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Bridging the Transatlantic Counterterrorism Gap

Rhetorically, the United States and Europe are united in their opposition to terrorism. Governments on each side of the Atlantic frequently assert that counterterrorism cooperation is essential to solving the problem, and they join together to condemn outrages such as the July 7, 2005, attacks in London. In terms of doctrine, the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002 and European Union Security Strategy of 2003 are remarkably similar in their descriptions of the new threats to national security. Both highlight international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and ungoverned spaces that might foster terrorism as the central security concerns for the future.[1]

Day-to-day cooperation between the United States and most European countries proceeds apace and is often effective. Although officials on each side have complaints, they are generally satisfied. As the *Washington Post* reported in 2005, the CIA's multinational counterterrorist intelligence center is located in Paris and has been a critical component of at least 12 operations, including the capture of one of Al Qaeda's most important European operatives.[2] Indeed, during the transatlantic crisis regarding Iraq, the practical necessity of counterterrorism cooperation helped preserve U.S. relations with Germany and France.

Yet, counterterrorism cooperation is not purely a day-to-day activity. Sustaining effective cooperation requires an understanding of each side's interests in counterterrorism and a respect for the strategies that follow from

those interests. Observed from that type of strategic perspective, the United States and Europe disagree on some basic issues, including the precise nature of the terrorist threat, the best methods for managing this threat, and the root causes of terrorism. Perhaps more importantly, they do not understand or accept each other's positions.

Of course, in the United States and Europe, there are many internal divisions on the appropriate strategies for counterterrorism. In Europe especially, each country has its own threats, its own threat perceptions, and its own approach to terrorism, and there is no central government capable of unifying those strategies. When compared and contrasted with the U.S. approach, however, internal divisions in Europe and the United States fade in significance.

> The United States needs to worry much more about catastrophic terrorism.

These distinct approaches do not come through in high-level strategy documents or day-to-day operations but can be seen in many of the policy disputes that the United States and Europe have over counterterrorism. European officials and commentators, for example, have criticized the U.S. tendency to resort to the language of war and in particular the use of the neologism "war on terror."[3] Similarly, Americans and Europeans often disagree about what constitutes a legitimate political or charitable activity and what constitutes support for a terrorist group. Thus, according to Cofer Black, then the Department of State's counterterrorism coordinator, "[d]iffering [U.S. and European] perspectives on the dividing line between legitimate political or charitable activity and support for terrorist groups similarly clouds the picture. The EU as a whole, for example, has been reluctant to take steps to block the assets of charities linked to Hamas and Hizballah, even though these groups engage in deadly terrorist attacks and their 'charitable' activities help draw recruits."[4] The Europeans are much more hesitant to label such groups, Hizballah in particular, as terrorists because they fear the instability that might result. In February 2005, an EU official summed up this view: "This is a difficult issue because Hizballah has military operations that we deplore, but Hizballah is also a political party in Lebanon.… Can a political party elected by the Lebanese people be put on a terrorist list? Would that really help deal with terrorism?"[5]

Of course, the most dramatic expression of the differences was the distinct views that each side took on the 2003 war in Iraq. For Americans, overthrowing the Ba'ath regime and fostering a democratic Iraq was a critical component of the struggle to defeat terrorism. It is, in President George W. Bush's words, "the central front in the war on terror."[6] Europeans tended to believe that the conflict would contribute to the instability and enmity

that foster terrorism and possibly bring Islamist terrorism to their doorstep. "People in France and more broadly in Europe," wrote French ambassador to the United States Jean-David Levitte, "fear that a military intervention could fuel extremism and encourage [Al] Qaeda recruitment."[7] As French president Jacques Chirac said in a February 2003 interview, war in Iraq risked creating "a large number of little [Osama] bin Ladens."[8]

The most common explanation for such policy divides between the United States and Europe is that they spring from deep-seated cultural impulses that are then reduced to unhelpful stereotypes. Yet, the good news is that the real reason for U.S.-European strategic differences is far more mundane than the stereotypes imply and much less rooted in immutable cultural differences. They are thus amenable to intelligent policy that can bridge the transatlantic gap. In short, the United States and Europe face different threats from Islamist terrorism, they have different perceptions even of their common threats, and they have different tools in their arsenal for fighting terrorism. Not surprisingly, they also respond differently.

