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The war on terrorism

The war in Iraq constituted a diversion from the war on terrorism. It opened a new front with no direct links to the attacks of 11 September or international terrorism. Indeed, the reverse was true: it gave radical Islamic groups new arguments to gain, in the countries where they are active, more support and recruits among resentful youths. And all this before military victory was consolidated in Afghanistan.

Two and a half years later, the error of the Bush administration's attempt to establish a new bipolarity is all the more apparent, be it through an undue linkage between terrorism and Saddam's secular tyranny or the unwillingness to distinguish between international terrorism like al-Qaeda's and what are essentially national groups. Because the threat was seen as global and combating terrorism as a war, it was not possible to adopt a strategy that took into consideration the kinds of political and social conditions that open avenues for terrorist political action and asymmetrical violence.

The overwhelming majority of UN members supported the United States in the aftermath of 11 September: the international community almost unanimously legitimated not only the pursuit of anti-terrorist action but also US leadership in that battle. The decision to ignore the majority of the members of the Security Council and attack Iraq unilaterally, and the lack of credible arguments to justify the war, significantly increased suspicions about the real aims of US foreign policy and contributed to erosion of the legitimacy of the US-led 'war on terror'. And as the notable levels of international solidarity in the immediate aftermath of 11 September were not put to good use there was a weakening of public support for US policy. Thus, serious divisions emerged within an anti-terrorist front that had widened and consolidated in the aftermath of that brutal attack. It is true that Euro-American

cooperation to combat terrorism did not diminish, and nor did the new awareness of the threat inherent in asymmetric violence disappear; however, it is also true that the political setting for transatlantic relations is more difficult, and this cannot fail to affect the efficacy of international anti-terrorist action and the involvement of many EU states in the resolution of the Iraq crisis.

The outcome of the intervention in Iraq is important for future anti-terrorist action. Iraq has already become the scene of some lethal terrorist attacks like those carried out against the UN and the Red Cross, and if it descends into chaos and disintegrates, a possibility that many analysts consider likely, it could become a new HQ for international terrorism. It is therefore in the interest of the EU and the international community in general to see a stable Iraq and a successful transition in Iraq. However, this calls for deep changes: the United States should give up its monopoly of power during the transitional period and thereby create the conditions for the EU to get involved and the UN to return to the terrain in a meaningful way.

The Greater Middle East

One of the more credible justifications for the intervention in Iraq was that democratising the country would give rise to new wave of democratisation in the Greater Middle East, a region that ranges from Morocco to Pakistan. This view is endorsed not only by the US administration but also by neo-liberals who served under Clinton. It is based on the, essentially correct, view of the American Democratic and Republican establishment that one of the causes of the anti-Americanism that feeds radical Islam arises from an identification of the United States (and indeed Europe) with dictatorial regimes. It is a strategy inspired by Samuel Huntington's theory of the 'clash of civilisations', albeit in the Orientalist guise proffered by Bernard Lewis, who, unlike Huntington who considers that Islam is incompatible with democracy, views Islam as a sick patient but one that has a capacity for recovery. A position based on a positive Huntingtonian perspective is condemned to failure, however, because it is too global and considers Islam as an undifferentiated whole, and ill-adapted to specific realities, and because it fails to consider that democracy – or its absence – is a national matter above all. To the dangers and practical limitations of an overly vol-

untaristic vision, one must add the fact that policy has not matched enunciated aims: for if the intervention in Iraq was undertaken in the name of democracy, the fight against terrorism has been undertaken in cooperation with authoritarian regimes and in connivance with their methods.

The intervention in Iraq did have the merit of raising the 'democracy issue' and showing everyone the limits of a policy of accepting and defending the authoritarian status quo and only very timidly mentioning human rights, all for fear of the Islamic alternative. However, it raised the issue in the worst possible way, as it conflated democracy with US military intervention and made life more difficult for endogenous democratic actors, who are forced to address what many see as an act of aggression and, what is worse, one that coincides with the interests of Israel. Certainly, the fact that the intervention was not preceded or accompanied by a real effort to settle the Israel-Palestine conflict – a powerful radical influence on Arab public opinion – has an enormous impact on the credibility and legitimacy of the policy of the United States and its allies in the region.

