

Professor Dr. Günter Burghardt
Former EU Ambassador to the United States

**THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND THE UNITED STATES –
READY FOR A FRESH START ?**

**College of Europe,
Bruges,
26 January, 2005**

I am delighted to discuss with you today a central theme of Europe's post WW II historic process of unification – the indispensable relationship between the EU, the New Europe, and the United States of America, the New World.

European integration and the EU/US relationship are like the two sides of one medal: closely intertwined by almost 60 years of recent history and today's challenges. There would be no America without Europe and there would be no free, prosperous and united Europe without America. Together, Europe and America can achieve almost anything; divided, they risk to fail in many things. "When we quarrel we make headlines, when we work together, we make progress!"

We cannot rest on the laurels of a successful 11/9/1989 agenda, Europe whole and free. But we can remain proud that the fall of the wall and the disappearance of the iron curtain were achieved through the combined effort of American resolve and the attraction of the European model. Now, history has opened a new page, the post 9/11/2001 agenda. The unprecedented terrorist attack on the US mainland has deeply affected the American sense of invulnerability to a degree widely underestimated in Europe. However, Europe might rightly wonder whether the US has not, post September Eleven, somewhat over emphasized an admittedly terrible event with the effect of making "war on terror" the centerpiece of a hotly disputed and highly polarizing foreign policy.

The state of the transatlantic relationship is, and has always been, an issue of intense, sometimes passionate debate. Against the background of the particularly stressful four years of the first Bush '43' term, and at the start of the second Bush mandate, with the US President visiting the EU and NATO Headquarters next month, it seems timely to take stock and to look ahead. I will do so head-on, without having to withdraw behind the curtains of diplomatic parlance of the diplomat I happened to be for most of the past 35 years. Rather, I would invite you to revisit some of the fundamental features underpinning the EU/US relationship, and address a few vital questions the answers to which will shape our future agenda.

In doing so, I am aware that the interaction between the New and the Old World is a natural subject of interest for the students of the Montesquieu promotion. As the Rector has so

eloquently pointed out at the official opening of the 2004/05 academic year, this great contemporary of Louis XIV and Louis XV – who died 250 years ago - was an early European and an Atlanticist of sorts, since his famous recipes of good governance, *the separation of power through a system of checks and balances, had found its most admirable incarnation in the American Constitution of 1787.* What Montesquieu might have admired even more is the fact that a constitution aimed at forming ‘a more perfect union’ among thirteen former rural colonies, today, more than two centuries later, organizes the decision making process of the world’s sole superpower with a global reach. We may wonder, incidentally, how Montesquieu would have perceived last week’s inaugural ceremony on the steps of the Capitol building which some American non-FOX NEWS media commentators have compared to a lavish aristocratic coronation rather than the procedural constraints prescribed by the Constitution of the American republic.

Maybe, today, *Montesquieu would be tempted to update* a few of his other reflections. Let me suggest just two [and spare you the embarrassment of his pronouncements on the legitimacy of slavery which would have made him an ardent pre civil war southern confederalist]: First, on *liberty*, and second, on the *rule of law* in our era of globalization.

First: “La liberté n’est que lorsqu’on n’abuse pas du pouvoir: c’est une expérience éternelle que tout homme qui a du pouvoir est porté d’en abuser; il va jusqu’à ce qu’il trouve des limites. La vertu même a besoin de limites... Il faut que le pouvoir arrête le pouvoir.” – I leave it to you to decide whether Montesquieu would have been labeled a proponent of Europe as a counterpart or a counterweight of American power, an advocate of a unipolar as opposed to a multipolar world.

Second: Would the ‘république fédérative’ of a united Europe, in the spirit of Montesquieu, not strive with today’s United States, the ‘indispensable nation’ in the words of former President Clinton and his Secretary of State Madeline Albright, for an international order of strong and respected global rules, instead of one partner establishing his own international order, and for both

sides to show willingness and readiness for a mutually respectful partnership?