Different Threats: The Near Enemy versus the Far Enemy

The Islamist terrorist threat is not monolithic. There is no single, coherent enemy named Al Qaeda or anything else that is responsible for and capable of a sustained and coherent campaign of terrorist attacks throughout the world. Rather, both the United States and Europe face two interrelated threats. The first stems from a variety of local grievances that in some way pit jihadist groups of greatly varying levels of size, cohesion, and capacities against specific governments, including such groups as Jemaah Islamiya in Indonesia and the Moroccan Islamist Combat Group. Bin Laden's innovation in the 1990s was to convince many of these groups that they had a common foe in the United States, which, he claimed, stood behind and upheld the various repressive governments throughout the Islamic world. Only by defeating this "far enemy" could each local group realize its goal of overthrowing the "near enemy," the puppet government in question. By attacking the United States and forcing it to withdraw its support, the near-enemy governments would fall in short order. In this way, bin Laden managed to create a degree of strategic unity, operational cooperation, and priority in the fight against the far enemy. Yet, for all of these groups except the relatively small number of rootless cosmopolitans of Al Qaeda's core, the near enemy remained the primary target.

This observation leads to the essential distinction in the terrorist threat from the point of view of the United States and Europe. The United States faces no group that regards it as the near enemy, but it is the primary target of the Al Qaeda core. Many of the countries of Europe, in contrast, are

near enemies for many groups, either because of their implication in specific struggles in the Islamic world through colonial ties, geographic proximity, or their indigenous and poorly integrated Islamic populations. Many of these groups have been inspired by the Islamist rhetoric of Al Qaeda and others

The U.S. Muslim and Arab population is small and scattered throughout the country…

and empowered by the example of the September 11 and subsequent attacks, but they are nonetheless focused on a near enemy. With the possible exception of the United Kingdom, European countries are secondary targets of those groups that advocate concentration on the far enemy. They are threatened but in a way that could conceivably be accommodated.

Indeed, in April 2004, the Al Qaeda core offered just such a compromise to Europe: withdraw support for U.S. policies in the Middle East and you can have a truce with Al Qaeda. Europeans immediately rejected this offer but not simply out of solidarity with the United States.[9] They also did so because they understood that Al Qaeda had little ability to carry out its side of the bargain and to constrain the near-enemy–focused groups that threaten Europe. Al Qaeda controls its own members but not local groups such as the perpetrators of the Madrid attacks. Nonetheless, the truce offer demonstrates that Europe could conceivably accommodate the Al Qaeda core.

In short, Washington faces a wounded but global foe, constantly plotting to violate the sanctuary of the American homeland, whereas European states worry more about the Islamist ideology inspiring local groups. Of course, in practice it is often difficult to distinguish between near-enemy– and far-enemy–focused groups. There is a great deal of overlap in their membership and logistics, as well as shared training and information exchanges between them. Groups such as Algeria's Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat have factions that advocate both strategies. Yet, the essential distinction remains: near-enemy groups have as a first priority their struggle against local governments. In contrast, far-enemy groups prioritize the struggle against the United States.

This distinction in the enemy's location leads immediately to a distinction in the type of terrorist attacks that each side can expect. The United States needs to worry much more about catastrophic terrorism that conceivably makes use of WMD because far-enemy groups tend to be more highly trained and more technical. More importantly, they are more nihilistic and have little interest in accommodation with the enemy. Similarly, they are less attached to any specific social context or constituency, which frees them from the constraints that have typically inhibited WMD use among terrorist groups in the past.

Near-enemy groups, however, have civilian constituencies—potential financiers, recruits, and political supporters—whose opinions they value and whose assistance they need, and they often have more specific political goals that could conceivably be reached through compromise. They would thus benefit less from massive destruction that might fully mobilize their enemies or alienate their base. They also tend to be poorly trained and less capable of sophisticated operations and procurement efforts. These factors help explain why so few terrorist groups, with the notable exception of Al Qaeda, have shown much interest in acquiring or using WMD.[10]

The danger faced from the domestic population, in essence, Muslim residents and citizens of Europe and the United States, also differs strikingly. The U.S. Muslim and Arab population is both small as a percentage of the overall population and scattered throughout the country. In addition, most American Muslims are not Arab, and the majority of Arab-Americans are Christian, not Muslim.[11] These communities, moreover, are prospering; their average incomes are higher than the national average in the United States. Not surprisingly, there is little support for radicalism. Some suspected terrorists, such as the "Lackawanna Six,"[12] have been reported by their own communities.

