

# **MANAGING THE MIDDLE EAST: THE NEED TO REVIVE TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION**

*Following the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, the international community rallied around Americans, shared their grief, and expressed their solidarity to provide all they could for the United States to track down and punish the responsible. How did the U.S. waste this front of good will and loose credibility among its allies? How did the Bush administration's strategies fail in the Middle East, undermining U.S. security and prestige? Arguing that transatlantic cooperation is vital to stabilize the churning in the Middle East, this article analyzes events since September 11 as they relate to the transatlantic alliance.*

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**F**ive years after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the world looks no safer today. In fact in ways, it has become a much more dangerous place. According to a survey conducted by the Rand Corporation for the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), the rate of terrorist incidents has increased by 167 percent compared to the period prior to and including September 11.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the rate of incidents, excluding Iraq, is 75 percent. By dividing the post-September 11 period into two halves, the report also points out that the number of terrorism fatalities shows an increase in the second half compared to the first.

Looking at the growing number of terrorist attacks in the last few years, something seems to be going seriously wrong with the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Global terror has spread like a contagious disease striking major cities such as Istanbul, Bali, New Delhi, London, Cairo, and Madrid. On 10 August, the British police revealed a terrorist plot designed to explode about ten of the transatlantic aircrafts by using liquidated bombs.<sup>2</sup> Presumably, the aim of the terrorists was to blow up commercial aircrafts in the U.S. airspace crossing the ocean, or perhaps they were seeking to hit New York, Washington, San Francisco, Boston, and Los Angeles.

### ***How the U.S. Strategy Backfired in the Middle East***

As the threat of terrorism increases in the world, U.S. prestige and credibility falls parallel to the waning international support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism. The U.S. popularity ratings show a steep decline -parallel to the course of the Iraq War- even among the key allies of Washington such as Britain and Spain.<sup>3</sup> The growing global public resentment against the United States largely stems from (or is a consequence of) the unilateralist foreign policy line followed by the Bush administration in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. With its “the mission builds the coalition” approach and its overemphasis on the use of military force, the Bush administration not only alienated its allies but also caused an increase in global terrorism as well as the political empowerment of actors who resist U.S. influence and democratic values. Transatlantic relations received a severe blow with the U.S. decision to expand the war on terrorism from Afghanistan to Iraq. The Bush administration’s insistence to go for a regime change in Iraq, ignoring European opposition, exposed the pre-existing structural differences between Europe and the United States in terms of threat perceptions and political approaches to conflict resolution. Moreover, the Bush administration’s launching of the Iraqi operation without United Nations (UN) backing, led to a serious legitimacy crisis in the international arena, eroding the credibility of the United States as a standard bearer in international relations.

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<sup>1</sup> See, “Terrorism Knowledge Base”, <http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp>, 13 September 2006.

<sup>2</sup> “A plot to commit murder on an unimaginable scale,” *Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,1842270,00.htm>, 11 August 2006; See also, “Timeline: UK 'terror plot' investigation,” *BBC News*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4801183.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4801183.stm), 21 September 2006).

<sup>3</sup> According to the survey conducted by the Pew Global Project in 2006, the US popularity ratings in Britain fell from 83 percent to 56 percent and in Spain the ratings fell from 50 percent to 26 percent since the year of 2000. As for the US-led war on terrorism, the popular support for the United States in Britain fell from 63 percent to 49 between 2003 and 2006. While in 2003, 63 percent of the Spanish society supported the US-led war on terrorism; in 2006 the rate of support fell to 19 percent. See, “America’s image slips, but allies share US concerns over Iran, Hamas,” 13 June 2006; see also, “US image up slightly, but still negative,” June 2005, : <http://www.pewglobal.com>,

When it was revealed that there was no trace of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, the U.S. officials had to cling to the rhetoric of liberating Iraqi people and bringing democracy to the Middle East. However, the scandals at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, the military attacks in Tal Afar, Fallujah and Haditha displayed a hypocritical image for the United States.<sup>4</sup> The global public opinion, particularly among the Muslims turned against the United States as civilian death tolls and human suffering increased in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq. Ironically, Iraqi quagmire strengthened the Islamist radicals' claims that the west is actually waging a war against Islam. Thus, today the U.S. presence in the Middle East is perceived as a force of occupation rather than as a liberator and this perception reinforces the resistance movement against the United States.

The U.S. experience of regime change through military force demonstrated that imposing democracy at the point of a gun, without considering the internal dynamics of a country (i.e. political culture, demographic features) leads to chaos; not democracy. In this context, the U.S. refashioning of the Greater Middle East -based on the rhetoric of bringing democracy with the aim of curbing the conditions which foster terrorism- seems to have backfired. Today it is not possible to talk about blossoming democracy in the Middle East; the region remains hostage to thunder blasts of missiles, suicide bombs and thus is virtually buried in smoke. The Afghan case shows that holding parliamentary elections is not an indicator of democracy let alone preserving security or stability. Worse, Taliban forces are almost experiencing a comeback. On 13 September 2006, the UN Security Council agreed to extend the authorization of the NATO-led force in Afghanistan to counter the attacks of the Taliban forces, reported to be operating in the southern provinces.<sup>5</sup> Iraq, on the other hand, is still in a civil war. What's more, the Sunni-Shia divide in Iraq threatens other Sunni Arab countries that have Shia minorities. Brookings Institution's "Iraqi Index" indicates that from 19 March 2003 through 30 August 2006, the U.S. troops' fatalities are estimated to reach 2096; and the number of Iraqi civilians killed by violence is around 45,600.<sup>6</sup> Apparently, the U.S. task of liberating people in the Middle East have turned into a political burden consuming Washington's energy, economic and military resources as well as its moral standing.