No doubt Montesquieu would have felt in good company with and found inspiration from Alexis de Toqueville - born 200 years ago - the patron of the 1996-97 promotion [which included my eldest son Christopher]. De Toqueville was the first European to familiarize a large public with “La Démocracie en Amérique”, his famous 1835 oeuvre. His admiration for the workings of the US Constitution might have induced him today to add a few more nuanced chapters.

Perhaps, we Europeans should not sound over critical. While I was delighted towards the end of my term to witness American intellectuals to start writing about the “European Dream” [is Jeremy Rifkin’s book an early predecessor of an American De Toqueville?] much still remains to be done to get Europe fully into shape. The ratification of the “Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe” is far from being a ‘fait acquis’. And is one of the reasons for so many critical comments recently crossing the Atlantic in both directions not to be seen in frustrations about the state of our respective unions which can best be described as showing features of asymmetries, with Europe often having too little of what America has in over supply, and America having too little appreciation for Europe’s achievements?

Perhaps, America and Europe might find comfort in agreeing on their shortcomings when reminded of a famous quote from Winston Churchill, the patron of the 1970/71 promotion [coinciding with my joining the European Commission as a junior ‘lauréat de concours’]: “Democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” Moreover, Churchill had this to say when commenting on US policy: “America will always do the right thing, once it has exhausted all the alternatives.”

What more convenient a bridge could there be to find our way back from the philosophical excursion into things past to the realities of today and reflections on things to come!

Today, the EU/US relationship is the most powerful, most comprehensive and strategically most important bilateral relationship in the world. The EU and the US combine some

60% of the world's GDP, with the EU having overtaken the US numbers of around 10 Trillion \$ recently. They stand for around 40 % of world trade in goods and even more in services. They hold 80 % of the global capital markets. They are each others main trading partner and source, as much as recipient, of foreign direct investment. They are each others principal stakeholder in the other's economy with the US investing twice as much into Ireland than into China and the EU investing more into Texas than into Asia. This amounts to a transatlantic economic area with transactions worth some 2 and a half Billion \$ a day, with the major part intra company transactions.

Power generates responsibility - for the proper conduct of bilateral as much as of global affairs. How therefore prevent the transatlantic political divide from growing? How to put the concept of transatlantic partnership in leadership back on track?

Europe and America are family, after all, with common roots and shared basic values. Like in any family, there have always been quarrels. Churchill used to say that Europe and America were separated by their common history and traditions. There have been ups and downs as far as I can remember back. Managing transatlantic disputes has been the bread and butter of generations of civil servants all along. As a young desk officer I recall the citrus war of the early 70tees when USTR Eberle demonstratively pointed to the importance of the 5th fleet in the Mediterranean when sending a protest to Commissioner Dahrendorf over the Community's preferential tariffs in favor of Moroccan oranges. Today, our common efforts to support democracy in the "Greater Middle East" might more easily be given priority over the still well represented interests of citrus farmers in Florida and California. In the early 80tees, one of my predecessors in Washington commented in his first dispatch, that "we are going through a rough patch over the Siberian gas pipeline issue, trade in steel and farm products and the value of the dollar." When I took up my posting in early 2000 the 'B' words Bananas, Boeing, Biotech and the Bird Amendment stood for only a sample of almost traditional disputes.

At the same time, from the Truman/EisenhowerMonnet via the Kennedy/Hallstein, the Reagan/Bush [41]/Delors

interaction up to the Clinton era *the US had been instrumental in supporting the evolving concept of a transatlantic partnership with the emerging Europe*. The two basic documents on both the substance and the mechanics of that relationship, the *Transatlantic Declaration of 1990* and the *New Transatlantic Agenda of 1995* have consolidated that commitment.

However, *the past four years saw unprecedented deep and bitter family disagreements* displayed on the open balcony instead of behind closed doors. An honest analysis must put blame on both sides, while it must also recognize differences of approach as a result of history moving on from the 11/9/1989 to the post 9/11/2001 agenda.