> ...European countries have concentrated Arab and Muslim communities.

The contrast with Europe could not be greater. Although individual European countries have their own distinct mix of Arabs and Muslims (in the United Kingdom, for example, most Muslims are from South Asia; in France, most are from the Maghreb; and in Germany, most are from Turkey), all have concentrated communities. Moreover, many residents are both poor and poorly integrated. Youth from these communities often mingle with firebrand preachers, many of whom are recent immigrants to Europe. The result is an explosive combination of social unrest and political grievance.

It is tempting to ascribe Europe's integration problems to assimilation policies that, relative to the U.S. melting pot in particular, are ill conceived and ineffective. As Charles Krauthammer wrote, "[T]he real problem [in Europe] is not immigration but assimilation. Anyone can do immigration.... America's genius has always been assimilation, taking immigrants and turning them into Americans."[13] Krauthammer's critique applies to some European countries, but it fails to capture the diversity of approaches within the EU. Europe has a wide variety of integration policies spanning the entire spectrum, from Dutch multiculturalism to French assimilationism and including a British system not terribly different from that of the United States. The one element that all of these policy experiments have in common is that they have not yet

succeeded in integrating a large, socioeconomically disadvantaged Muslim population into their national polity.

Moreover, Europe's Muslim population arguably is in the process of integration. Muslim immigrants have only been present in large numbers in Europe for some 30–40 years and in most countries much less. Under any circumstances, the integration of this type of population would take several generations, but the trajectory of Europe's Muslim population is arguably very much in the direction of integration.[14] At the same time, the process, even if it is working, is clearly painful and long term. In the meantime, European states can expect that some number of their citizens will feel alienated and will occasionally take up the available ideology of radical Islam and the demonstrated technique of terrorism. There is no short-term policy solution to this problem, either in the American or European experience.

This fact, combined with the riots in France, the bombings in London and Madrid, the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands, and the furor over the Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad, means that Arab and Muslim integration is becoming perhaps the most important domestic issue in a growing number of European countries. It is implicated in virtually every other issue, from welfare reform to immigration to education, and has already become far more important and more contentious than Hispanic integration in the United States.

Within this panoply of issues, counterterrorism is far from the largest problem that touches on Muslim integration. The United States can pursue its counterterrorism objectives in relative isolation from other domestic issues, but in Europe that is simply not possible. This fact often causes the Europeans to perceive the threat in different ways. France's decision, for example, to force Muslim girls to remove their headscarves in school is disastrous from a counterterrorism point of view. France had gained some support from jihadists for its strong anti-U.S. stance during the Iraq war, but the veil issue generated tremendous hostility and was specifically mentioned by groups that kidnapped French journalists in Iraq. For France, however, the ban was part of a broader desire to uphold the principle of the separation of church and state as well as a way of pandering to anti-immigrant voters. For better or for worse, these ideological and political issues trumped counterterrorism.

The Capabilities Gap: The Superpower and the Rest

The United States, beyond facing a more global enemy, also has a much broader range of interests and assets throughout the world than any European country. It thus worries about threats to targets abroad as much as or more than it does about threats at home. Europe obviously has global interests and assets abroad, many of which are threatened (e.g., British targets in

Istanbul), but the primary threat is either at home or against a specific number of narrow locations where individual European countries have historical and current ties, particularly in North Africa (e.g., France in Algeria and Spain in Morocco).

The United States spends almost $500 billion on its military and its operations, which is well more than twice as much as all of the EU combined. These raw numbers reflect a huge difference in capabilities. Only the United States can project power in a sustained way far from its borders. Of the European states, only the United Kingdom and France can show up without significant U.S. assistance, and they can only do so in limited numbers and for a limited period of time.

