

The United States and European Neighborhood Policy

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Abstract

The EU's new role as a strategic actor in its own neighborhood represents a tremendous opportunity for the United States and transatlantic relations. The US and EU have many common or shared interests in the European neighborhood, and many reasons to cooperate. However, transatlantic cooperation will not be automatic, and may indeed be problematic. Among the factors that could impede it are: different geographical, political, and economic "realities" in dealing with the European neighborhood; different policy agendas (reflecting different priorities and concerns); and different approaches to democracy promotion and combating terrorism. If the US and EU cannot cooperate in the European neighborhood, the result could be increased strains in the transatlantic relationship, and possibly even increased policy competition.

Introduction

In recent years the EU has endeavored to become a strategic actor in its own geographic neighborhood. This ambition was most clearly announced in the first-ever European Security Strategy that was approved by EU leaders in December 2003, which declared “Building Security in our Neighborhood” to be one of the main strategic objectives of the EU (European Council 2003, 7). The main instrument for achieving this goal is the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which offers neighboring countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, Northern Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean the prospect of closer ties with the EU if they make political and economic reforms that conform to EU standards and cooperate in resolving pressing foreign policy problems (European Commission 2004).

The EU’s new neighborhood role has considerable significance not just for the EU and surrounding countries, but also for the United States and transatlantic relations. This is because the United States has major strategic interests of its own and is itself an important actor in the regions bordering Europe. From the perspective of the United States and transatlantic relations, therefore, ENP presents both a tremendous opportunity and a potential challenge. Increased cooperation between the United States and EU in the European neighborhood could yield huge benefits for both. Working together, Washington and Brussels could more effectively advance such common goals as the enhancement of regional security and stability, the promotion of democracy and human rights, and improved energy security. The possibility also exists, however, that if the United States and EU are unable to cooperate this could generate new strains in transatlantic relations and contribute to a further deterioration of US-EU ties. A more assertive EU neighborhood role could also lead to increased policy competition between Washington and Brussels in particular countries and regions.

To date, the record of US-EU cooperation in the European neighborhood is mixed. In the former Soviet Union, Brussels and Washington have increasingly coordinated their efforts to promote democratic change in Eastern Europe and resolve the troublesome “frozen conflicts” in Moldova and the South Caucasus. In the Mediterranean and broader Middle East, however, cooperation has been more problematic and the divergence of policy views more pronounced, although even here examples of successful cooperation can be found.

What are the prospects for closer US-EU cooperation in the European neighborhood? This is the central question which this paper seeks to address. It begins by discussing the incentives that Washington and Brussels have to cooperate. These are considerable, and include common or overlapping interests in a number of areas, including conflict resolution, the struggle against terrorism, efforts to counter WMD proliferation, energy security, and democracy promotion, but also the need to find new projects to validate the transatlantic partnership and repair the rifts created by the disagreements over Iraq. It then briefly examines some recent examples of US-EU cooperation in both the former Soviet Union and the broader Middle East, demonstrating that such cooperation is indeed possible. However, the next three sections examine factors that could make US-EU

cooperation difficult: 1) different geographical, economic, and political “realities” in dealing with the EU’s eastern and southern neighborhoods; 2) flowing from these, different regional policy agendas; and 3) different policy approaches, especially when it comes to promoting democracy and fighting terrorism. In the final analysis, the question is whether US security and geopolitical goals in the European periphery are compatible with the EU’s efforts to enhance security through community-building and external governance in its own neighborhood.

Incentives to Cooperate

The United States and EU have plenty of incentives to cooperate in the European neighborhood, not the least of which are a host of common or overlapping interests. These can be discussed under the categories of security, energy, and democracy promotion.

Security

One common interest is the post-9/11 fight against radical Islamic or anti-Western terrorism. Although the nature and extent of this threat is viewed differently in Europe and the United States, it is recognized as a key security challenge by both. Indeed, European perceptions of the seriousness of this threat have increased and converged with US views in the wake of the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the June 2005 subway bombings in London, and the uncovering by British authorities in August 2006 of a plot to blow up transatlantic flights. There is also general agreement that the main geographic source of this threat is the arc of unstable, impoverished and authoritarian Islamic societies that stretches from Northern Africa eastward to Pakistan and Central Asia, although in there is also growing concern about the “homegrown” threat posed by large and increasingly alienated Muslim minority populations in many European countries. A major focus of concern is the activities of so-called rogue states – such as Iran and Syria – which are accused, especially by Washington, of being state sponsors of terrorism. Many of the countries making up this “crescent of crisis” (Daalder, Gnesotto, and Gordon, eds. 2006) – although not all – are addressed by ENP, which creates the potential at least for more effective transatlantic cooperation to deal with this security challenge. However, despite mutual recognition of the seriousness of the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, there are substantial differences between the United States and Europe over how to address it, a subject that is discussed later in this paper.

