THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE
POLARIZATION OR PLURALISM

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The Pitfalls of Polarized Thinking

Since the American revolution, American opinion has polarized around two conflicting images of what the proper relation should be between the United States and Europe. The first, which dominated American foreign policy until this century, pictured the destiny of the United States and the European nations as separable and divisible. Isolation from European politics was pursued to advance American security and economic interests and to insulate American democratic institutions from what were perceived as Europe's authoritarian and corrupting ways. President George Washington's Farewell Address, warning against entangling alliances, became what is now understood as old testament doctrine in American foreign policy.

We know now that isolationism worked as long as the United States enjoyed physical isolation from Europe, the protection of the British navy, and a favorable balance of power on the Continent. Freed from the intrigues of European diplomacy—"the pest of the peace of the world," as Jefferson decried—American energies could be directed toward conquering a new continent. The burden of constructing and maintaining a provisional global order fell to the European states.

Two world wars, a worldwide economic depression, the collapse of the Eurocentric system, and the rise of the Soviet Union as a superpower prompted an opposed vision of inseparable and indivisible security, economic, and political interests between the United States and Europe. President John F. Kennedy's vision of an Atlantic Community, shared by his postwar predecessors in office,
became the new testament of American foreign policy

The ideal of an Atlantic Community was affirmed at the very time that public interest in pursuing this objective was waning. By the late 1950s, several major structural changes in world politics profoundly weakened incentives for greater U.S.-European cooperation, although the need for improved coordination of transatlantic policies had not diminished and, in many areas, like economic assistance to the developing world, had become more urgent. Sputnik heralded superpower nuclear parity and raised anew European fears, temporarily stilled by the formation of the Atlantic Alliance and its link to the American nuclear monopoly, of the credibility of the American security guarantee. The creation of the European Economic Community signalled not only the formal end of the American-inspired recovery program for Europe but also the assertion of European economic interests different from, and even opposed to, those of the United States. The Suez crisis also signified that European and American views about how North-South relations should be organized were sharply at odds, a perception since reinforced by the Vietnam experience and Europe's efforts to distance itself from that conflict and from American policy toward the developing world.

Neither the image of divisible or indivisible interests and values well describes the parlous state of current American-European relations nor provides a reliable formula for encouraging cooperation and managing conflict within the Atlantic arena. A more sensible way to proceed in rationalizing American-European relations than one of exaggerating or discounting the identity of American and European interests and values is (1) to recognize what binds Americans and Europeans together, (2) to identify where they differ, and (3) to adjust differences with minimal damage to core values—an even with an eye to
exploiting mutual advantages from the pluralistic system that has evolved in the West.

I Focus on Core Values

First, what binds? The United States and Europe must cooperate since neither alone is capable of creating an international environment congenial to the promotion of their respective, if sometimes incompatible, interests in national security, economic welfare, and democratic values. While the burdens and benefits of mutual dependency have varied over time between these two not always willing partners, their need for each other has never been greater. There is no currently available alternative to U.S. power to deter a Soviet attack on Europe, nor to balance Soviet political influence as a consequence of Moscow's conventional and nuclear superiority in the European theatre. The presence of almost 300,000 American troops in Europe is hostage to American intent to defend Europe, with nuclear weapons if necessary. They are a more reliable gauge of American commitments than conflicting verbal assurances issued from the White House by passing presidents. We often forget, moreover, that American military presence in Europe ensures the desired outcome of World War II, registered in the Berlin accords of the early 1970s. The lasting defeat of Germany's century-long effort to dominate the European continent and the legitimation and integration of its two parts into two rival blocs.

If the European segment of the Atlantic grouping were permitted to fall under the dominant influence of a single power, the American people would suffer the loss of enormous military capabilities and economic resources as well as access to the proven political talents of the West European democracies. American interests also depend on the expansion of Europe's role in developing a viable world order, in motoring economic development (together the United States
and the West European states produce most of the world's wealth), and in preserving open societies and in extending human rights.