The U.S. intelligence budget alone, at about $44 billion, according to published reports, is more than the entire defense budget of Germany or France and just under that of the United Kingdom.[15] Despite its well-noted weaknesses, U.S. intelligence has a far more significant presence in much of the

> Geography and capability lie at the root of the relative U.S. reliance on military power.

world compared to the intelligence agencies of any European state. Imagery intelligence and signals intelligence are particular gaps for much of the world, as they require multibillion-dollar systems that few states can afford. The United States is also able to marshal the world's intelligence services behind its counterterrorism campaign. Indeed, prominent Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri lamented in December 2002 that, after the September 11 attacks, "the entire world became a CIA office."[16] Thus, the United States can address many of its terrorism problems by acting in cooperation with governments abroad. This involves both sharing intelligence and rendering suspects to countries, particularly in the Middle East, where their "justice" systems are employed to keep them off the streets and to gain information.

This difference in power leads to divergent perspectives on the world. Much of Europe's modern history has been spent adjusting to the notion that the quarrels between peoples of faraway countries about which Europeans know nothing are not Europe's concern. The United States, in contrast, has a global perspective, in part because it can use force around the world and in part because it faces a global threat. It is the hard facts of geography and capability that lie at the root of the United States' relative reliance on military power rather than any distinct conceptual understanding of the causes of terrorism or the appropriate strategies for countering it. As all of their strategy documents aver, the United States recognizes the need for "root cause" strategies that attempt to win over the hearts and minds of potential terrorists, just as Europeans recognize the utility of military force in battling actual terrorists.

Yet, the United States' specific terrorism problem and its unmatched military capabilities lead naturally to a much greater tendency to use force, a tendency that is often mistaken for doctrine. Europeans would point out that possession of a hammer does not make the world into a nail; from the U.S. perspective, having a hammer allows you to make good use of nails.

EU institutions range from fledgling to pathetic when it comes to counterterrorism.

Perhaps the biggest reflection of this difference in capabilities is Washington's ability to target terrorist sanctuaries abroad. Although modern jihadists are able to exploit the Internet and lax law enforcement to operate from Europe and other advanced Western countries, nothing beats having a sanctuary in which to openly plan, train, recruit, rest, and otherwise sustain the burden of running a major terrorist organization. The United States demonstrated the capability to destroy sanctuaries par excellence when it overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001. In a matter of months, the United States was able to project force thousands of kilometers away from the sea, gaining bases and access by working with new allies in Central Asia and reinvigorating its alliance with Pakistan, something only a superpower can do with such speed and success. On arriving in Afghanistan, the United States bolstered the long-suffering domestic military opposition to the Taliban with air power and Special Operations forces; within weeks of the initial deployment, the Taliban crumbled.[17] The ease of this overthrow in hindsight obscures the fact that, for any other military, this would have been essentially impossible.

European powers in the past have tried to target sanctuaries abroad, but their efforts were limited to fairly feeble attempts at coercion or diplomatic suasion. An Afghanistan-like option was never really on the table. In the 1980s, France launched a series of raids in Lebanon and even bombed Damascus after a series of Hizballah-linked attacks on French targets in Lebanon and France itself, but these efforts failed. In the 1990s, France tried to stop terrorism emerging from Algeria by pressing the Algerian government, a policy France abandoned when it realized it had little sway in Algiers. In both cases, the problem was not a lack of French will but rather a lack of capabilities.

The contrast between the U.S. experience in Afghanistan and the French failures highlights why the Europeans have made a virtue out of necessity and have concentrated on fighting terrorism at home. Because their militaries are inadequate and their diplomacy weak, they rely more on using law enforcement and intelligence services to fight terrorism on their own soil rather than abroad.

One Nation versus One Union

In addition to being able to act decisively abroad, the United States is also much better able to marshal its power at home. Famously, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger derided the idea of Europe as a diplomatic partner by asking for its phone number. Although European integration has made enormous strides since the 1970s—there is now a "phone number" on issues such as the value of the euro or agricultural price supports—on counterterrorism issues, Kissinger's jibe remains accurate. Almost all operational coordination remains bilateral or, rarely, occurs among a small, ad hoc group of interested countries.