The first Bush [43] Administration started off by disavowing a number of international commitments, including the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court, in the run-up to the June, 2001 EU/US Summit in Göteborg, Sweden, where the US President faced harsh criticism from the members of the European Council he met collectively. Tension had been growing well before the terrorist attacks on US homeland on September 11, 2001 marked a historic crossroad and set off a geopolitical earthquake. When meeting with Presidents Prodi and Verhofstadt in the Oval Office on 27 September to receive a message of Europe's unreserved solidarity President Bush said that the dramatic events provided "a new opportunity to working together". Sadly, that opportunity was not realized. After a period of international unity on Afghanistan the US resumed a policy of unilaterally determining an agenda of "war on terror" assembling "coalitions of the willing", welcoming followship instead of aiming at partnership.

In retrospect, 9/11 had the effect of amplifying *policy mix* based, in a combination and intensity almost *unprecedented in American history*, on a number of factors which Presidential speech writers are nowadays eager to coin the 'Bush doctrine': the ideology of the neo conservative foreign policy school; the reliance on the military superiority of the world's sole hyper power with a defense budget bigger than all other countries' defense budgets combined; the missionary zeal of America called upon by history and divine providence, chosen to defending freedom, the most valued gift to mankind;

profound religious convictions of reborn christianism; a web of influential corporate interests ; an oversimplified distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, and a refusal to let 'others' having a say in determining the course of action. "Part of history has been written by others, the rest of history will be written by us" is one of those characteristic 'sound bites' planted by the President's gifted speech writers in key addresses to domestic audiences. They perfectly reflect the ideological components of a policy which has polarized and divided allies in those 'who are either with us or against us', who, consequentially, are to be 'rewarded, punished or ignored'; a policy 'allergic to international cooperation' in an early comment from Madeline Albright.

For its part, Europe widely underestimated the psychological effects of 9/11 on America and the unprecedented challenge on its sense of invulnerability. America, the invincible, had become vulnerable at home. Europeans brushed aside the neoconservative ideology as pure rhetoric for home consumption. They underestimated the strong determination of a 'reborn Christian' President profoundly believing to be led by higher authority to do the right thing. The EU, for reasons of own shortcomings, proved unable to respond collectively as a Union. The European Council, in the second half of 2002, did not spend much time on Iraq, contrary to the Treaty obligation requesting Member States to consult on international issues before making individual pronouncements, with EU members splitting apart into those who decided to embark on the US agenda and those who opposed military action against Iraq. Europe's lack of unity deprived it from any real chance to engage the US on a more comprehensive and internationally legitimized approach of what throughout of Europe we prefer to call 'fight against terrorism' as opposed to 'war on terror'.

While, as a consequence, for much of 2002 and 2003, the general tenor of EU/US relations remained uneasy and combative, 2004 has seen some of the rifts beginning to settle.

In the US, after a period of patriotic conformism and almost zero tolerance with respect to criticizing a President at war a library of publications flourished to take issue with the course of US foreign policy and its increasingly negative effects

on America's public image. From Josef Nye's advocacy of the virtue of soft power in "The Paradox of American Power", Clyde Prestowitz's "Rogue Nation – Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone" to Zbig Brzezinski's "The choice – Global Domination or Global Leadership", to name just a few, the voices arguing for America to reach out to its partners, and notably the European Union, gained force. The neo conservative agenda of preemption and preeminence, of "the mission determining the coalition" had obviously met with limits of military, financial and moral overstretch. Foreign policy uncharacteristically dominated the Presidential campaign of 2004 in a country deeply divided.