In the Mediterranean what counts in terms of democratic progress is less Iraq and more the success of the Turkish experiment with democratic Islam, and of Morocco and other countries with liberalisation. The United States and the EU in particular can play an important role in the consolidation of the Turkish process and the political transitions of the Maghreb and the Middle East (the European priorities) by rewarding steps towards democracy through positive conditionality. As far as the EU is concerned, this means accepting Turkey as an EU member state as soon as it completes its democratic reforms, as well as making the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) work by integrating into the European 'economic area' the countries of the Mediterranean that are willing to protect basic freedoms and follow the rule of law: in short, those that are willing to democratise.

The European Union's role as a global actor

If one judges the foreign policy potential of the EU in light of its nearly non-existent response to the Iraqi crisis, like many other analysts one is inexorably led to conclude that there is no meaningful common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and, what is more,

whatever is currently given that name can be reasonably expected to wither away. However tempting, this conclusion is premature. The EU obviously failed to respond to the crisis in a united and coherent way, given the paralysing effect of the disagreement with the United States. This may always be the case when such divisions occur. The crisis in Europe provides a glimpse of the great bewilderment caused by the sea change in US policy under the Bush administration, and the great difficulty Europe has in dealing with the predominant neo-conservative vision and the strong unilateral stance adopted.

The Iraq crisis also saw the emergence of a 'European public' in favour of a greater autonomous role for the EU in the international arena and the development of a defence policy. This is a public that feels that the EU should act internationally in a way that is coherent with the values it defends internally, those that make European integration possible and made power politics illegitimate. Internationally, there was also clear support for a more significant role for the EU. This was particularly true of the Mediterranean: studies show that the majority of the countries of the region support a Union defence policy: they want and need 'more Europe'. The big question is whether the inter-European crisis over Iraq is symptomatic of insurmountable divisions and foreshadows the fragmentation or permanent disabling of the EU as an international political and security actor, or whether the crisis will become a powerful stimulus for reform. The Convention and the IGC were not conclusive in this regard. They did permit important advances, namely by introducing reinforced and structured cooperation in defence matters; and yet the unanimity rule was maintained for foreign affairs, which will likely paralyse a Union of 25. Defence policy also depends on foreign policy options and it is therefore difficult to predict the lessons that states will learn from their failure to address the Iraq challenge or to foresee how they will respond to public opinion in this area.

None the less, it is important to note that foreign policy is not just about intervening in serious international crises like that over Iraq. It also involves 'soft' security and international trade issues, in which the EU will continue to play a leading role and may, ironically, come to play an important role in stabilising Iraq. But it will not be as a merely civilian power that the EU will be able to shape decisively the global order or security on the periphery.

Transatlantic relations

The Iraq war caused the deepest crisis in transatlantic relations since the Suez crisis of 1956, only this time there was not the 'cement' of a common enemy: the Soviet Union. Iraq aggravated an already existing rift over the opposition of the Bush administration to key multilateral instruments and institutions like the Kyoto Protocol and the ICC. The question that remains to be answered is this: what is the cause of this crisis and will it be resolved as in the past with a new Administration, or is this one more structural and therefore more intractable?

That the crisis involved deep differences between France and Germany, the 'motors' of European integration, and the United States automatically made it a serious one. The basis for that quarrel is primarily the different views of how to organise the world – which also reflects different views of the role of the EU – but also different political readings of and approaches to military intervention in an Arab country, and its impact on the Maghreb, the Middle East and Islamic communities in Europe. Many saw the intervention in Iraq as having a strongly negative impact on the EU policy of Southern inclusion. The crisis made it apparent that although there has been fundamental consensus regarding European security, the same cannot be said for extra-European crises and, in particular, problems in the Gulf and Middle East. This is not new; what is new is the feeling among Europeans that the United States no longer sees successful European integration as essential. European fears about the US position on the future of European integration have the most devastating consequences on transatlantic relations. This is particularly sensitive now, as the EU is enlarging to countries that have a markedly Atlanticist position.