In the meantime, the U.S. preoccupation with the growing insurgency paved the way for other actors such as Iran and Syria to steal the scene. As the Chatham House report, released in this

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<sup>4</sup>To read on the U.S. involvement in the abuse and torture of prisoners held in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq; See "Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse," *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu\\_Ghraib\\_prisoner\\_abuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Ghraib_prisoner_abuse). See also, "Guantanamo Bay detainment camp," *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guantanamo\\_Bay\\_detainment\\_camp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guantanamo_Bay_detainment_camp). In May 2005, Newsweek magazine covered a story about U.S. interrogators at Guantanamo Bay desecrating the Qur'an to get prisoners to talk, including placing the holy book on a toilet and, in one case, flushing it down the toilet. See, "The Qur'an Question," *Newsweek* <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7937016/site/newsweek/>, May 2005; To read on the criticisms of the U.S. military attacks in Tal Afar, See for instance, "Turkmens say civilians killed in Tal Afar clashes," *Turkish Daily News*, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=22660>, 6 September 2005; To read on the U.S. operations in Fallujah; See the report "Iraq: Fears of serious violations of the rules of war in Falluja," *Amnesty International*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE140562004> 12 November 2004; See also; "In Haditha, Memories of a Massacre," *Washington Post* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/26/AR2006052602069.html>, 27 May 2006

<sup>5</sup> Sanjay Suri, "Afghanistan: Taliban taking over," *Inter Press News Agency* <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=34595>, 5 September 2006; Also see, "UN extends NATO-led force in Afghanistan, expressing concern at upsurge in terrorist activity," *International Herald Tribune* [http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/09/13/news/UN\\_GEN\\_UN\\_Afghanistan.php](http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/09/13/news/UN_GEN_UN_Afghanistan.php), 13 September 2006

<sup>6</sup> "Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," *Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index20060831.pdf>, 31 August 2006),

September 2006 points out, Iran has been the chief beneficiary of the war on terror.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. overthrow of Sunni regimes in Afghanistan (Taliban) and in Iraq (Baathists under Saddam) eliminated two of Iran's enemies, both of which were openly hostile to the Shia Mullah rule.<sup>8</sup> The increase in oil revenues and the rise of Shia predominance in Iraq also contributed to Iran's rising political profile in the region. With its anti-American and anti-Semitic rhetoric, Iran aspires to be the new regional hegemon. Relying upon the fact that the U.S. is too busy in Iraq and Afghanistan (which makes a U.S. ground operation much less likely), Iran continues to defy international pressure to halt its uranium enrichment program. On the other hand, an economic boost is enabling Iran to provide financial and logistic support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas -in coordination with Syria. As Ted Koppel asserts in his article "Gifts for Iran: Look What Spreading Democracy Can Do," Tehran capitalizes on every opportunity that democratic reform presents.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, the U.S. sponsored wave of free elections paved the way for Hezbollah representatives to secure fourteen seats in the Parliament in Lebanon and brought Hamas to power in Palestine.

As for Syria, the Bush administration's vows to overthrow authoritarian regimes in the Middle East have been intimidating Bashar Assad, whose rule depended on the fragile hegemony of an Alawite minority over a Sunni majority. Relations between the U.S. and Syria have been further strained since the killing of Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005. The Bush administration has been trying to pressure Bashar Assad to punish some of his government members, who were allegedly involved in the plot. Although never formally declared among "the axis of evil", Syria was identified as an "ally of terror...the enemy of freedom, justice and peace" in the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2006.<sup>10</sup>

The failure of the Iraqi project is believed to have undermined local attempts of democratic openings and in a way eased the pressure on Syria to give in to the reform demands of the West.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, political isolation is still a matter of concern for Assad; urging him to strengthen his alliance with Iran. On the other hand, the prospect of an independent Kurdish entity in northern Iraq poses a threat for Syria and Iran and unites these two states which have significant Kurdish populations. Another common point of Syria and Iran is their hostility towards Israel. Prompted by the lingering issue of the Golan Heights, Syria supports resurgence movements against Israel through its logistic assistance to terrorist organizations in the region. It is therefore no surprise that Hamas headquarters is based in Damascus. This is hardly a successful record for the Bush administration's fight against terrorism or its declared goal of democratic regime change in state supporters of terrorism.

### ***Divergent Approaches Towards the Middle East Mayhem***

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<sup>7</sup> "Iran, its neighbors and the regional crisis," *A Middle East Program Report by Chatham House*, <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/mep/Iran0806.pdf#search='chatham%20house%20report%20on%20Iran,2006>.

<sup>8</sup> Iranian political influence on Iraq's political future cannot be dismissed since 60 percent of Iraq consists of Shia population. It is important to bear in mind that the spiritual leader of the Shia community in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali Sistani is of Iranian origin and the president of Iraq is also a Shiite.