On the EU side, lessons had been learned as well. It had become clear that no single member state on its own was able to ultimately influence the Washington decision making process, and that only collective engagement together with enhanced capabilities could make an impact. Moreover, putting aside past differences over the war had to make room for the need to address together post-Saddam Iraq as part of the problems of the Middle East, a region even closer to Europe than to the US. In addition, the successful May, 2004, EU enlargement and the June agreement on a Constitutional Treaty had bolstered Europe's confidence and drive towards reinforcing its foreign and security policy capabilities. The triple Summit Meetings in June, 2004 [the G 8 Summit on Sea Island in the US State of Georgia, the NATO Summit in Istanbul and the EU/US Summit at Dromoland Castle in Ireland] displayed a new sense of realism, articulated in a quite substantive set of seven policy declarations at the EU/US meeting.

The unique coincidence in transatlantic changeovers last November now provides for an opportunity by both Administrations to reassess the state of the transatlantic relationship and to reenergize a transatlantic agenda in the areas of the economy, foreign and security policies and the strengthening of the consultative mechanisms.

Early gestures at the highest level [post election statements by Presidents Bush and Barroso, as well as by the November and December European Council meetings] and senior level visits over the past weeks clearly indicate a determination to mend what has no doubt been the worst

transatlantic crisis during your academic career. *President Bush's symbolic decision to make Europe the destination for his first foreign trip after inauguration* is a strong message directed both to allies at NATO and to the European Union as such. His inaugural speech contains conciliatory language to this effect. Although judged by American and European commentators alike as highly idealistic, again clearly impregnated by neoconservative ideology and missionary zeal, and over ambitious as to the “ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world” the President admits that “this is not primarily the task of arms”, is eager to add that “America will not impose our style of government on the unwilling”, reaches out to “all the allies” with the promise “to honor your friendship”, to “rely on your council” and concedes that “we depend on your help”. While such language seems to suggest a willingness to correct course, *President Bush would be well advised, when visiting for the first time EU Institutions in Brussels on 22 February, to join his predecessors by fully endorsing the idea of a united Europe*, a Europe of post-nationalist states, troubled by military assertiveness and the bold projection of hard power, a soft power super power New Europe which has become a successful model case for securing freedom, spreading liberty, stability and prosperity over the entire continent and beyond through the attractiveness of its unique experience in reconciliation, integration and nation building.

The EU/US economic relationship holds important lessons for both the European Union's policy aspirations and a well functioning transatlantic partnership. It has remained largely unaffected by the recent geopolitical divides and worked as a stabilizer of the overall relationship. Particularly in the areas of trade and competition policies and regulatory cooperation EU/US interaction has reached an unprecedented level of intensity that has earned the EU collective respect as an equal partner by Administration, Congress and the business community. At the global level combined EU/US leadership was indispensable to get the Doha Development Round on track, and will have to be the driving force in order to bring the Round to a successful conclusion before the end of this year. The Economic Declaration agreed at last June's EU/US Summit has set our sight on the ambitious goal of a barrier free transatlantic market, with the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, private and public. Given the overriding importance of the

transatlantic economy, the most globalized part of the global economy, such development would also be a powerful engine to help achieving the EU's Lisbon objectives.

With regard to foreign and security policy cooperation much will depend on the EU's ability to pursue its course towards more effective diplomatic and security capabilities. Only with the further reinforcement of its 'hard' power capacities will the EU's impressive 'soft' power resources gain the full credit they deserve. Of course it is also up to America to review the principles underpinning their foreign and security policy. However, that is frankly a debate that the EU can only hope to influence by getting its own act together. Here is the obvious link with the need to prepare the putting into place of the mechanics provided for in the Constitutional Treaty under ratification.

More fundamentally, *EU/US partnership will require a better meeting of the minds on strategy.* Post 9/11 the dominating agendas of our respective political systems are different, as illustrated by the gap between the September 2002 US National Security Strategy based on the doctrine of pre-emption and pre-eminence, and the December 2003 EU Security Strategy based on effective multilateralism.