The European Council, Europol, Eurojust, and the other EU institutions range from fledgling to pathetic when it comes to counterterrorism. In interviews conducted in 2005, most officials dismissed these EU institutions out of hand. One senior French intelligence official remarked that these "people talk but they don't act" while a British official dryly noted that the EU does not do much well and that giving it responsibility for counterterrorism would dramatize its many weaknesses. The EU counterterrorism coordinator, appointed with much ceremony after the Madrid attacks in March 2004, has little power to compel cooperation. There are myriad initiatives to strengthen these institutions, but none appear to have the momentum to produce major changes. One German terrorism expert cynically summed up this view, declaring that "European counterterrorism will improve … after about three more attacks."[18]

With no European-level coordination, it is difficult for European states to work together to coordinate all of the various information and institutions necessary to prevent terrorist attacks. According to one German intelligence official, "[t]he problem with intelligence in Europe is that we are far too bureaucratic and fragmented across borders…. The extremists also move relatively freely across borders. In this sense, ironically, they are more European than we are."[19] Two Irish Republican Army suspects under surveillance in France, for example, crossed the unguarded and often unmarked border into Belgium and then traveled on to the Netherlands. To continue surveillance, the French had to work with the Belgians and the Dutch. All had different rules for what constitutes legal surveillance. In addition, Dutch intelligence had no nighttime surveillance capability and lost the trail of the Irish suspects.[20] This problem is even more acute when there is no ongoing surveillance. One German expert told us that if a suspect moves from the United Kingdom or France to Bavaria, they probably would not know, as records are often not exchanged and the rules on such matters are not fixed.

As these examples suggest, Europe is a prisoner to the least motivated and least capable member. Belgium, for example, seemed largely unconcerned

about terrorism before the September 11 attacks. Not surprisingly, in the 1990s Belgium became a center for terrorists, where they found a haven, acquired false documents, and obtained financing.[21] In our 2005 interviews, Greece was often singled out for criticism as one of the weaker states in Europe today.

European national agencies fear that handling counterterrorism on a European level risks jeopardizing sensitive information. More prosaically but probably more importantly, there is a widespread perception that working through the EU machinery or coordinating with less-efficient member countries would impede cooperation. Alas, this scorn is well deserved: the EU has neither the bureaucratic competence nor the appropriate sense of urgency to take on these types of vital security tasks.

> The U.S. political system makes Washington more prone to play up the threat of terrorism…

Creating the necessary sense of urgency is particularly difficult given the disagreement over the terrorist threat within the EU. Because the EU treaties mandate a common border among much of the EU with the exception of the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the new members, internal security is only as good as its weakest member. It is now just as easy to travel from Helsinki to Paris as it is from Minneapolis to Albany. Finland and France face quite different threats, but no European body exists that forces a common threat assessment and the proper allocation of counterterrorism resources. In the United States, of course, Minnesota and New York also face different threat levels, but the federal government can arbitrate between the two to ensure a unified response. However fraught the U.S. system is with pork-barrel politics or disputes on federalism, its problems pale in comparison with those of Europe.

The U.S. political system makes Washington more prone to play up the threat of terrorism, whereas the European political system tends to lead officials to downplay it. Because the U.S. system is far more open than that of most European states, Congress, the media, and the public have a voice on foreign policy that would be shocking to the well-heeled foreign policy mandarins in Whitehall or the Quai d'Orsay. This more open system can lead politicians to play up threats as a way of gaining the necessary momentum to act. In Europe, however, leaders tend to avoid involving the public, fearing that they will lose control over policy.

Experience has reinforced these different approaches. The United States has experienced a mass-casualty attack, while Europe has experienced numerous low-casualty events. The American mental image of terrorism is of skyscrapers collapsing and thousands dying. Europeans see subway bombings.

Both are gruesome, but the scale is quite different. Europeans, even after Madrid and London, quite simply have not wrapped their heads around an attack of the magnitude and symbolic power of the September 11 attacks, and they probably will not unless and until one happens in Europe.

