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## **No Time to Go It Alone; Europe and the United States and their mutual need for NATO**

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This week the highest representatives of NATO will meet in Prague for a summit that will lead to a number of important decisions. The alliance plans to set the stage for the largest expansion in its history, agree on measures for collective defense against global terrorism and strengthen ties with its partners in the East. But there will remain a critical question about the future of the American-European relationship, illustrated most recently by the row between the United States and Germany over the threat of confrontation with Iraq.

When the Cold War ended, so too did the feeling that Western Europe faced a common enemy. And while significant foreign policy challenges are not ignored, the European response to them is guided by the conviction that our present-day harmony can be easily duplicated elsewhere. We are inclined to overlook a potential enemy, and if forced to address a threat, do so through appeasement or with payoffs.

Only seldom do Europeans acknowledge that our stability and well-being would not be possible without America's help and the strength of our transatlantic bond. To the contrary, many attribute their position in the world to the success of their own "unique ways" (European, German, among others). The anti-Americanism and demonizing of President Bush so in vogue on the European left today are only comical expressions of a more general trend to which not even the European right is immune. And this heightened sense of nationalism has led some Europeans to question the shape and function of the NATO alliance.

But the inclination to sever the transatlantic bond is evident across the ocean as well. The end of the Cold War meant the close of an era in which the United States considered Europe its most important ally. The cool reaction to Europe's offer of assistance last fall is a good example of this changing worldview. American military superiority, generated by its investment in new technologies and its streamlined decision-making process -- which becomes more apparent when compared with the complicated European system -- is indisputable, and occasionally causes Americans to overlook the views and interests of others. The position of the United States as the sole global superpower is further strengthened by a belief in American exceptionalism and its enduring economic success.

America's unquestionable responsibility for the stability of the world is supported

by allied commitments in three key regions -- Europe, Eastern Asia and the Middle East. The traditional goal of American foreign policy has been to prevent the dominance of one power at the expense of others. A superficial look suggests that the task is mostly complete in the first region, Europe, while more needs to be done in the other two. When it faces a real threat, such as Saddam Hussein's regime, America identifies the enemy and eliminates the threat using tools that include diplomacy backed by the threat of military force, international coalitions and the support of internal opposition groups.

But does the fact that they employ different approaches to foreign policy mean Europeans and Americans no longer need each other? We think not. This is not only because we share the same basic values and interests that were embodied in the Washington Treaty of 1949, but, most of all, because neither of us can face the future alone.

Europe needs America to maintain global stability. Without the United States -- its leadership, political influence and military power -- Europeans and all the international institutions they swear by could not guarantee minimal stability in the world's trouble spots. The principles of European coexistence, based on a state that respects the rule of law, cannot easily be implemented in these regions. If Americans choose isolation, there is a real possibility of chaos. For Europeans, instability in other regions would mean the loss of a ready source of raw materials and export markets. Militarily, the helplessness of Europeans as they confronted the massive killing in the Balkans serves as a warning.

America also needs Europe. Military dominance and political influence do not always guarantee success; superiority sometimes can trigger a backlash, and the logic of the balance of powers could force others to align against it. A highly professional army, technological prowess and precise guided missiles can limit casualties, but they cannot guarantee political and civic preparedness for a prolonged involvement in a distant region. It is also possible that while America is involved in the Middle East another power could start flexing its muscles in the Far East. Thus, America needs political, diplomatic and military allies. Where else can it hope to find them but in Europe, whose interests and values most closely resemble its own?

The end of the Cold War did not bring about a peaceful earthly paradise. The enemy is more diffuse -- militarily weaker but determined to strike, without warning, against civilians. The highest principles of Euro-American civilization are freedom and democracy, which are not always harmonious with the demands of absolute security. A global terrorism based on intolerant ideologies, a determination to use weapons of mass destruction and a readiness to sacrifice one's own life, are reasons our civilization is in such mortal danger. The only means to face this danger is mutual cooperation and solidarity.

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