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"Images of Europe in U.S. Foreign Policy: A Critical Overview of the Crucial Alliance to a Sustainable Cooperation in the Atlantic Area"

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We are currently traversing a sustained period of creative disorder in the international political system.

Since 1989 many analysts and political scientists, accompanied by current and former leaders, have tried to articulate the major trends of the global shift that is driving our world vision and changing our previous certainties into doubts and unforeseen perils.

Almost all the structures we relied upon in the past, from institutions to conceptual devices and methods, are changing in terms of shape and content. This instability has given rise to both enlightened dreamers and prophets of doom. Many feel the moment has arrived to decree the "Perpetual Peace" among the different families of mankind, or, alternatively, to warn public opinion in all corners of our narrow planet about the contents emerging from the various Pandora's boxes that someone forgot to lock in the recent or remote past.

In times of profound change it is a worthwhile exercise to identify the critical relationships built into the international political system that are likely to remain constant due to structural factors.

I think that the role played by the Atlantic as a crucial bridge for American-European relations belongs to that category of complex

phenomena that have long and lasting roots and hence will not be shaken or put aside even under the most dramatic revolutionary or evolutionary changes in Western Hemispheric political affairs.

I would like to explore a couple of reasons why the Atlantic will remain important as a structural link -- not only in American-European relations but also in the world vision of the United States.

To begin I would like to trace a short critical and historical review of the five major North American representations of Europe as a political entity. To provide a solid basis for my personal interpretation, I have tracked the different "ideas of Europe" (in a broad interpretation of Max Weber's "ideal types") that we find in the documents and positive strategic steps that embody U.S. foreign policy, which is the pivotal constitutional responsibility of the federal government.

Secondly I will tackle the most recent signs that indicate the permanence of U.S. interest both in the Atlantic and in Europe. The amazing geopolitical earthquake of the last decade that drove the U.S. even more into the heart of world politics served to enhance rather than diminish U.S. interest on the Atlantic area.

On the one hand, we must acknowledge that the U.S. today has more freedom to make its own decisions without the physical pressures of a clear enemy. In that sense, the U.S. is also free to cut some old ties and probably to suffer bitter consequences in the long-term as a result of this shortsightedness.

However, I believe that the likelihood that the U.S. would commit such an error in terms of evaluating the vital role played by both the Atlantic and European areas is so remote as to be near zero.

Five Historical U.S. Visions of Europe

It is almost unnecessary to remember that a large part of the building process of the American identity as a nation was done in a profound cultural dialogue with the plural cultural heritage of different European streams of immigration. Nevertheless, in the realm of foreign policy a clear distinction was made between cultural background and the sphere of the material American interests. Even the more idealistic of American presidents and other prominent policymakers never lost contact with the

'Realpolitik' rules of the game prevailing in European internal and external affairs.

Let us examine the chief characteristics of the five proposed U.S. visions of Europe and their corresponding dates:

1. *1776-1826: From the dangerous vicinity to a precautionary distance.* In the period between the initial battles of the American Revolution and the pronouncement of the Monroe Doctrine, the American view of Europe was dominated by the urge to defend the new nation against the intrusion of the European powers that maintained footholds on the American Continent near many of the federated states.

The second war against the British (1812) served as vivid proof that the U.S. should not distance itself from the twisted methods of European policymaking, but avoid all contact that could embroil the U.S. in the bloody European search for a new internal balance of power. In this light we may understand the Louisiana and Florida purchases respectively from France (1803) and Spain (1819).

2. *1826-1917: Competitive isolationism.* During this long period that ended with the arrival of the first American troops on the European battlefields of the First World War, America expanded its national territory and its continental influence while still trying to avoid conflicts with European powers. But this splendid isolationism was abruptly interrupted a century ago, in 1898, when the interests of U.S. collided directly with the remaining outposts of the Spanish Empire in Cuba and the Pacific. The main trend of this second period, however, was driven by expansion westward toward the Pacific: the forced purchase of California and Arizona from Mexico (1848), the acquisition of Alaska from Russia (1867); military interventions as a method to open markets in Japan (1854) and China (1859); and occupation of the Philippines, Hawaii and Puerto Rico after the defeat of Spain in the 1898 War. Europe was a deliberately distant vision in the almost self-reliant world of American foreign policy.