II Structural Flaws in the Western Edifice

These core values should not obscure the serious differences that split the Western democracies. Unless these differences are squarely faced, internal conflict threatens the fragile structure that has been painstakingly constructed to protect and foster Western cooperation. At their most general level, Europeans and Americans differ fundamentally over the requirements of Western security, the terms of economic development, and the political principles that should guide East-West and North-South relations.

Defense vs Deterrence Since the 1950s, Europeans and Americans have repeatedly clashed over military strategy and the proper mix of conventional and nuclear weapons needed for Western security. Europeans have consistently emphasized deterrence over defense. They have little interest and less enthusiasm for American suggestions that NATO be prepared to fight a lengthy conventional war. They have resisted American pressures to increase the size and readiness of conventional forces to underwrite a full-fledged flexible response strategy in Europe. Whereas American strategists believe that such a posture is more credible than the early use of nuclear weapons, Europeans fear that enhanced conventional forces and the West's announced willingness to use them against low-level aggression dim Soviet perceptions of the West's determination to use nuclear weapons and may, unwittingly, encourage the very attack that NATO preparedness is designed to preclude. They worry also that they will be the victims of a war fought by the superpowers on their soil. Europeans want the American nuclear threat to be committed at the onset of hostilities to deter a Soviet attack and minimize the temptation of an implicit
superpower agreement to limit their military exchanges to the European continent. The unwillingness of Europe's populations to shoulder the high costs of conventional forces during peacetime have also bolstered the resistance of their governments to American overtures to strengthen NATO's nonnuclear arms.

The NATO proposal to install 572 cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe deepens the split between the U.S. and Europe in still other ways. Former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was first to call attention to the possible de-coupling of the European theatre from the Soviet-American global balance if the Soviet Union's installation of SS-20 missiles and the deployment of Backfire bombers in western Russia went unanswered by NATO. The Carter administration's decision to exempt theatre nuclear weapons (TNF), like Soviet SS-20 missiles and the Backfire bomber, from SALT II negotiations and to entertain restrictions on the transfer of cruise technology to European allies in NATO further fueled European anxieties about de-coupling.

The NATO two-track decision of December 1979 responded to several European concerns. The proposed deployment of 572 missiles closed what Europeans perceived was a gap in NATO's deterrence posture. A Soviet attack on NATO bases would presumably trigger NATO's theatre nuclear forces (TNF) and activate American strategic forces. The Soviet Union would not be spared nuclear retaliation by NATO forces, and the United States, in control of these TNF capabilities, would be engaged from the start of hostilities, narrowing, if not eliminating, the possibility that an American president might temporize or withdraw American forces in a crisis.

The other track of the NATO TNF decision was designed to couple SALT and theatre nuclear arms talks and give the Europeans some say in both. The willingness of NATO to modify downward and even retract its deployment decision
if the Soviet Union followed suit provided at least partial entry of the European states into superpower nuclear arms negotiations and implicitly hampered Washington and Moscow from isolating the European theatre in their agreements on a new nuclear balance. European supporters of the two-track decision also hoped that a NATO posture favoring a negotiated settlement with the Soviet Union would offset domestic critics opposed to new nuclear weapons in Europe. If Soviet SS-20 and Backfire bombers could be reduced or eliminated, then the deterrence gap would close itself. If the Soviets proved intransigent, the number of missiles to be deployed in Europe was still small enough that the European or superpower nuclear balance would not be destabilized, yet the TNF force would be large enough to commit American nuclear power and strengthen American-European coupling of theatre and central nuclear forces. Meanwhile, a bona fide arms control initiative would disarm domestic opponents, particularly Leftist opinion bent on a neutralist or unilateralist disarmament course.

