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THE FP MEMO: ADVICE FOR GLOBAL LEADERS

How to Fix Europe's Image Problem

By Andrew Moravcsik, Kalypso Nicolaidis

The European Union must showcase its democracy-building skills while avoiding moral grandstanding and its own version of unilateralism.

MEMORANDUM

TO: José Manuel Barroso, European Commission President
Javier Solana, EU Foreign Policy Chief

FROM: Andrew Moravcsik and Kalypso Nicolaidis

RE: Bridging the Atlantic

The recent American charm offensive in Europe—capped by President George W. Bush's visit in February and the subsequent agreement on a joint strategy for Iran—shows that there is some hope for warmer trans-Atlantic ties. Perhaps most important, the president conceded that the European Union (EU) is a major global partner by treating it as equal to NATO. Europeans still believe, however, that the United States could be more respectful and sophisticated in its relations with the EU. Certainly, the Bush administration must learn to listen as well as lead. But can you entirely fault the Americans? Constant electioneering by 25 national leaders speaking 20 languages, splits between "old" and "new" Europeans, and a constitution in limbo often make it hard for Americans to discern a clear European message. You have correctly proclaimed your commitment to raising Europe's foreign-policy profile during the next five-year term of the European Commission. Changing attitudes in Washington will be an essential part of that task.

Europe is widely viewed in the United States as impotent, obstructionist, and—simultaneously—utopian and cynical. Americans instinctively understand military alliances and simple free trade agreements, such as NATO and NAFTA. They have no experience with Europe's complex governance system. Americans pressure the EU to let Turkey into the club, but they would be astonished if Mexican President Vicente Fox asked the United States to "share" Supreme Court justices, trade negotiators, and agricultural subsidies the way Europeans do.

The coherence of EU foreign policy is likely to improve as the new constitution is implemented, in late 2006 with a bit of luck. But in the meantime, what does Europe stand for? You must correct the distorted image of Europe by keeping your foreign policy pragmatic, broadening your strategic agenda, and connecting Europe's experience to the larger push for democratic change.

Showcase Europe's "Civilian" Power

In Washington, Europeans are often portrayed as free riders on U.S. geopolitical might, unwilling to spend on credible defense capabilities. Without a common EU defense policy, the metaphor goes, the United States will do the cooking and Europe must clean the dishes.

It is past time for Brussels to retire the rhetoric of powerlessness. The first step in a more robust European strategy is to highlight Europe's financial and political commitment to deploying "civilian power." Europeans will not soon match the military capabilities the United States displayed in Kosovo and Iraq—and it is unclear what difference it would make if they could. A far more effective approach would be to stress what Europe is already doing. The real lesson of the past four years is that most Western progress in promoting security can be traced to less flashy strategies that are natural tasks for the EU, with its collective, incremental style of governance. European power is equal to or stronger than that of the United States in almost all forms, save for the deployment of military might. And this power is almost always exercised to pursue goals shared by the United States.

Enlargement. In a decade or two, the EU will likely encompass 600 million people from the Arctic Circle to Turkey's border with Iraq. Since the end of the Cold War, authoritarian, intolerant, and corrupt governments have lost elections to democratic, market-oriented coalitions held together by the promise of EU membership. In the face of public skepticism, EU leaders courageously decided to negotiate accession with Turkey. At least in its own neighborhood, Europe is the leading promoter of democracy.

Trade. For those who cannot join the EU, close trade relations often help spread prosperity, democracy, and reform. Association agreements have been made with Russia, much of the former Soviet Union, Israel, and many Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa—all of which trade more with Europe than with the United States. European trade with China recently surpassed that of the United States.

Aid. Whether in the form of humanitarian assistance, technical expertise, or support for nation building, foreign aid reduces human suffering and bolsters peaceful development. Here, too, Europe is the civilian superpower, dispensing 70 percent of all civilian foreign aid and dispersing it more widely than the United States. In assisting democracy building in the Middle East, excepting Iraq, the EU dispenses 15 times more annual aid than the United States.

Peacekeeping. European nations now deploy more than 100,000 troops abroad, many of them in defense of U.S. commitments, in places such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. Current and prospective EU members contribute 10 times as many soldiers to U.N. peacekeeping and policing operations as does the United States. European defense cooperation is not aimed at countering U.S. hegemony but at mustering more troops for these humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

You will find a receptive audience in the United States if you emphasize the effectiveness of these contributions to Western security. Americans on the right and the left have learned from Iraq that winning the peace is harder than winning the war. The United States sometimes has difficulty addressing the root causes of terror. Show Americans that bolstering Western “civilian power” through the EU is very much in their self-interest. Trumpet these European strengths.

Stay Pragmatic

Moralism is just as common, and no more attractive, among responsible Europeans as it is among U.S. neoconservatives. During President Bush’s visit in February, Europeans unhelpfully touted the EU as the “moral power”—in contrast, presumably, to the amoral United States. This is hardly constructive.