3. *1917-1920: The short-lived dream of a "community of power."* During this transition period a Princeton scholar who found himself in the White House due to an improbable number of coincidences ran the foreign policy of the U.S.. The result was not only the decisive push to defeat German armies but also the spirited strength that led to the first attempt to establish an international organization designed to pursue and

maintain peace -- a truly bold endeavor which many thought embodied the living testimony of Kant's ideas (G. Aillet, 1918: 99 ss; K. Vorlaender, 1919).

The Wilsonian effort failed. He was betrayed both by his bad health, which prevented him from countering his numerous antagonists, and by the persistent indifference of his people -- ever loyal to the maxim that "all politics is local." In spite of this, in those ephemeral years, the U.S. tried to teach a lesson about the linkage of ethics and politics to a stubborn European audience, largely contaminated by an extremist reading of Machiavelli's advice to the Prince.

4. *1920-1941: The estranged and distant Europe.* It is hard to find a similar historical moment in which the major world power refuses so energetically to use its power even for its own sake in an area where something important is happening. Besides the American role in stabilizing the currency crisis of the Weimar Republic in the 1920's, the truth is that America saw Europe and the Atlantic zone as being at the periphery of its foreign policy. The Great Depression of 1929 give Americans a good reason for introspection, and the menace of Japanese imperialism in the Pacific helped to overlook the danger that was brewing in Germany.

In fact historical data available today clearly demonstrate that Hitler and not Churchill was the one responsible for breaking American isolationism toward Europe. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, even Roosevelt was deeply convinced that the American war should be waged essentially in the Pacific against Japan. Only Hitler's Wagnerian sense of loyalty toward Tokyo can explain the German initiative of declaring war on the U.S. (11 December 1941) -- probably the most foolish foreign policy decision ever made.

5. *1941-The Present: Europe as a part of an imperial world perspective.* From Hitler's ill-advised decision in 1941 until the present day Americans have developed a continuous, diversified and multipurposeful involvement in European affairs. Fully 75% of the war effort against the Axis powers on the Western European front was American. The enormous effort to reconstruct Europe's urban and industrial infrastructure -- for former allies and former foes alike -- was fueled by American dollars. The shield against Soviet conventional and nuclear weapons was dependent upon the hundreds of thousands of American infantrymen concentrated at several European

checkpoints, and the numerous nuclear warheads of every type aligned along the border of the divided Germany. In addition, as a major factor for deterrence the U.S. offered its autonomous "triad": SLBMs, ALBMs, and ICBMs (Soromenho-Marques, 1985: 89-111).

The dramatic shift between 1918 and 1945 in the American stand toward Europe was due to the realization that it was no longer possible to play the isolationist card without jeopardizing American internal security in a world of new and lethally destructive weapons. The image brought home by many of the millions of Americans who fought in France, Italy or Germany was no longer that of a powerful and dangerous Europe. On the contrary, Western Europe became a kind of American protected area, or, in a more realistic way, the first line of defense against the newest continental rival, the Soviet Union.

After 1945 the U.S. became the first of the two superpowers with the military, economic, cultural and ideological capacity to re-draw the world map to its liking. Europe and the entire North Atlantic area were thereafter seen as a mere piece -- albeit a central piece -- of a much broader power puzzle. From that point Atlantic Europe embarked on a continuous geopolitical decline, only interrupted occasionally by the impaired visions of men like De Gaulle and even Churchill who either failed to perceive or refused to acknowledge the sunset of their countries' colonial empires.

After 1989 and 1991 the situation, rather than change for the better, was actually exacerbated by the political, military and ideological collapse of the former Soviet Union, which even in its best days was never able to match in economic and cultural terms the strong worldwide appeal of the U.S.

U.S. Visions of Europe for the Future

If America is now living the days of a dubious and complex "unipolar era;" if the surrender of some of the values of the "Founding Fathers" is seen by some observers as an acceptable price to pay for the exercise of a benign hegemony within the framework of a coming *Pax Americana*; and if America is now the master of an unmatched freedom to pursue its own strategies, movements and initiatives -- why should the U.S. pay much attention to Atlantic Europe?