Another common interest is in stopping the spread of WMD, which the European Security Strategy describes as “potentially the greatest threat to our security” (European Council 2003, 3). The primary concern is that such weapons will be acquired by “rogue states” or could find their way into the hands of terrorist groups. A major focus of Western activity is securing and eliminating WMD resources in the former Soviet space, left unprotected or uncontrolled following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The US government has played a lead role in these efforts, in cooperation with Russia, European

governments, and other regional states, for instance through the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. The efforts of Iran, Syria, and until recently Libya to acquire WMD have been the focus of joint US and European concern. For its part, the EU has insisted on the insertion of WMD clauses in its Association Agreement with Syria and ENP Action Plans for the Mediterranean countries (European Council 2004, 10). Washington has also supported the efforts of the so-called EU-3 (France, Germany, and the UK) to negotiate an end to Iran's uranium-enrichment program, widely viewed as an effort to develop a nuclear weapons capacity.

The United States and EU also have common interests in the struggle against international organized crime, such as: the smuggling of weapons, drugs, and other illicit goods; the illegal trafficking of persons, especially women; and money laundering. The unstable and impoverished countries of the European neighborhood, which are often characterized by corrupt or inefficient governance, are major bases of operation for such illegal trans-border activities. For the EU in particular such activities are a "soft security" threat because of geographical proximity to countries of concern, but the reach of such illegal criminal networks is worldwide. A major concern for both the United States and Europe is the link between international criminal activity and terrorism.

Finally, there is a common interest in regional conflict resolution. In the former Soviet space, both Washington and Brussels seek the resolution of long-standing "frozen conflicts" over separatist regions in Moldova (Transnistria) and Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), as well as resolution of the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Armenian-occupied territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Not only do these frozen conflicts threaten periodically to explode into "hot" conflict or war, but the "uncontrolled" separatist enclaves pose security threats as bases for illegal criminal activity and terrorism. Moscow also uses its support for separatist regimes to maintain influence in the affected regions and to undermine the pro-Western ambitions of former Soviet states such as Georgia and Moldova. In the broader Middle East, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to destabilize the entire region and inflame anti-Western and radical Islamic passions, while the sectarian conflict in Lebanon also poses major security concerns. The divergent responses of the Bush administration and European governments to the summer 2006 Israeli military campaign in Lebanon reveals significant differences of views and approach when it comes to Middle East peace and security, however.

Energy

Both the United States and Europe have major energy security interests in the European neighborhood, with both being heavily and increasingly dependent on imported oil and gas. The countries of the European neighborhood and adjacent states are vitally important as both suppliers of energy and transit routes for the shipment of oil and gas.

To the south, the states of the Persian Gulf (although not formally addressed by ENP) and Northern Africa are important energy producers that are threatened by political instability and the activities of terrorists and anti-Western extremists. Both the United States and

Europe have an interest in promoting stability and security in these regions to preserve their access to vital energy supplies.

To the east, both Washington and Brussels are concerned about Europe's increasing energy dependency on Russia, which could leave it vulnerable to blackmail or political pressure in the future. The potential for such a scenario was demonstrated by the cut-off of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine in January 2006, in order to punish and discredit the pro-Western government of President Viktor Yushchenko. As a consequence, the EU has joined the United States in promoting access to alternative sources of oil and gas through pipelines that are not controlled by Moscow. This has greatly increased the strategic importance of the South Caucasus, as a source of energy (Azerbaijan), and as a transit route for pipelines carrying oil and gas from Azerbaijan and Central Asia (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) westward to Europe through Turkey. The completion of the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline in 2006 is the first of several projects to bring Caspian energy to Europe while bypassing Russia, to be followed by the opening of a parallel gas pipeline, the Baku-Tblisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipeline, later in 2006.