<sup>9</sup> Ted Koppel, "Gifts for Iran: Look what spreading democracy can do," *International Herald Tribune*, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/07/21/opinion/edkoppel.php>, 21 July 2006

<sup>10</sup> See the document of the U.S. NSS of 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/sectionIII.html>, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance, "In Syria, Iraq's Fate Silences Rights Activists," *Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/25/AR20061025018>. 26 October 2006

Whereas the region's enduring problems such as the Israel-Palestine issue remain unresolved, the recent outbreak of war between Israel and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon demonstrated once again how interrelated the various conflicts in the region are. The war in Lebanon underscored the difference of political approaches between Europe and the United States in dealing with the conflicts in the Middle East. While both the United States and Europe blamed Hezbollah for having started the fight, European leaders also criticized Israel's disproportionate military response and called for an immediate ceasefire. The Bush administration, on the other hand, defended Israel's right to respond to Hezbollah attacks and tacitly approved of Israel's military operation to cleanse southern Lebanon of Hezbollah forces. A week after the conflict started, on her way to the Middle East, the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice said: "A ceasefire would be a false promise if it simply returns us to the status quo," and suggested that the international community should work urgently to create the conditions for stability and lasting peace.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. position which was joined by Britain was an obstacle to the initiatives of the European and Arab countries to bring an end to violence. The international community failed to reach a consensus on how to deal with the war in Lebanon at the Rome Summit on July 27.<sup>13</sup> The United States even blocked a UN statement just before the Rome Summit, condemning Israel's air campaigns which led to the destruction of targets, predominantly civilian, including a UN post in Beirut, which ended in the killing of four UN observers.<sup>14</sup> Eventually, after a month-long military struggle between Israel and the Hezbollah forces, the United States and European countries -under the leadership of France- succeeded in overcoming their differences with respect to the position of Israel, and agreed on a draft plan concerning the situation in Lebanon. And on 11 August, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1701 which called for the urgent cessation of hostilities, demanded an exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hezbollah and the deployment of an international force to Lebanon.<sup>15</sup>

From a broader perspective, the war in Lebanon was considered as a proxy war between Iran and the United States, fought by Hezbollah and Israel.<sup>16</sup> Issues like Iran's nuclear ambitions, Israeli-Palestinian issue, the insurgency in Iraq, the rise of Shia predominance in the region, integration of Hezbollah forces to the Lebanese political system, each constitute distinct yet intermingled conflicts related to the political stabilization of Lebanon. In the months ahead, the UN forces in Lebanon might either contribute to the settlement of disputes or lead to more chaos which may drag others into a military confrontation, including the United States, Iran, Syria and even European countries.

In this context, the instability and chaos which dominate the Middle East today pose a global threat. Effective multilateral diplomacy and transatlantic cooperation is necessary to confront the challenges of the Middle East which might spread to other regions as well. Transatlantic

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<sup>12</sup> Remarks by the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "Special Briefing on Travel to the Middle East and Europe," *Washington DC* <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/69331.htm>, 21 July 2006..

<sup>13</sup> John Hooper, Ewen MacAskill, and Jonathan Steele, "Frustration as summit fails to end conflict," *Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329539181-103552,00.html>, 27 July 2006..

<sup>14</sup> Simon Tisdall, "Tying the hands of the United Nations," *Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329540272-114659,00.html>, 28 July 2006; See also, "Israel expresses 'deep regret' after UN strike," <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14034540/print/1/displaymode/1098/>, .

<sup>15</sup> The details of the UN Security Council Resolution 1701 are available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>, .

<sup>16</sup> Soli Özel, "Prelude to War or Diplomacy," *Middle East Program Studies* <http://www.tribeca.com.tr/default.asp?pld=18&lang=0&blgId=1&blgItmId=4>, Fall 2006 Also see, Ted Koppel (2006).

cooperation is vitally important to mediate a solution to the region's frozen conflicts which fuel outrage among the Muslims and widen the gap between the West and the Arab world. Cooperation between Europe and the United States is vital because as the only superpower, the U.S. faces a dramatic fall of credibility and prestige due to its strategic blunder in Iraq and its insistence on following a unilateralist foreign policy. The unfolding of the events in the Middle East and especially the mounting of radicalism prove that the U.S. strategy of combating terrorism in the Middle East has been counterproductive. Furthermore, the United States is no longer perceived as an honest broker in the mediation efforts in the Middle East because of its pro-Israel stance and overdependence on the use of military force. In contrast, the European Union (EU) still has a chance to present itself as a legitimate arbitrator in addressing a variety of issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Iran's nuclear program and stabilization of Lebanon. Contrary to Bush administration's axis of evil rhetoric, which reinforces political isolation, the EU's tools of diplomacy -through alternative policies of political engagement and economic integration- might attract moderate regimes of the region and pave the way for political reconciliation among the parties. Yet, the EU lacks economic and military resources to undertake such a political task without U.S. assistance. Only with a balanced political strategy - combining Europe's carrot/soft power and the U.S. stick/hard power- might achieve victory against the threat of fundamentalist terrorism by winning the hearts and minds of the Middle Easterners.

However, transatlantic relations still remain fragile. The impact of the transatlantic crisis dating back to the war in Iraq continues to undermine relations between the United States and European countries. Despite the Bush administration's efforts -mainly under the initiatives of the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice- to rectify the alliance, relations between the United States and European countries stand on a shaky ground because of divergent political priorities and persisting differences in their means of conducting foreign policy. On the other hand, EU internal problems such as defining the EU's security and foreign policy weaken transatlantic cooperation. Lack of political consensus on foreign policy objectives makes it harder for the EU to act on a common strategy with the United States. Yet, Europe and the U.S. share a common responsibility in confronting global challenges. Therefore there is a need to overcome structural as well as conjunctural obstacles which stand in the way of transatlantic cooperation. Understanding thoroughly the reasons which led to the transatlantic split on the eve of the war in Iraq should be a starting point in efforts to reinvigorate transatlantic relations.