Differences in Strategies

As has been implied, these differing threats and capabilities imply different strategies for counterterrorism. These differences transcend any simplistic "force vs. engagement" dichotomy. U.S. leaders genuinely believe that addressing the root causes of terrorism through a strategy that attempts to win hearts and minds is an important tool in combating terrorism. Indeed, this is the very premise of the democratization strategy that was the centerpiece of Bush's second inaugural address. Similarly, Europeans recognize the utility and, indeed, the necessity of using force against terrorism, as Chirac's threat to retaliate against a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons dramatically illustrated in January 2006. The greater U.S. willingness in recent years to use force flows more from the differences in the threats that the United States and Europe face and in their capabilities than from cultural or ideological differences.

...The European political system tends to lead officials to downplay it.

The largest strategic difference comes from the location of the fight. The United States has an externalization strategy, trying to keep terrorists out of its country and fighting them abroad, be it in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere in the world. As Bush said, "[T]here is only one course of action against [terrorists]: to defeat them abroad before they attack us at home."[22] In contrast, for Europe the fight begins at home.

This distinction is the source of the U.S. preference for use of the word "war" and the European rejection of that terminology. From a policymaker's perspective, use of the word "war" usefully mobilizes the public, but for a domestic issue, it conjures up images of civil strife and violations of civil liberties. Europeans have often pointed out that waging war against an abstract noun makes little conceptual sense.[23] The phrase "war on terror" therefore condemns us to a permanent state of emergency in a quixotic quest to defeat a technique rather than an enemy. At the March 2004 EU conference on terrorism, Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, made a point of highlighting this difference by declaring succinctly that "Europe is not at war."[24]

European objections to the phrase "war on terror" have a solid analytical basis and point out many important flaws or at least pitfalls in U.S. strat-

egy, but they miss the point. Despite those drawbacks, the phrase remains an effective tool for domestic mobilization both in the United States and Europe. That the U.S. government has chosen to make use of this tool and the European governments have not reflects more on the relative value of that tool for their distinct problems and strategies rather than a conceptual difference. Because the United States has an externalization strategy that consciously seeks and even largely is able to separate the foreign from the domestic, use of the word "war" is not only possible but serves to reinforce that distinction. Because the Europeans must fight the war on terrorism at home, the notion of war would conjure images of violations of civil liberties, internal conflict, and domestic chaos rather than a neat separation of the sphere of conflict from the sphere of society. Therefore, the United States thinks globally while Europe acts locally.

> The largest strategic difference comes from the location of the fight: externally or at home.

The U.S. goals are vast. For example, it seeks to delegitimate the tactic of terrorism under any circumstances and to create a degree of consensus regardless of the political context. As with the fight against nazism or communism, terrorism is treated as a cancer that must be extirpated. For the United States, one man's terrorist will never again be another man's freedom fighter.

Europeans seek to manage the danger of terrorism as they do crime. They thus seek more variation; at times they appease terrorists or try to conciliate their "political" wings to cool down the threat at home. Moreover, Europeans can hope to divert the danger, to the United States or another European state for example, while a global enemy is less likely to shift its focus. At the same time, Europeans will act with an iron fist should they feel the need. France's crackdown on radical networks in the mid-1990s involved massive administrative detentions, allegedly included occasional torture, and used domestic surveillance to a degree that would make the most ardent defenders of the USA PATRIOT Act blush. The United States must care far more about a consistent hard line against terrorism, as its policies in one country are being observed by its partners and enemies halfway around the globe.

Different perceptions and capabilities also shape attitudes toward the question of reform abroad. Washington is more comfortable with upsetting the status quo, as it sees the absence of political reform in the Middle East as the source of terrorism for years to come. Simply busting a cell here or killing a terrorist leader there does little to solve the long-term threat, as the jihadists will simply shift their base to another land. The hope of eventual good government, which might dry up the well of terrorist recruits, is worth

instability in the short term. Europeans see democracy in the Arab world as far off and hardly a panacea. For them, instability is the enemy. Unrest in one country today may spill over onto their soil tomorrow.