Obviously, the rift between EU members is much less about Iraq and the consequences of intervention than about individual relations and the collective relationship with the United States. As shown by the crisis, ideological 'Atlanticism' cannot be the basis for a solid and healthy relationship with the United States. Relations can and should be rebuilt issue-by-issue. A first step is arriving at a consensus within the EU, although this does not mean that a solid convergence may not arise between the two on any number of issues, including with this Administration. Perhaps more important for the future of transatlantic relations is the

definition by EU members of a common view of relations with the United States. The Iraq war clearly revealed the bankruptcy of opposite extremes: direct opposition and uncritical alignment both failed to have any influence on the evolution of the crisis.

The best game plan appears to be 'critical involvement' with the United States, not least because it stands the best chance of winning the backing of EU member states. This presupposes that neither automatic alignment nor automatic opposition are the rule, but rather that the EU is able and willing to say 'no' in concrete circumstances without splitting apart. However, whatever the option, none will work if it is not based on a solid European convergence that allows the EU to act as a bloc. It is therefore crucial to move European policy from an amalgamating 'Atlanticism' towards a Euro-American partnership.

The international system

The war in Iraq marked the end of the first period of the post-Cold War era, which was characterised by the prevalence of multilateralism and regionalism, and a new emphasis on the duty of the international community to protect populations from grave human rights abuse after the tragic experiences in the Balkans and Rwanda. The path taken in the 1990s was to construct a new model of global governance, a new multilateralism that worked to protect human rights, even within sovereign state boundaries. It was a multilateralism that underlined the importance of regional integration and was a factor in regulating globalisation. The EU does not hold national sovereignty to be sacrosanct and was therefore in a good position to engage with this model, not least because it also has the support of its citizenry, as was made plain in the Kosovo war. It is worth remembering that the idea of humanitarian intervention was born in Europe: in 1991 François Mitterrand, then President of France, supported the idea of a military intervention in Iraq to protect the Kurds.

The debate about the international order and Iraq is not about the need to create, or not, the conditions to intervene to defend populations threatened by crimes against humanity: it is about the circumstances that justify this kind of intervention and render it legitimate. Thus, the question is what kind of international order is most able to promote international peace. During the Iraq

crisis, two proposals emerged: unipolarity, which was explicitly defended by Tony Blair, and multipolarity, which was most powerfully exemplified by France.

The war has shown that unipolarity is a transitory and unstable arrangement, as it generates counterbalancing powers and lacks the impartiality that is necessary to ensure legitimacy. A multipolar balance of power system built to counterbalance the United States would also be unstable. It is a system that would force the EU to act like a traditional superpower and recreate itself as a 'superstate'. The EU will never be a superstate, not because of current divisions but because of its very nature. It can never, nor does it want to, become a superpower to rival the United States. To pull its weight in the international system, the EU does not have to compete with the United States for global domination; rather, it must assert its own identity.

The EU will only be able to operate effectively in an international system that is based on shared norms and rules supported by strong international organisations, as the Iraq crisis has clearly demonstrated. The Union was unable to play any role in the resolution of that crisis, and as yet has been unable to contribute as it might, and should, to securing peace. The EU needs a world governed by an encompassing and effective multilateral system if it is to exert its influence. As Jean-Marie Guéhenno¹ has suggested, this system cannot be sustained under the indefinite supremacy of the United States, or with the supreme value attached to independence and sovereignty as the ultimate aim of any political entity.

1. See Jean-Marie Guéhenno, 'The Impact of Globalisation on Strategy', *Survival*, Winter 1998-99; for a discussion on multipolarity and multilateralism, see Helio Jaguaribe and Alvaro Vasconcelos (eds.), *The European Union, Mercosul and the New World Order* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