### ***Road to a Transatlantic Crisis***

Following the devastating terrorist attacks on September 11, international community rallied around Americans to express their solidarity and to provide all necessary means for the United States to track down and punish the responsible. On 12 September, NATO invoked its *Article 5* of "Collective Defense"-for the first time in the treaty's history- calling for a joint response to defend a member under attack. The United Nations, on the other hand, passed a resolution which authorized taking "all necessary steps - including the use of force" to respond to the attacks. However, the Bush administration did not take up offers from the international community and preferred to launch Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan with a coalition of forces under the U.S. leadership instead of being under NATO command. Warm welcoming of the Afghan people encouraged the U.S. policy makers to take the war on terrorism one step further and oust the Baathist regime in Iraq. And almost within a year, international solidarity for the U.S. war on terrorism started to wane. Why?

For many analysts, the end of the Cold War marked the downward trend for transatlantic cooperation. The collapse of the Soviet Union -the elimination of the common threat- paved the way for the conflicting national interests of the allies to resurface. The future of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which served as glue for the Atlantic alliance was called into question since the enemy quit the game. While the United States, as the only superpower, focused on how to preserve its power and predominance in world affairs, European countries concentrated on their unification process and arguably turned inward. With reference to the famous quip of Robert Kagan -Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus- the growing disparity of power between Europe and the United States had an impact over their handling of foreign policy issues.<sup>17</sup> Whereas the Europeans preferred to use multilateral diplomacy and counseling through international institutions in conflict resolution, the United States became more inclined to use force and less eager to be bound by international commitments.

Despite their structural differences such as asymmetry of power or handling of foreign policy issues, transatlantic allies succeeded in getting Saddam out of Kuwait and ending the violence in the Balkans. However the decision-making process was slow. Contrary to the claims that transatlantic alliance was actually suffering a clash of values, Europe and the United States agreed on the benefits of democracy, freedom, and human rights and thus cooperated on several issues such as integration of post-Soviet states into the political system, fighting global poverty or preventing infectious diseases. Yet, following September 11, policy divergences and differences in respective threat perceptions became harder to reconcile. Particularly, in the process leading to the war in Iraq, the Bush administration's rigid rhetoric -"With us or against us"- and diplomatic mistakes escalated growing tension between Europe and the United States and culminated into a crisis.

The traumatic experience of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 led to the American public to approve of a shift in U.S. foreign policy towards a more unilateralist and assertive line. From then on, terrorist groups, weapons of mass destruction and rouge states<sup>18</sup> were articulated as main threats to the U.S. national security. Traditional defense policies such as containment and deterrence were no longer found appropriate in confronting these unconventional threats because unlike nation-states, terrorist groups lacked a stable location which made retaliation impossible. Moreover, the fact that they were determined to die for their cause and adapted suicide bombings as a method proved defensive strategies ineffective. Thus, the U.S. right to act unilaterally (if necessary) and the preemptive strike doctrine (countering the threats before they materialize) together became the main components of the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, neither unilateralism nor the right of preemption was a new theme for the Bush administration. In the first eight months in office, the Bush administration showed a tendency towards unilateralism and avoided making international commitments. In March 2001, the Bush administration decided to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. Before the international community digested the news, in May, President Bush declared the U.S.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America vs. Europe in the new world order*, (New York: Knopf, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Rouge states are identified as states brutalizing their own people, violating international law and intimidating their neighbors. They pose a global threat because they are determined to acquire WMD and they sponsor terrorism abroad. See, "President delivers Graduation Speech at West Point," *West Point*, New York, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>, 1 June 2002

<sup>19</sup> "The U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssall.html>,

intention to build a national missile defense system during his speech at the National Defense University.<sup>20</sup> While the U.S. campaign against the International Criminal Court continued, Washington denounced the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) in December 2001.<sup>21</sup> The Bush administration's disdain for international commitments drew criticisms at home as much as from abroad such that the Economist commented: "Has President Bush ever met a treaty he liked?"<sup>22</sup> As for the right of preemption, the United States sought the option of preemptive strike in the past as in the case of Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>23</sup> However, emphasis of a policy option as a centerpiece of the U.S. security strategy brought along potential risks. The borders of this preemptive strike doctrine were so vague and elastic that it was all left to the U.S. mercy to decide the nature of the treat, where and when to wage a war. Besides, the U.S. action might provide a pretext for other countries, claiming the same right to pursue their own agendas.

### *Rifts Over Iraq War and Afterwards*

Retrospectively, in the post-9/11 era, transatlantic relations appeared problematic even before the war in Iraq was launched because of the unilateralist foreign policy line of the Bush administration. However, as Washington pointed Iraq as the next target in the war on terrorism, the relations between Europe and the U.S. further strained and came to a breaking point for a variety of reasons. To begin with, transatlantic allies were not on the same page about the war on terrorism. The United States was hit at home for the first time since the British burned down Washington in the war of 1812, whereas European countries such as Britain, Spain or Turkey were struggling against terror for decades. Up to 9/11, Europe considered terrorism as a problem of domestic politics. This perception started to change after the U.S. experience and as terrorism became a global threat necessitating collective action. On the other hand, as Andrew Moravcsik asserted, since the Europeans were not the primary target of September 11, they found the threat less pressing.<sup>24</sup> Instead, European countries were more concerned about a possible spillover of a military confrontation in the Middle East, considering a large number of Muslims living in Europe as well as their relations with the Middle Eastern countries.