Many of these differences have come to a head in Iraq. The bitter debate preceding the war soured policymakers on each side. Today, however, the United States sees the need to win in Iraq as essential for the war on terrorism, as it will spread the long-term solution of democracy and prevent unrest in a critical region. Europeans, however, worry that Iraq will continue to radicalize their own Muslim population and serve as a training ground for its most radical members, who will then return to their soil in the years to come. Thus, the lesson for Spaniards and indeed for Europeans in general after the March 2004 attack in Madrid was that, as one U.S. commentator said, "they have now been placed on the terrorists' list as a direct consequence of participating in a war that should not have been fought."[25] American Muslims, in contrast, only go to Iraq as members of the U.S. military. Moreover, although Europe would suffer as much as the United States if unrest spread from Iraq to other oil-rich states in the Persian Gulf, no European state sees itself as responsible for ensuring stability there as does the United States.

Cooperation amid Conflict

Many Americans depict Europeans as appeasers, incapable or unwilling to take forceful action and ready to turn a blind eye to terrorists on their soil or even to pay outrageous ransoms that go straight into the bad guys' pockets. In this view, even terrorist outrages such as the March 2004 Madrid bombings or the July 2005 London bombings cannot rouse the Europeans from their stupor. In the words of former U.S. deputy homeland security adviser Richard Falkenrath, "[T]he relatively passive approach of the Spanish—and other Europeans—to the 3-11 attack on Madrid is stunning."[26]

Similarly, Europeans often seem to view the Americans as trigger-happy simpletons, engaged in a futile quest to protect against every conceivable threat and ready to bomb willy-nilly on the smallest provocation. From this perspective, Americans are losing the fight for the hearts of minds of the Islamic world even as they kill and capture specific terrorists. Even the normally diplomatic EU counterterrorism coordinator Gijs de Vries has asserted that the United States has unnecessarily increased the terrorists' recruitment pool and alienated many of its allies by relying too heavily on a military response and consistently undervaluing the political dimensions of counterterrorism.[27]

Over time, U.S.-European strategic differences and the stereotypes they spawn will have painful policy consequences for the United States. The European continent is perhaps the heart of the struggle against terrorism. Contrary to the popular myth, neither the madrassas of Pakistan nor the slums

of Cairo can churn out the shock troops of international terrorism. Rather, these areas produce mostly functional illiterates who are essentially incapable of operating in the United States. Yet, many young, angry Muslims in Europe are being radicalized. They are educated, often speak excellent English, and hold passports valid for visa-free entry into the United States. As terrorism expert Marc Sageman said, "[I]n terms of the threat to us Americans, the threat comes from Europe."[28]

An inability of the United States and Europe to cooperate may result either in attacks in the United States or serious disruptions in transatlantic economic links. Commentators such as Reuel Marc Gerecht and members of Congress such as Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) and Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) have already pointed to the possibility of suspending the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which allows about 13 million visa-free visits across the Atlantic each year, unless European countries tighten their internal security procedures.[29] The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that a suspension of the VWP would cost the U.S. economy $66 billion in tourism alone, even before taking into the account the loss of business in other sectors.[30]

Policymakers on each side of the Atlantic must recognize that many problems stem from legitimate differences in the threat faced and relative capabilities, not just politics, European cowardice, or U.S. arrogance. Until this is accepted, current levels of cooperation, however insufficient, are at risk because the cooperation has so little political foundation. Sudden shocks, such as revelations about CIA prisons in Europe or U.S. rendition practices, can threaten the U.S. and European capacity to cooperate in capturing terrorism suspects abroad.

With recognition of differences comes recognition of common interests. Washington should want European states to focus on the internal enemy. If they do not, those radicals will kill Americans in Europe and travel to the United States as well as slaughter the English, French, Spanish, and other Europeans. Similarly, Europeans should cheer on Washington and support it as they can when it confronts terrorists sanctuaries in Afghanistan, Iraq, or elsewhere or renders terrorists to the Middle East. These different approaches at times also allow for a more nuanced treatment of the threat. Algerian jihadists operating from the Maghreb and from France should be treated differently than Egyptian ones who are part of the Al Qaeda internationale.

Europe and the United States can also pool their resources when it comes to pushing democratization. Every country in the Middle East and many others in the Muslim world need dramatic progress on democratization. That bad news is good news for U.S.-European cooperation. Joint efforts should focus on those countries where democratization has the greatest benefits for counterterrorism and stability, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine.