The refusal of the Reagan administration to ratify SALT II and its determination to embark on nuclear rearmament shredded the delicate tissue of expectations underlying qualified European support for the two-track decision. The proposed TNF deployments appeared in Europe to be a part of the American rearmament effort to re-establish the American-Soviet nuclear balance that was perceived in Washington as having tilted in Moscow's favor. Cruise and Pershing missiles were also viewed in Europe as part of the new administration's campaign to substitute a war-fighting strategy for the posture of mutual assured destruction (MAD) that was the foundation for American nuclear policies throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s. The Europeans faced the worst of all worlds—a destabilizing arms race, the deterioration of East-West detente, reduced prospects for genuine arms control and disarmament accords, and
heightened criticism at home for having tied European interests to expansionist American military policies. President Reagan's proposal for a zero-option did little to quiet European concerns. The conditions set by Washington appeared to many in Europe to be too stiff to bring the Soviet Union to the bargaining table.

**Detente vs Deterrence** Besides differences over defense and deterrence, Europeans and Americans don't see eye-to-eye over detente. For Europeans, detente signifies an end in itself and, with progress in arms control and increased economic and cultural exchange, an instrument of peace. Many Americans feel that they received little or nothing from detente, many argue further that detente was a snare, permitting the Soviet Union to gain the military upperhand, to tighten its grip over Eastern Europe (Poland), and to expand its influence in the Third World (African Horn, Angola, Afghanistan). Europeans meanwhile want to conserve real gains—increased trade and access to energy supplies, resolution of boundary disputes, legitimation of the military outcome of World War II—a divided Germany—and German recognition of this *fait accompli*, greater opportunity for cultural and personal contacts between East and West European governments and peoples, and creation of a process—the Conference on European Security and Cooperation—to advance East-West accord.

Germans, specifically, have benefited from detente. Over 300,000 Germans were repatriated from the East, West Berlin's legal status and ties to West Germany were regularized, families between East and West Germany were re-united and freer contacts were permitted between the two Germanies, including thousands of previously prohibited daily telephone calls. Europeans are understandably reluctant to put these gains at risk. This attitude partly explains their reticence when Washington assails Soviet pressures on Poland, urges Europeans to
join an armed crusade against Moscow, and saber rattles at tiny Nicaragua and Libya. During the hostage dispute with Iran, for example, the Europeans responded slowly to requests for support against the Khomeini regime. Fearing Soviet intervention, the Europeans preferred conciliation over military threats or retaliation. German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt reminded the Carter administration that, while the United States had 50 hostages in Iran, there were 18 million hostages in East Germany.

**Economic Development**  
Economic interdependence between Europe and the United States should not be confused with the notion of identical economic interests or a singular view about how joint interests should be promoted. The range and significance of the issues dividing Europe and the United States over economic policy is formidable—and growing. A glance at the European-American agenda suggests the dimensions of the gulf. First, there's the question of economic philosophy. Europe forms a major trading bloc at odds with the free trade perspective that has dominated American trade thinking since World War II. The European preferential system was tolerated—even encouraged—by American administrations during the 1950s and 1960s as a vehicle of European unity. A partial trade-off was struck between a unified Europe and a global economic order based on liberal trading principles. Now that European unity no longer appears in the immediate offing, the United States faces a powerful trading bloc, potentially adverse to its economic interests, with no compensating movement toward European political unity. American products, like foodstuffs, have to vault discriminatory European tariffs or quota barriers. They also experience greater difficulty than before in penetrating markets outside of Europe because of preferential arrangements between developing states and the European Community (EC).
Europe must trade to stay alive. For the major EC states (Germany, Italy, France, and Britain) total trade (exports and imports) is valued at over 40 percent of GNP. For some of the smaller states (Benelux) it is over 85 percent. The comparable figures for the United States is around 20 percent (but rising).

These figures suggest some of the underlying reasons why Washington and European capitals disagree over trade policy toward Eastern Europe. The U.S. tends to use trade as a political club over the Soviet Union whether in denying grain under the Carter administration or in restricting technology under the Reagan regime. Europeans want more trade with the East to promote detente and their economic interests. The West European share of the Eastern bloc market is about 30 percent, the American portion is a tenth of this level. It is no wonder then that Europeans refused to accede to American demands to cancel the multi-billion oil pipeline contract with the Soviet Union. In exchange for Russian natural gas, countries, like France and Germany, will meet up to 15 percent of their energy needs—no serious threat to their national security if Soviet sources are cut off. Meanwhile, trade flows will swell between the two Europes. Increased trade is also a key to Eastern Europe's long-term liquidation of its foreign debts. Almost 90 percent of East Europe's debt is owed to Western Europe. Only about five percent is held in the United States.