Another important point of divergence was that most Europeans regarded the U.S.-led war in Iraq as a war of choice rather than a war of necessity; a war with the aim of completing an unfinished task leftover from the Gulf War. In fact, a number of factors fueled suspicions that the U.S. was exploiting the campaign over Iraq for regional political ends such as controlling the oil lands of the Middle East and Central Asia or maintaining Israel's security. For instance, on 20 September 2001, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) presented a letter to President George W. Bush which advised a regime change in Iraq "even if evidence does not directly link Iraq to the attack."<sup>25</sup> It is also remarkable that the 2001 edition of the Department

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<sup>20</sup> "Remarks by the President Bush to Students and Faculty at the National Defense University," *PBS*, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june01/nmd5-1.html>, 1 May 2001

<sup>21</sup> "Bush to quit ABM treaty Thursday," <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/ALLPOLITICS/12/12/rec.bush.abm.treaty/>, December 12, 2001; Also see, "Allies alarmed as US opposes biological weapons inspection," *Guardian*, <http://www.ccmep.org/hotnews/allies052101.html>,

<sup>22</sup> "Stop the world, I want to get off," *The Economist*, [http://www.economist.com/world/na/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=E1\\_STDDPT](http://www.economist.com/world/na/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_STDDPT), July 26, 2001

<sup>23</sup> Ivo Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2003), p. 122.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol: 82 No: 4 p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> The letter is available at: <http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter.htm>. The majority of members are associated with policy statements by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) whose charter members in 1997 included Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney. See, Jim Lobe, "They're Back: Neocons Revive the

of State's annual Patterns of Global Terrorism presented no evidence of terrorist activities linked to Iraqi government.<sup>26</sup> What's more, the reports prepared by the United Nations Chief Weapon Inspector Hans Blix lacked concrete evidence on Saddam's WMD program.<sup>27</sup>

In many respects, the Bush administration failed to explain Washington's concerns about Iraq to the international community. In part, diplomatic inefficiency of the then Secretary of State Colin Powell was held responsible. Secretary Powell was later criticized for his preference of phone-call diplomacy instead of traveling abroad and establishing face-to-face contact with foreign leaders.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, President Bush's rhetoric which divided the world between good and evil left no room for moderates and thus alienated those who were skeptical about the U.S. strategy over Iraq. As Philip Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro argued, Europeans in fact agreed that Iraq was a problem but they differed on how to deal with Saddam Hussein.<sup>29</sup> Europeans considered regime change in Iraq without a concrete post-war plan as a strategic mistake. Particularly, France and Germany were in favor of giving Iraq three months time to cooperate with the UN weapons inspectors so as to provide Iraq's compliance with the UN resolutions. In this context, the Bush administration's rush to war and its ignorance of the international opposition was perceived as if the U.S. would remove Saddam no matter what. A week before the UN Security Council's resolution 1441, the U.S. Secretary Colin Powell noted that "The U.S. continues to believe that the best way to disarm Iraq is through a regime change."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, rather than trying to persuade opponents of the U.S. policy over Iraq, the Bush administration explicitly threatened countries who got in the way of Washington. During the U.S. efforts of getting a second UN resolution on Iraq, Colin Powell warned that "If France did veto the resolution, the United States and France would remain friends, but that such an action "will have a serious effect on bilateral relations at least in the short term."<sup>31</sup> Thereupon, the Iraq war divided Europe into two camps; France and Germany represented the heads of the anti-war camp, whereas Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria joined the United States.

The U.S. response to European opposition was to "Punish France, ignore Germany and forgive Russia," recalling the famous phrase attributed to the then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in the spring of 2003.<sup>32</sup> However, parallel to the course of the Iraq War, a sense of realism settled onto U.S. foreign policy making makers? To begin with, unlike the mission in Afghanistan, the mission in Iraq turned out to be more costly and complicated than it was anticipated. Although it was easy to defeat the weak and poorly equipped Baathist army, strategic miscalculations with regard to post-war security and reconstruction of Iraq paved the

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Committee on the Present Danger, This Time against Terrorism," *Foreign Policy in Focus*

[http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2004/0407cpd3\\_body.html](http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2004/0407cpd3_body.html), 21 July 2004

<sup>26</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of the Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Transcript of Blix's March 7 presentation to the UN, *CNN*,

<http://cnn.usnews.printhis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action&title=CNN.com>.

<sup>28</sup> Even in the case of getting an authorization from the Turkish government for the US 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry to by-pass Turkish-Iraqi border (popularly known as the March 1 incident) Washington kept a low diplomatic profile. Powell came to Turkey only after the Turkish Parliament turned the motion, whereas during the Gulf crisis, the then Secretary of State James Baker went to Ankara three times.