Our '1989' agenda is about building peace by the sharing of sovereignty internally, and about nation building abroad, with internationally legitimated use of force as a matter of last resort. Our agenda rests on the bitter experience of centuries of wars which have brought Europe close to destruction. *The US 2001 agenda* is about seeking [almost absolute] security by exercising on a global basis what America considers its sovereign rights. Iraq was a war 'of choice'. Simply speaking the peoples of Europe feel themselves at peace, reconciled, seeking to export stability across their borders, while America feels itself at war.

These differences are profound, however, they are not insurmountable. It is the task of statesmanship across the Atlantic, during the lifetime of the freshly installed Administrations on both sides, to demonstrate they are not. Fighting the root causes of terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, dealing with the world's many trouble spots, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, to

Iraq, Iran and North Korea, engaging in nation building where States have failed or have been destroyed, stabilizing civilizations to avoid a clash of civilizations, solving the Israeli/Palestinian problem after so many missed opportunities, all this and more requires the combined and complementary blend of European and American power and capability. Although transatlantic partnership will necessarily show some degree of asymmetry, it must be based on mutual respect and the realistic assumption that agreement will not always be possible on all issues and that therefore any disagreements must be managed equally respectfully.

There have been regular suggestions that such management should be based on a strengthened set of bilaterally agreed rules, of developing the present mechanisms, the Transatlantic Declaration of 1990 and the New Transatlantic Agenda of 1995 into some form of Treaty. Perhaps the historic entry into force of the EU Constitution could present such an opportunity, if not for a formal treaty, for a further strengthening of the political commitment to EU/US Partnership. Such a commitment could take the form of a binding document, maybe entitled 'Transatlantic Declaration of Interdependence', recalling President Kennedy's visionary address of 4 July 1962 that foresaw the day when Europe could engage in a 'partnership of equals'.

Finally, let me share with the next generation of decision makers in this room the sense that we truly are at a moment of profound changes in history. We are used to deal with linear changes. They sometimes build up into something big and unpredictable. 1989 and 2001 represent examples of such sudden and unexpected changes. During most of its history Europe - on its downside - was the source of wars, sometimes totalitarian doctrines, bringing destruction, oppression and desperation. Tens of millions of Europeans emigrated to seek 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' in the New World, the chosen land, America. Today, Americans, from Charles Kupchan's book 'The End of the American Era' to Tom Friedman's 'I love the European Union' op-ed in the New York Times, to Jeremy Rifkin's very recent book 'The European Dream', start to discover the New Europe, a role model for the world, a form of multilateral governance which leaves behind the order of the Westphalian settlement of 1648, the notion of

absolute state sovereignty; a model better prepared to approach the realities of accelerating globalization.

Let us be proud to be ‘present at the creation’ [the title of Dean Acheson’s, President Trumans’ Secretary of State’s, 1969 memoirs], at the beginning of a new phase in history, post 1989, and let us be humble at the same time to concede that the 2001 agenda is of a magnitude only the combined efforts of the “New World’ and the ‘New Europe’ can master together.

<<< >>>

Following the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 Benjamin Franklin wrote to a European friend: ‘I send you the proposed new federal Constitution...If it succeeds, I do not see why you might not in Europe form a Federal Union and one great republic of all different states and kingdoms.’ Franklin who became the first American envoy to France, was obviously aware of Montesquieu’s ideas on a European ‘république fédérative’. Comme recteur Demaret nous l’a rappelé en Novembre dernier, Montesquieu, quand il se référait a` l’Europe comme cadre de pensée et parfois comme cadre politique écrivait:

‘L’Europe n’est plus qu’une Nation composée de plusieurs, la France et l’Angleterre ont besoin de la Pologne et de la Moscovie, comme une de leurs Provinces a besoin de l’autre...’!

Dear students, it must be your generation’s purpose to pursue the transformation of the ‘European dream’ into Europe’s irreversible reality. In doing so you should not hesitate to take inspiration from the ‘can do’ spirit on the other side of the Atlantic. As one European commentator remarked after President Bush’s inaugural speech: “A bit of the New World’s sometimes exuberant idealism and traditional patriotism would do the Old World good and help it to renew itself”.