Stop Focusing on Wedge Issues. Complaints over symbolically salient but secondary issues such as the International Criminal Court, the land mines convention, capital punishment, and U.N. resolutions on the Middle East do little good. The U.S. positions on these issues are unlikely to change. European heckling is counterproductive and invites some damning responses. What is principled about pandering to Russian President Vladimir Putin, especially considering the carnage in Chechnya? How can Europe justify the depression in agricultural prices caused by the Common Agricultural Policy, which perpetuates developing-country poverty? And what does the inability to offer unanimous support for intervention in Sudan say about Europe’s moral superiority?

Help Rebuild Iraq. Today, the EU faces new opportunities to assist in Iraq’s reconstruction, through policing, training, and legal reform. Unfortunately, certain member states remain reluctant to make success for the United States more likely. Persuade them that using some of the EU’s reconciliation and mediation expertise in Iraq is good for both European interests in the Middle East and its relationship with the United States.

Make a Miracle of Gaza. The future of broader Middle East peace rests largely on an effective transition to a post-Yasir Arafat Palestinian Authority in Gaza, including the incorporation of such groups as Hamas into the political process. Ensuring that Gaza’s new autonomy does not lead to isolation will require carefully choreographed technical and financial aid, the safe opening of ports and borders for exchange, and tangible signs that there is more progress to come. The EU has the means and credibility to facilitate this transition, balance the perception in the region of a U.S. bias toward Israel, and increase the likelihood of a settlement.

Promote Trans-Atlantic Homeland Security. Europe is indispensable in waging the war on terrorism. The EU, not NATO, is the institution that can best secure container shipping, a likely instrument of terrorism in Europe and the United States. The EU already oversees screening airline passengers, securing loose nuclear materials, coordinating police activities, and

fostering cooperation on European intelligence—which has already foiled a number of plots directed at U.S. assets. A more prominent and public EU role would counter the false impression that Europe is not pulling its weight.

Set the Agenda

Operating in its own sphere, Europe has shown the ability to set the agenda through progressive enlargement and agreement with its “wider neighborhood.” Beyond that, however, Europe is too often passive and reactive. As former colonial powers, Europeans are pessimistic about what can be achieved in conflict zones such as the Middle East. You can help European politicians and publics deal with the continent’s psychological deficit. Working alongside the United States, the EU can question the assumptions of a bygone era and help redefine the global agenda. For this, Europe must extend the strategic agenda it pursues in its backyard—and is currently pursuing in Iran—to the rest of the globe.

Expand the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This program, launched in November 1995, commits Europe to engaging in a security dialogue and to establishing an eventual free trade area in the Middle East. Through the program, Europe has provided more than \$10 billion in development aid and loans to the region. The partnership dwarfs the United States’ Greater Middle East Initiative in scope and financial commitment. Yet the EU has shied away from implementing a more ambitious strategic vision. You should use the partnership’s 10th anniversary to give it a higher profile.

Preempt the Crisis over Chinese Arms. The EU initially signaled its intent to unilaterally lift the arms embargo on China, suggesting that Europe did not appreciate American security commitments in the region. Fortunately, that position appears to be shifting. Europe should now implement a gradual and negotiated change to the arms embargo, in close consultation with the United States (which is particularly concerned about “dual-use” technologies) and conditioned on Chinese human rights commitments, such as signing the U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Reform International Law. You claim to be serious about international law. If that is so, the EU must implement and expand the recent proposals by a U.N. panel of experts, especially its recommendation on revising the criteria for using force, strengthening the nonproliferation regime, and entrenching the right and duty to intervene, a norm too important to be left hostage to distrust of American motives. This battle may be lonely, but Europe is well positioned to explain and champion the idea of “responsible sovereignty.”

Liberty, with a European Twist

If Europe can accomplish what has been laid out here, it will be able to more effectively transmit the European version of liberty and democracy. Too often, critics of Europe in the United States get away with portraying Europe as unprincipled and without vision. In fact, Europe’s experience is a critical lesson in how democracy can exist in a world requiring governance beyond the nation-state. Remind Americans that Europe, too, is on the side of liberty.

The European experience demonstrates that a multilateral institution can be powerful and authoritative without trampling on the rights and liberties of its member states and their citizens. The EU's limited government, its checks and balances, minimal centralized fiscal control, broad democratic input, and efficient and decentralized administration are very much like the U.S. Constitution at its best. While acknowledging its flaws, Europe should emphasize that its form of cooperation can create unity in diversity and serve as a laboratory for the rest of the world.

Reacting to Bush's visit, you said that "freedom is a European concept." It is time to elaborate. Why not explain what *liberté, égalité, fraternité* means today and how Europe's concept of liberty differs from, but also complements, that of the United States? In particular, Europeans believe that political rights are not sufficient to foster meaningful democratic change and must be supplemented with social rights, cultural freedom, and collective solidarity. This concept of positive as well as negative liberties—this "European dream"—is one that appeals to the world as much as the libertarian conception that reigns in the United States. Pragmatically advancing this vision is something Europeans owe themselves, and the world.

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