

## THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

Politics & Government	95	107	Religion & Philosophy
Foreign Policy & Defense	97	108	Science, Technology & Environment
Economics, Labor & Business	101		Arts & Letters
Society	103	111	Other Nations
Press & Media	105	115	

### *Continents Apart?*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

Is the Atlantic Alliance doomed? For the progeny of America's "greatest generation," who grew up during the Cold War when the United States and its European partners stood together against the menace from the East, it's hard to imagine. Yet there are those who say it's so.

Stephen M. Walt, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, for example. Writing a year and a half ago in the *National Interest* (Winter 1998–99), he argued that with the Soviet threat gone, "it is time for Europe and the United States to begin a slow and gradual process of disengagement." This, he added, is bound to happen in any case.

But that, of course, was before the United States joined its European allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) first-ever exercise of military might that was more than an exercise, and, by raining bombs down on Yugoslavia, gained what all but spoilsport critics called a victory. Surely the Kosovo war of 1999 showed that the Atlantic Alliance is in splendid shape. But no, observes Peter W. Rodman, director of national security programs at the Nixon Center, writing in the *National Interest* (Summer 2000): "Instead of vindicating NATO and American leadership, [the war] had the effect of accelerating efforts to build a new all-European defense organization."

A bit humbled by the dazzling martial display of American technological prowess, and uncomfortable finding themselves under verbal assault from anti-American leftists (and in France, Gaullist rightists) for taking part in an American-led war, many European governments decided to avoid

such an embarrassing situation in the future, Rodman notes. At the Helsinki summit of the European Union (EU) last December, the Europeans announced they would field an all-European force of more than 50,000 by 2003.

These days, Rodman observes, much European rhetoric has a common theme: "It is time for Europe to make itself an equal of the United States, to be a counterweight to it, to achieve greater autonomy from it, [and] to lessen dependence on it." So uniquely extensive (supposedly) is U.S. dominance, stretching broadly across the political, military, economic, and cultural realms, that French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine has coined a new pejorative to describe it: *hyperpuissance* (hyper-power).

"It is an oddly schizoid experience to live in Europe these days," observes Martin Walker, former U.S. bureau chief and European editor of the London *Guardian*. "It is a place," he writes in *World Policy Journal* (Summer 2000), "where more and more people live and work and eat and dress and relax like Americans, while exercising considerable ingenuity in finding new complaints about the United States." Capital punishment, rampant handgun violence, puritanical anti-smoking crusades, and loony political correctness—all are grist for the anti-American mill.

As "a *de facto* military protectorate of the United States," Europe today is in a situation that "necessarily generates tensions and resentments," particularly with the Soviet threat gone, asserts Zbigniew

Brzezinski, who served as national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter. If “a truly politically united Europe” were to appear, he writes in the *National Interest* (Summer 2000), then indeed “a basic shift in the distribution of global power” would occur, with far-reaching consequences for America’s position in the world. But that will not happen anytime soon, he maintains, because the EU does not—not yet, at least—inspire the political commitment necessary for true political unity: “As of now, and for the foreseeable future . . . no ‘European’ is willing to die for ‘Europe.’” Most Europeans, he adds, are “unwilling . . . even to pay for Europe’s security.” Walker, too, sees “not the slightest sign that Europe’s taxpayers are prepared to pay more” for defense than they currently do. For any major mission, the planned European rapid reaction force would still rely heavily on NATO assets—thus effectively giving the United States a veto over the operation.

Though some dream of a unified Europe that will be a match for America, most Europeans regard unification in a more pragmatic, less idealistic way than Europe’s “founding fathers” did in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Brzezinski says. “European ‘integration’—largely a process of regulatory standardization—has become the alternative definition of unification.” Since the leading states in the EU each still insist on sovereignty in foreign policy, he observes, movement toward political unity is unlikely to accelerate. Nor can anti-Americanism provide the needed impetus, since “most Europeans do not subscribe to it.” As Walker notes, even the much-maligned Disneyland outside Paris has proven popular and profitable.

The EU, meanwhile, has been finding it hard to maintain internal unity. It has been paralyzed by indecision over enlargement and other fundamental issues, and the euro has suffered an embarrassing slide in value against the dollar since its debut last year.

Most of the reaction in Europe and elsewhere to American preeminence is only to be expected, quite in accord with classic “balance-of-power” theory, says Rodman, “and much of it is, in fact, healthy. For our allies in particular, the end of the Cold War is an opportunity to restore some balance to a relationship

of dependency. Such relationships are by their nature corrosive, breeding resentments on both sides.” The U.S. Congress, which has long complained about America bearing too much of the common burden, should hardly object to more European self-reliance.

Most Americans “do not see Europe threatening American vital interests,” notes Joseph S. Nye, Jr., dean of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. “On the contrary,” he writes in *International Affairs* (Jan. 2000), “as recent polls show, [they] see a united Europe itself as a vital interest . . . [and] better than the alternatives. A united Europe has the potential to clash periodically with American interests, but a Europe riven by internecine antagonisms would pose a far greater set of problems.” Europe also, of course, can be a welcome partner “in dealing with global challenges.”

“However reluctant some of America’s allies may be to trumpet the fact,” says François Heisbourg, chairman of the Geneva Center for Security Policy, writing in *Survival* (Winter 1999–2000), “leaders and, to varying degrees, public opinion in allied countries have a fairly clear perception of America’s role as a key element of what measure of international order may exist . . . [and] the only credible ultimate guarantor of that order.”

The U.S. military, observes Walker, “could quite probably take on all of the rest of the world’s military forces at the same time and beat them with ease. And so it should, given that the United States spends more on defense than the next nine biggest military powers combined. This would only be a problem if the United States showed a desire to achieve such a triumph, which it does not, or to claim the spoils by acting as if it had already done so.”

What, then, do Europeans want? “Some respect,” says Walker, “rather more consultation, and some American reassurance that they will be treated as allies and partners rather than as satellites. Traditionally in NATO, American diplomats and soldiers have been rather good at [such treatment].”

Despite “significant strains,” concludes Nye, the forecast is for continued transatlantic bickering but no divorce.