<sup>29</sup> Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at war: America, Europe and the crisis over Iraq* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> "US stands firm on ousting Saddam," *BBC News*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2279758.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2279758.stm), 25 September 2002

<sup>31</sup> "Threats and Responses: Security Council; Urgent Diplomacy Fails to Gain U.S. 9 votes in the UN," *New York Times*, <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F00710FB3D5A0C738DDDA0894DB404482>, March 10, 2003

<sup>32</sup> Jim Hoagland, "Three Miscreants," *Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A10978-2003Apr11?language=printer>, 13 April 2003

way for the emergence of a strong resistance against the U.S.-led coalition forces. Moreover, the U.S. overthrow of Saddam's regime disrupted sensitive balances of power between different ethnic and religious communities in Iraq. Rivalries over distribution of power and resources of the country endangered the U.S. political assessments for future Iraq in terms of creating a democratic unitary state out of the ashes of a brutal dictatorship. On the other hand, the U.S. officials' justifying claims of their Iraqi invasion turned out to be false as one report after another concluded that there was no WMD in Iraq.<sup>33</sup> Erosion of the U.S. moral standing had a negative impact on the public opinions of the countries allied to the U.S. in Iraq. Whereas electorates in Spain punished Jose Maria Aznar -then Prime Minister and the leader of conservative Popular Party- for having supported U.S. policy over Iraq in 2004, the Labor Party under the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair won a landside victory in the UK general elections of 2005 with a drastic fall of its majority in the Parliament.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in the period following the Iraq war, the United States faced the limits of its hard power and adapted a cooperative stance in international relations (or in foreign affairs) which changed the tone of transatlantic relations as well.

Especially following President Bush's second term in November 2004, a significant rapprochement took place between the United States and Europe. As James Lindsay asserts, while many European countries regarded the U.S. despair in Iraq as a price Washington was paying for its hubris, the stakes of a total U.S. failure in Iraq were equally high, considering the spread of instability and violence to other regions.<sup>35</sup> In this context, terrorist attacks which targeted European cities led to a gradual change in the European perspectives towards how to cope with global terror. It is therefore significant that the European Union adopted an action Plan against Terrorism in June 2004, three months after the railway blasts in Madrid. On the other hand, the re-election of President Bush in November 2004 meant that European counterparts had to work with the Bush administration for another four years. This reality prompted European countries (or fierce opponents of the Bush policies) such as France and Germany to leave aside their unpleasant memories from the Iraq War and move on to minimize disagreements with Washington. In this respect, changes in the Bush cabinet, particularly President Bush's nomination of Condoleezza Rice as the Secretary of State provided a momentum for opening a new page in transatlantic relations. At her swearing-in ceremony at the White House, Secretary Rice gave hints of the U.S. political priorities in the following term as "The time for diplomacy is now," and consequently in February 2005, went on an overseas trip which included the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Israel, the West Bank, Italy, France, Belgium and Luxemburg.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>See, "Report concludes no WMD in Iraq," *BBC News* [http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/37](http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/37), 7 October 2004; Also see, "U.S. gives up search for Iraq WMD," *BBC News* <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4169>, 12 January 2005 .

<sup>34</sup> Spanish voters expressed their anger with the government, accusing it of provoking the Madrid attacks by supporting the U.S.-led war in Iraq. See, "Spain: Poll triumph for Socialists," *CNN* , <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/03/14/spain.blasts.election/index.html>, 6 May 2004; For the British elections, see; "Newsmaker: David Kay," [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/jan-june04/kay\\_01-29.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june04/kay_01-29.html), 29 January 2004; Also see, "2005 British General Election," [http://www.apsanet.org/section\\_577.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/section_577.cfm),

<sup>35</sup> James Lindsay, "Bush's Foreign Policy: Is the Revolution over?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/9035/bushs\\_foreignpolicy\\_strategy.html?breadcrumb](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9035/bushs_foreignpolicy_strategy.html?breadcrumb),

<sup>36</sup> In the process of this reconstruction of transatlantic relations, governmental changes in Europe also played a role in terms of breaking the ice with the US. In November 2004, French Finance Minister Nicholas Sarkozy's became the head of governing Union for a Popular Movement Party (UMP). He was known as having a pro-us stance. Angela Merkel's victory in German elections of 2005 also contributed to the thaw in German-US relations. During her election campaigns, she was promising to revitalize her country's tattered relations with the US. See, "Merkel's Trip heralds new start," *BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4603422.stm>,

### *What Has Happened to The “Union” of Europe?*

The reconstruction of transatlantic ties is currently an ongoing process. In the last two years, relations between the U.S. and Europe have been experiencing ups and downs. Despite signals of increased multilateralism in the U.S. foreign policy approach, scandals such as the CIA secret prisons in Europe and the U.S. treatment of the detainees in Guantanamo continue to sour transatlantic relations.<sup>37</sup> However, an equally important factor which derails the efforts to reinvigorate transatlantic alliance is the internal turbulence the European Union has been suffering since the veto of the EU constitution by the French and the Dutch in 2005.<sup>38</sup> The veto of the constitution was perceived as a clash of different visions on European enlargement and integration. It was also a setback for political initiatives designed to equip the European Union for playing a more decisive role in international relations such as the creation of a new post of European foreign minister, the External Action Service -mission for a diplomatic corps- and adopting a majority voting system. As the director of foreign policy center at the Center for European Reform Mark Leonard argued, the constitution crisis did not destroy the entire European project, but it wasted time for European leaders by distracting their attention to deal with internal problems instead of channeling their energy to the solution of important foreign policy issues such as the Middle East Peace Process or Iran’s nuclear ambitions.<sup>39</sup>

In order to talk about a more robust transatlantic partnership, the European Union has to overcome its internal divergences and set forth a clear unified foreign policy vision. This brings along a necessity to reach an agreement on issues related to European enlargement. Drawing the borders of the EU is crucial for determining the political sphere of influence as well as its mission. However, the recent reaction against EU enlargement -aside from economic concerns- is an indicator of growing reluctance among the EU members to get involved in regional conflicts which the inclusion of new members such as Turkey might bring about. With such a narrow vision, the European Union misses an opportunity to act as a global player and participate in shaping the world affairs along with the United States.