I think that several solid reasons can be given to the above question. In sum, according to my view America needs to enhance its good relationship with Western Europe not only for its own interests in one of the three most dynamic world zones (North America itself and Southeast Asia being the other two), but also because the type of special relations that have developed with the E.U. can be seen as a kind of model that is potentially applicable to many other sensitive regions of the world.

For the sake of a more sober use of power -- which even for the U.S. is still a limited asset -- America will encourage the shift from bilateral military and economic agreements to multilateral solutions in which the U.S. will try to be the leading partner. America is interested in teaching the lessons learned through the NATO experiment in other parts of the world, mainly in Asia, but it must admit that many aspects of the NAFTA experience were introduced after studying the E.U. economic integration process.

For a short period after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. feared the political consequences of European integration. Prepared for the worst scenarios, former President Bush was ready to acknowledge the reunited Germany of 1989 as its new "partner in leadership," despite all the negative side effects that attitude occasioned in both Paris and London. Now the mood has changed profoundly, for two main reasons.

First, after the disillusionment of the E.U. performance (and especially the French and German performance) during the civil war in Yugoslavia, the U.S. realized that Europe was far from having even the slightest notion of a common strategic vital interest. Second, no one in the U.S. believes that Europe will succeed in moving in two opposite directions at once: simultaneously enlarging and deepening its Union.

Some months ago Z. Brzezinski wrote the following words about the position of the U.S. towards the E.U.:

"A wider Europe and an enlarged NATO will serve the short-term and longer-term interests of U.S. policy. A larger Europe will expand the range of American influence without simultaneously creating a Europe so politically integrated that it could challenge the United States on matters of geopolitical importance, particularly in the Middle East. " (Z.Brzezinski, 1997: 53).

But we should not conclude from these candid words that America is going to declare a sort of cold war against the E.U. From long decades of experience with E.U. achievements and misfortunes, America has obtained substantial knowledge about the political divisions among Europeans. These divisions remain so deep that the birth of a "United States of Europe" -- a twin sister of the U.S. on Eastern Atlantic shores -- is unlikely for at least a couple of generations or so. The central fear of America in regard to the Old Continent is precisely the opposite -- i.e., the risk that Europe will fragment on a large scale. The criticism directed toward a more unified E.U. is above all based on the price that must be paid by all the other European nations, including Russia, which will find themselves marginalized by the process.

The U.S. is engaged in the construction of a global, multilayer, integrated system in which it will be requested by small, medium and large powers to play a key role. The Atlantic area will be a vital zone for the fulfillment of this globalization process. Western Europe is seen in Washington as "the democratic bridgehead" for America's larger Eurasian perception and projection.

The attempt to trace the trends of future implies a profound knowledge of previous causes and conditions hidden in the vast regions of the past. If America succeeds in the difficult task of overcoming its internal temptation to fall into the trap of hubris, or to employ unilaterally its military power without an international legal framework, then chances are high that the U.S. will maintain and enlarge its dominant world role well into the 21st century. In that case we will see probably the birth of a new kind of world power style, based upon the deepest roots of American culture.

Institutions, policy decision-making, and new international codes of law will arise giving flesh-and-blood to what we may call a new kind of hegemony. The best expression for this new sort of *de facto* domination would probably be what I call "federal hegemony" -- a mixture of military power combined with political persuasion, of affirmative will with containment, of domination through the control of information flows and trade rather than through bullets, and the search for national advantage through negotiated win-win solutions.

The Atlantic area will be at the heart of this new endeavor, and I believe that if we Europeans choose to act rather than standing aside and fighting our own pitiful tribal wars, we will have the opportunity to widen

this federal scope, thereby diminishing the imperial tone of this new hegemony. Europeans are the indispensable partners of the U.S. in a world that is working to survive in a more sustainable way. In the global struggles for peace and security, for a sound environment and a balanced economy, for cultural and social improvement accompanied by fair trade, Europeans have a major contribution to make -- so long as we are able to trust more in ourselves, and to overcome our seemingly never-ending European identity crisis.

For a small power like Portugal, firmly engaged in European construction and dynamics, there is a vital lesson to be learned by studying Euro-American relations -- one we should always bear in mind. If Portugal wants to play a more preeminent role in E.U. affairs and to be at the exact center where major decisions are made, then it should not underestimate the need to sail both toward the west and toward the south: to the very heart of the most ancient of European Atlantic adventures.

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