American-European competition in high technology markets should also be noted. These include nuclear energy, avionics and space, electronics, and arms. All of these areas have significant security dimensions. All also represent important advanced technology sectors whose prospects for long-term growth appear bright. For example, Europeans view American nuclear proliferation policy or restrictions on high technology trade with Eastern Europe as efforts to limit the development of European technology and industry. Having broken the U.S.
monopoly in civilian nuclear energy, Europe is not prepared to relinquish lucrative markets in the developing world to conform either to American security requirements or economic interests. Sales of electronic equipment to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have not been welcomed in Washington. There is also little sympathy in Washington for European arms sales to Middle East Arab states, like Libya or Iraq, to finance needed oil imports. Nor have European efforts to break the American hold on the world civilian aircraft market been viewed with equanimity. Witness the legal battles over Concorde's entry into American airspace and the application of technical restrictions on purchases of the European Airbus by American airlines. Atlantic tensions over technology transfers reflect more than differences over strategies in dealing the Eastern bloc. At stake, too, are the rate and size of domestic economic growth, levels of employment, and social stability—factors whose value depends significantly on increasing a nation's share of the world market for advanced technology products and services.

Organizing the World

Americans also tend to forget how quickly the world has changed for Europeans. World War II and decolonization destroyed the Eurocentric system. Within the short breath of a lifetime that fragile system has been replaced by a new constellation of power centers, including two superpowers, the developing world, and new centers of economic productivity, like Japan, and West Europe itself as an incipient polity. Europe's political fall, with its attendant feelings of psychological displacement, still grates on European leaders and is a source, admittedly of less force today than at the height of decolonization, of U.S.-European frictions.

More substantive are disagreements over the principles that should guide the future organizations of nation-state relations and the role of military
force in creating a tolerable world order. On the first score, American policy has tended to view the struggle with the Soviet Union as an ideological battle of global proportions. Conflicts in the developing world—the African Horn, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and, more recently, Central America—have been seen through the prism of a struggle against Communist expansionism. Europeans are no less interested than many developing states in keeping the superpower struggle out of the Third World. They have also been more accommodating than either superpower to ideological pluralism. Much to Washington's annoyance, France cultivates the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and condemns Pinochet's Chile. European states are also more disposed to deal with radical regimes, like Khaddafy's Libya and Khomeini's Iran, partly because of dependency on Persian Gulf oil (57% of Persian Gulf oil goes to Western Europe to fill approximately 30 percent of its oil needs against 30 and 5 percent, respectively, for the U.S.).

On the score of intervention, Europeans are wary of American use of military force in the developing world. With some justification, they believe that such moves polarize the world into two camps, touch off superpower-sponsored arms races, and increase the changes of global conflagration arising from a local conflict whose sources may be unrelated to the superpower struggle. These considerations explain further European temporizing over Afghanistan and the African Horn, sympathy for the Arab cause over Israel, and criticism of American proposals, like the Rapid Deployment Force, to counter Soviet military expansion in the developing world.

III  Pluralism at Work

It is easy to become obsessed with Western division. There's much to be worried about. Predictions about the West's coming demise, however, may be
The Western democracies defeated Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, mounted a successful defense against the Soviet Union, managed, albeit infelicitously, the decolonization of the developing world, and spurred a level of economic growth unparalleled in history. West Germany and Japan have joined the ranks of the democracies. India, Israel—now Spain and Portugal—are counted among the friends of popular government. Others are at the threshold of increased popular rule thanks to Western aid. These impressive achievements owe their success to a shared recognition of what binds, not divides, the West. It may be useful to remind ourselves that Western pluralism has worked and that it can be made to work better.