In fact, the European Union is already involved in the Middle East due to its historical and economic ties to the region, and because of the presence of a large Muslim population living in Europe. The EU states cannot remain immune to the instability emanating from surrounding regions by simply isolating the union as a closed political entity. On the contrary, Europe would become more vulnerable to challenges arising from the Middle East such as spreading global jihad unless it displays an active diplomatic engagement -as a Union- in the solution of conflicts. For decades, various policies -spanning from liberal to more conservative ones- failed to integrate Muslims in Europe. The profile of terrorists involved in Madrid and London attacks -mostly young Muslims educated in Europe- is a strong indicator that the radical

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12 January 2006; See also, “Sarkozy takes over Chirac Party,” *BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4048917.stm>, 28 November 2004, .

<sup>37</sup> See, “EU to query U.S. ‘secret prisons’,” *BBC News*: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4461470.stm>, 22 November 2005

<sup>38</sup> “What the EU constitution says,” *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2950276.stm#foreigndefence>, 22 June 2004.

<sup>39</sup> See, Mark Leonard, “Europe will survive a French Non,” *Foreign Policy* [http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/format\\_print.htm?article=leonard\\_foreignpolicy\\_20april....](http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/format_print.htm?article=leonard_foreignpolicy_20april....), 20 April 2005

Islamist ideology easily finds an audience in the continent.<sup>40</sup> With a provocative spark, domestic conflicts such as the killing of Theo Van Gogh or the violence in the Paris ghettos can take an ideological turn and lead to a confrontation between Christians and Muslims. For this reason, the EU countries share a responsibility in addressing regional conflicts which breed grievance and frustration among the Muslims with maximum care and diligence. And perhaps, the European Union should evaluate socio-political contributions of Turkey's membership -as a modern secular Muslim country- in this context.

An effectively functioning European Union is in the interest of the United States not only as a counterpart to imbue initiatives more "accepted" by societies which are skeptical about the U.S., but also to share economic and military burdens of political tasks it undertook in the last few years. However, institutional problems present an obstacle for the EU to act as a unified and more influential body in foreign affairs. Implementation of the reform measures embedded in the constitutional treaty such as establishing a President and a Foreign Minister of the Union and building a European diplomatic service might provide the Union with a more solid legal basis. On the other hand, as Charles A. Kupchan argues, developing a more unified voice on security and defense matters and acquiring military capability would increase the EU's power of enforcing its policies.<sup>41</sup> According to Kupchan, progress on defense matters would also provide Europe leverage over the U.S, since the EU would have important assets to offer in return for U.S. compromise. By the same token, the U.S. would not be in the position to complain about Europe for being a free rider on issues of security and defense.<sup>42</sup> However, for the time being, the debate of the EU constitution is hung in the air and the ratification process is extended to the second half of 2007.

Despite its institutional weaknesses, the European Union is an important actor of the international realm and plays a constructive role in realizing key foreign policy objectives with the United States such as counterterrorism, proliferation of WMD and supporting democratic initiatives in the Middle East. The EU member states cooperate with the U.S. in areas of intelligence sharing and financial monitoring of terrorist networks. The agreement in October 2006 between the U.S. and the EU on sharing travel data is, in this respect, a promising step towards enhanced cooperation in terms of tracking terror suspects cross-bordering Europe.<sup>43</sup> Besides, since mid-2005, Britain, Germany and France, representing the EU3, are actively involved in diplomatic bargaining with Iran over its uranium enrichment project. The diplomatic initiatives of the EU3 gained political support of Russia, China and the United States in 2006 and became EU3+3.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the EU continues to support democratic initiatives in the Middle East within the scope of the Barcelona Process<sup>45</sup> which

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<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey Schwerzel "London Bombings: In search for answers," *Center for Defense Information*  
<http://www.cdi.org/program/issue/document.cfm?DocumentID=3056&IssueID=45&StartRow=1&ListRows=10&appendURL=&Orderby=DateLastUpdated&ProgramID=39&issueID=45>, 8 July 2005;

See also, Mark Burgess, "The Meaning of the London Attacks," *Center for Defense Information*,:  
<http://www.cdi.org/program/issue/document.cfm?DocumentID=3056&IssueID=45&StartRow=1&ListRows=10&appendURL=&Orderby=DateLastUpdated&ProgramID=39&issueID=45>,

<sup>41</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, "The Fourth Age: The Next Era in Transatlantic Relations," *National Interest*,  
[http://www.cfr.org/publication/11488/fourth\\_age.htm,l](http://www.cfr.org/publication/11488/fourth_age.htm,l), September/October 2006

<sup>42</sup> Kagan (2003).

<sup>43</sup> "EU and US set accord on sharing travel data," *International Herald Tribune*  
[http://www.iht.com/bin/print\\_ipub.php?file=articles/2006/10/06/news/data.php](http://www.iht.com/bin/print_ipub.php?file=articles/2006/10/06/news/data.php), October 6, 2006

<sup>44</sup> "Proposals for Iran," *Council of European Union*,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/iran/doc/060714\\_proposals\\_iran\\_vienna\\_01-06-06.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/iran/doc/060714_proposals_iran_vienna_01-06-06.pdf), 14 July 2006.

<sup>45</sup>The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership thus comprises 35 members, 25 EU Member States and 10 Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey).

was initiated in 1995 -before the Greater Middle East Initiative was born- and then evolved into the EU Neighborhood Policy<sup>46</sup> in 2004. In this context, the EU encourages democratic reforms and assists countries in the Eastern Mediterranean to carry economic and political tasks for development. With an emphasis on encouragement rather than imposing reforms, the EU offers a share in the EU's single market closer and cooperation on issues of energy and transportation. Considering the overlapping issues of concern, there is still a prospect for Europe and the United States to revive the transatlantic spirit by focusing on areas of cooperation.