Washington must also recognize that, for counterterrorism, a strong Europe is in its interest. Currently, Washington usually does not care and often does not know whether particular issues are handled by individual member states or by the EU. This is unwise. Stronger European capabilities and more integrated intelligence are necessary to make progress on the mismatch between borders and the reach of European security services, as well as the widely divergent threat perceptions and capacities within Europe. According to Baltazar Garzón, a Spanish investigating magistrate, "[t]here is an enormous amount of information, but much of it gets lost because of the failures of cooperation. We are doing maybe one-third of what we can do within the law in fighting terrorism in Europe. There is a lack of communication, a lack of coordination, and a lack of any broad vision."[31]

Improving this situation requires accepting a major role for the EU, not just increased bilateral cooperation or a greater role for NATO. Bilateral cooperation between individual countries is necessary, but it enables terrorists to exploit countries in Europe that are lax or that do not work closely with one another. As a multilateral institution, NATO can help address this problem, and years of military cooperation have made it the preferred U.S.-European body for many Americans, particularly defense officials. Yet, NATO's military orientation makes it less suitable for counterterrorism, as most of the issues concern domestic security and law enforcement. Only the EU has the broad mandate to act on domestic and security issues and enjoys the necessary legitimacy within Europe.

> The European continent is perhaps the heart of the struggle against terrorism.

Yet, these moves toward understanding and harmony should not mask the need to change some policies on both sides of the Atlantic. Europeans should support U.S. efforts against the recruitment and logistics base of terrorist groups, even when this involves targeting supposedly humanitarian organizations. Europeans should also recognize the risk of catastrophic attacks. This requires more than rhetoric; their counterterrorism procedures and laws must be flexible enough to respond to unprecedented threats. For their part, Americans should support European efforts to integrate counterterrorism into the broader justice and law enforcement system. This does not inherently mean a "softer" approach toward counterterrorism. Although rules for counterterrorism can and should be different than those for normal crime, there still must be rules, as well as oversight.

One way to demonstrate this support is to make more information available for trials in Europe. Thus far, Washington has received information from European states to use in legal procedures in the United States while with-

holding its own information. This is a brilliant diplomatic success but a long-term disaster for counterterrorism. Because European states use their judicial systems to manage terrorism, U.S. efforts to minimize the flow of information for use in trials have created widespread anger. One constant complaint from Europeans is a call for the United States to share more. Because sharing is seen as a one-way street, few European leaders, to say nothing of the general populace, openly support it.

At home, the United States should also work to improve the FBI's ability to liaise with European services. Although European officials noted that they no longer believe that FBI stands for "f***ing bunch of idiots" with regard to counterterrorism, the bureau still has a long way to go with regard to foreign liaison, particularly when compared with the CIA. Washington should also try to soften some of its rhetoric on the war on terror. European officials said that many statements probably meant for domestic audiences in the United States received wide play in European Muslim communities and deepened alienation.

Adopting such a practical approach to work through differences, rather than engaging in simplistic criticisms, will enable the United States and its European allies to meet the challenge of terrorism better. These steps will not end U.S.-European differences, but they will help bridge the gap, strengthening counterterrorism cooperation in ways that will save lives for years to come.

Notes

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news/releases/2005/06/20050628-7.html (hereinafter president's 2005 Fort Bragg speech).

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8. "France Is Not a Pacifist Country," *Time*, February 24, 2003, p. 32.

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10. John Parachini, "Putting WMD Terrorism in Perspective," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 37–50.

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12. See Mathew Purdy and Lowell Bergman, "Where the Trail Led: Inside the Lackawanna Terror Case," *New York Times*, October 12, 2003, p. 1.

13. Charles Krauthammer, "Assimilation Nation," *Washington Post*, June 17, 2005, p. A31. See Robert Leiken, "Europe's Mujahideen: Where Mass Immigration Meets Global Terrorism," Center for Immigration Studies, April 2005, http://www.cis.org/articles/2005/back405.html.

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17. See Stephen Biddle, "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 2 (March/April 2003): 31–46.

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23. See Michael Howard, "What's in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 1 (January/February 2002): 8–13; Gilles Andréani, "The 'War on Terror': Good Cause, Wrong Concept," *Survival* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2004/2005): 31–50.

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