Defense, Deterrence, and Detente

Americans tend to forget that Europe has done a great deal—by some measures, more than the United States—in providing for its own defense. Europeans provide over 70 percent of the manpower, divisional strength, combat aircraft (much of it American made), and tanks for the central front. While the United States clearly outspends the European states for defense, the European contribution has not been negligible although below what Washington might want. The European share of over-all NATO expenditures rose from approximately 23 percent in 1969 to 42 percent in 1979. During much of this same period, European defense expenditures, measured as a percentage of GNP in constant dollars, remained stable while American expenditures declined. The United States is again surging ahead, but other countries, like France, are also increasing their defense expenditures.

Europeans have also held firm on key, and controversial, defense issues. The two-track decision remains NATO's position. European governments have drawn more fire from their domestic opponents over their stance on this issue than the Reagan administration from its critics at home. They have also run greater
political risks in holding the line. Italy is quietly preparing bases in Sicily for cruise missiles if they are deployed. The Thatcher government will deploy American cruise missiles in England if arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union break down. Mitterrand's France, while out of NATO, has supported the TNF decision and helped steady wavering German resolve to support the NATO position. It is also urging an enhanced and independent European response to the Soviet military challenge. Moving away from a nationally determined role for nuclear weapons, France is willing to station Pluton tactical nuclear missiles in Germany. President Mitterrand has also voiced interest in reviving the Western European Union. Such a move would provide a way to promote greater European defense cooperation without running afoul French objections to NATO's integrated arrangements.

The pluralism of the Western camp can also be turned to the West's advantage in dealing with the Soviet Union and its East European dominions. Western diffusion can be seen as a potential means for a more efficient diplomatic division of labor. The West European states and their peoples are the natural bridges to their East European counterparts. They have strong historic and cultural ties, interdependent economic needs, and a common interest in preventing a superpower clash in Europe. West Europe is also less threatening, partly because of its lack of unity, to the Soviet Union. East European contacts with the West are often more easily facilitated through Paris, Rome, and Brussels than through Washington. Strengthening non-bloc East and West European ties also provides for greater maneuverability for the East European regimes in their dealings with Moscow.

There is much to be said for allowing inner-European relations to proceed at their pace and to be guided by mutual interest. Coordinating them with U S
moves will neither be tolerated as a modus operandi by the West Europeans nor viewed as credible and authentically independent by the East Europeans and the Soviet Union. Fears that Europe will drift toward neutralism or fall unchallenged within the Soviet sphere are exaggerated. West Europe's impressive defense record since World War II and its current military and economic efforts caution against unqualified concern. Too narrow a focus on fears inhibits European and American statecraft in finding ways to ease tensions and to create a more favorable atmosphere for arms reductions than presently exists. Greater European responsibility for European peace is a key ingredient for managing peace in the region.

**Economic Growth and Development** European economic assistance to developing states compares favorably with the United States. States, like France and Sweden, allocate a larger proportion of their wealth measured by per capita expenditures to foreign assistance than the United States. There is a steady flow of European technicians to the developing world. Tens of thousands of students from the developing world, supported by grants from private and public sources, receive advanced training at European universities and institutes. European investment is an indispensable source of capital for industrial development. European banks have extended billions of dollars in credits to developing states. The United States neither has the resources nor the interest of replacing this elaborate structure of global economic support. While altruism hardly explains Europe's motives, the fact remains that there is no readily available substitute for the stabilizing role that Europe plays in the developing world. It keeps these nations and their markets open and accessible to the West and affords an alternative either to closed, collectivist solutions to development or to politically entangling dependency on the United
States