The U.S.-EU cooperation can lead to successful political outcomes in the Middle East owing to their complementary capabilities in the diplomatic scene. The EU method of diplomacy relies on the resolution of political disputes through direct negotiations and persuasion. In contrast, the Bush administration's hard line refuses establishing contact with adversaries, and insists on imposing severe sanctions instead. However, success of such a rigid strategy is arguable today, considering the cases of North Korea versus Libya.<sup>47</sup> The EU, in this respect presents an alternative way of persuading political actors to change their policies by offering something in return, either attracting them through direct membership or encouraging them to participate in the EU's economic and social programs. However, in the case of the Middle East, the EU's bargaining power is limited since it cannot offer membership. At this point, the U.S. military supremacy provides a power of coercion to the EU's diplomatic pressures in case diplomacy fails. Therefore, an effective strategy to bring peace and stability to the Middle East requires a combination of European diplomatic skills and U.S. military assets.

### ***Forging a transatlantic cooperation avoiding multilateral disorder***

As stated in the Compact between the United States and Europe in February 2005: "The partnership between Europe and the United States must endure, not because of what it achieved in the past, but because our common future depends on it."<sup>48</sup> The rhetoric that America needs Europe and vice-versa -however worn out it sounds- is true because policy objectives can be achieved more easily through cooperation than competition or confrontation. The damage transatlantic relations suffered in the last few years is not irreparable. Considerable efforts are underway to restore a healthy dialogue between the U.S. and European countries. Yet, there is much more that could be done to avoid similar clashes in the near future. In this context, some policy suggestions can serve as a guide to reconcile differences between the U.S. the EU in global affairs.

A change of perception both in the U.S. and in Europe is necessary to agree on the need to act together. The United States should realize that opposition against the U.S. policies is not

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Libya has observer status since 1999. "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership / Barcelona Process," <http://ec.europa.eu>.

<sup>46</sup>Remarks of Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy at Swedish Institute for International Affairs and the European Commission Representation in Stockholm, "European Neighborhood Policy," <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/149&format=HTML&aged=0&language=en&guiLanguage=en>, 7 March 2006,

<sup>47</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "Let them eat carrots," *Newsweek* <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/15265429/site/newsweek/>, 23 October 2006 ,

<sup>48</sup>"Compact between the United States and Europe,"

<http://www.wws.princeton.edu/ppns/conferences/reports/USEuropeCompact.pdf>, 15 February 2005 , .

simply a result of the envy the weaker states feel towards the U.S. power and supremacy.<sup>49</sup> As research studies have identified, specific policies of the Bush administration since 9/11 escalated tension between Europe and the U.S. and triggered a global anti-Americanism. Therefore, a change in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy- taking into account viewpoints of foreign actors and more eager to strengthen and work with international institutions- will surely contribute to the transatlantic partnership. There is indeed a growing awareness in the U.S. of the need of upgrading the U.S. image abroad and efforts of organizations such as Terror Free Tomorrow<sup>50</sup> is evidence of this.

As for Europe, EU countries need to admit that diplomacy has a limit and in some cases threats have to be confronted with military force. Embracing these realities, the European Union should adapt its institutional framework to current changes, implement reforms to shorten the decision-making process and agree on common threats and interests. Europeans should also bear in mind that building a military structure would require an increase in their military spending which means additional economic burdens such higher taxes. However, at the same time, a European military force would strengthen the EU's hand as a credible and compelling actor in global affairs.

Reaching a consensus on all strategic issues is an unrealistic goal in international relations. Especially, when the EU consists of 25 nation-states, harmonizing policies with the U.S. is an even harder task. There are inevitably conflicts of interests. Responsible statecraft is therefore crucial in handling clash of perspectives. In this respect, the Bush administration was frequently criticized in the last few years due to a perceived dictating, presumptuous style in foreign affairs. As globalization continues at full speed, only through diplomatic missions and intensive dialogue can states introduce their policy objectives and persuade administrations and public opinion to the rightness of their cause.

Lastly, working through international organizations provides a seal of legitimacy to political actions. International institutions which constitute the main pillar of transatlantic alliance need to be transformed so as to better accommodate opposing views. Changing the unanimity rule in the voting system of NATO or the UN Security Council as Kupchan suggests might help enable transatlantic partners reach a decision on strategic issues.<sup>51</sup> By the same token, such a reform can shorten the decision making process so that immediate measures can be put into force under international legitimacy. At a time when the world faces even a deadlier "combinations of technology and religious fundamentalism,"<sup>52</sup> transatlantic partners should leave aside their differences on global governance and act together in confronting current challenges which threaten Europe and the U.S. alike.

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen Walt elaborates on the reasons which motivate other states to constrain U.S. power and makes a distinction between what America is-stands for- and what America does in foreign affairs-questioning the impact of the U.S. foreign policy on others. See, Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. primacy* (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> "Terror Free Tomorrow", <http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org>,

<sup>51</sup> Yet, Kupchan bases his argument on the assumption that the U.S. and Europe will not be able to forge an alliance in the near future and therefore it is necessary set the new rules for international institutions with regard to possible coalitions of the willing. See, Kupchan (2006).

<sup>52</sup> Cited from President Bush's forward to the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002, *The U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002*," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssall.html>, .