A word might also be said in favor of building preferential trading blocs if Western political and security gains can be registered. After World War II, the United States created a global security framework within which European recovery and worldwide economic expansion were facilitated. It can no longer shoulder this burden. As more of this responsibility shifts to Europe, the American dream of a truly liberal economic order, resting on the free movement of trade, labor, and capital, will have to be modified. A new economic order will have to be sensitive to the demands of the developing states for aid, concessions, and stable markets, particularly for commodities subject to wide price fluctuations in international commerce. The European Community has taken the lead in responding partially to the needs of the developing states in the Lomé accords, which facilitate access of products from these countries to the European market. Europe's import dependency on oil also encourages privileged arrangements with Middle East states. Since these preferential agreements serve powerful interests, they will not be wished away. Reconciling the competing requirements of a liberal or preferential system will not be easy. The political as well as economic health of the Western democracies, however, depends on developing a sufficiently flexible perspective and institutional mechanism, now lacking, to synchronize, if not conciliate, Western efforts to strengthen North-South ties and to improve the domestic economic base of the Western states. A moratorium on pointless European-American ideological wrangles over economic principles may be a start toward mutual accommodation. The Reagan administration's Caribbean initiative suggests that American policy may also find the extension of privileged trade and investment concessions politically useful.
World Order and Western Pluralism  The United States and the West European states are likely to be at cross purposes if either attempts to dictate what the West's responses should be to the Eastern bloc or to the developing world. The divisions within the West are too deep and abiding. Power is so diffuse and decentralized among the Western states that no one nation, whether a determined United States or a willful Gaullist France, can impose its views on the others on matters of vital concern to them. These constraints on Western cooperation and policy coordination are serious, but not necessarily fatal. We have to remind ourselves periodically of the simple truth that the very core values that give the West a measure of cohesion prompt the pluralism characterizing the Western system.

Pluralism can be an asset. It has permitted a wider range of foreign policy initiatives, a greater rate of economic growth, and a broader extension of personal freedoms than would otherwise have been possible in the postwar period through more authoritarian political arrangements. The desire of each of the Western states to erect its own foreign and security policy structure to serve its particular needs is, ironically, a major obstacle to the creation of an anti-Western coalition capable of destroying the Western alliance. Developing states have an interest in keeping a window open to the West by preserving their access to one or more of the Western states. Expanding the present network of relations between individual Western states and developing countries blocks Soviet monopolization of these relations. Greater East and West European ties also inhibit Soviet control over its satellites and, complicates, if not erodes, Moscow's ability to impose harsh measures—witness the Polish or Hungarian case—on East European peoples without paying some price for its imperial system. These outcomes of Western diplomacy—diplomacies might
be a better word—are consistent with a pluralistic international environment where national rivalries, ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences, unique historical and geographical circumstances, and differential rates of domestic economic, social and political development divide states and peoples.

No one ideology, nor single ordering principle, nor aspiring hegemonic power will unify a diffuse and decentralized international system built on separate nation-states as contending centers of power and decision without risking a self-destructive global conflagration. The United States was frustrated in its attempt to shape the international system to its liking. The Soviet Union, as the intervention in Afghanistan and earlier repudiation by Egypt of Soviet tutelage suggests, is confronted with similar limits on its power. Soviet militarism is a formidable force in international relations, but containing it requires more than a military response. Western pluralism is more responsive to the varied and competing needs of the states and peoples composing the global system than the narrow military thrust of the Soviet Union.

Keeping the international system open is the great task of Western statecraft—American and European. This overriding interest and the core values animating it are deeply shared by most Americans and Europeans. They are reflected in the reinforcing, if not always coordinated, efforts of the nations on both sides of the Atlantic to shape a world suited to their needs. The pursuit of an open system does not imply the creation of an Atlantic community, based on integrated transatlantic institutions and unitary mind-sets, however attractive this vision may appear. Pursuit of common interests and values certainly also belies well-meaning but misguided calls for a return to a simpler time when American isolationism from Europe's affairs made sense. History has overtaken old testament doctrine in American foreign policy. New testament
sermonizing has also proved utopian. Western divisions preclude harmony, but not the need for cooperation and burden sharing to preserve a fragile peace and prosperity and to nurture frail personal liberties in a world marked by indifference and hostility to these values. If American and Europeans, two centuries after the American Revolution, must hang together or hang separately, they must also learn to "hang loose" in pursuing these aims.