While the United States has been the primary political sponsor of these pipeline projects since the 1990s, they will benefit Europe the most in terms of energy security. However, for the United States a major strategic benefit of these alternative routes for Caspian energy is that they reduce potential Russian (and Iranian – the pipelines also, significantly, bypass Iran) leverage over Europe in the future.

Democracy promotion

The United States and EU also both have a major stake in promoting democracy and good governance in the European neighborhood. For both Washington and Brussels, the promotion of democratic stability and good governance is linked to the achievement of strategic security and energy needs: democratic countries are likely to be more stable (at least in the long run), more friendly towards the West, and more effective partners in efforts to combat terrorism, international organized crime, and WMD proliferation. They are also more likely to be reliable sources and transit routes for energy, if for no other reason than democracies tend to be market-oriented economies, thus making them less likely or able to use energy as a political weapon. Democracy promotion, therefore, is closely linked to the achievement of other important strategic goals.

For both the United States and EU, however, democracy promotion is also an important goal for its own sake. The United States has traditionally regarded the promotion of democracy as a key goal of its foreign policy and an expression of its national identity. Under President George W. Bush, however, it has elevated this pursuit (the so-called freedom agenda) to an even higher and more visible level. This can be seen in the Bush administration's strong support for the various "color" revolutions in the former Soviet Union, as well as its high-profile efforts to remake and democratize the greater Middle East. The EU also views democracy promotion as a key goal of its foreign policy and a basis for its emerging role in the world. As it is for the United States, democracy is a key constitutive principle of the EU and a core aspect of its identity; the promotion of

democracy, therefore, is both an expression of EU identity as well as a moral obligation. However, the EU also shares the predominant US view, inspired by “democratic peace theory,” that promoting democracy enhances security and thus has instrumental value as well.

While the United States and EU agree on the goal of promoting democracy, they nevertheless have different views about how to do this, as well as different views about which aspects of democracy should be stressed or how democracy promotion should relate to other important strategic goals. These differences are an important factor inhibiting US-EU cooperation, and are discussed more later in this paper

Aside from common or overlapping interests in the realms of security, energy, and democracy promotion, the United States and EU have another important reason to cooperate in the European neighborhood, and that is the need to find new cooperative projects to validate and give purpose to the transatlantic partnership. The US-European relationship, already stressed in the post-Cold War era, has been badly frayed by disagreements over Iraq and US policies in the “Global War on Terror.” In response, both Washington and Brussels have sought ways to preserve and revitalize the transatlantic partnership, by focusing on the pursuit of common goals and interests.

Especially following the re-election of President Bush in November 2004, Washington and Brussels have sought to expand their cooperation in the broader Middle East and western regions of the former Soviet Union. This has been reflected in numerous summit statements since 2004, in which American and European leaders have voiced their support for strategic cooperation to promote peace, human rights, and democracy worldwide, but with special reference to the Middle East and former Soviet Union.¹ The European neighborhood is not only an area of common or overlapping interests, but it is also a zone in which EU influence is the greatest given its geographical proximity and existing political, economic, and historical ties. Hence, the potential for effective transatlantic cooperation in the European neighborhood is strong. The next section discusses some outstanding recent examples of such cooperation. Subsequent sections discuss factors that could, however, make further US-EU cooperation difficult.

Examples of US-EU Cooperation

Given the extent of common or overlapping interests, it is perhaps not surprising that there has been substantial US-EU cooperation in the European neighborhood in recent years. Such cooperation is most evident in the former Soviet space, and especially Eastern Europe. Increased efforts at improved cooperation in the broader Middle East are also notable, however.

Promoting democratic change in Ukraine and Belarus

¹ See for instance, the June 2006 US-EU Summit Declaration (White House 2006).

The clearest examples of US-EU cooperation have been joint efforts to support democratic change in Ukraine and Belarus. In the former case, both Washington and Brussels immediately denounced the results of the November 2004 presidential elections, claiming that they were unfair and did not adhere to accepted democratic standards. Joint US-EU diplomatic intervention then helped to ensure a new vote in December, which resulted in the election of Western-leaning Viktor Yushchenko. While European leaders such as CFSP chief Javier Solana and Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski took the public lead in efforts to mediate the election crisis, the United States played a vital behind-the-scenes role. Throughout the course of the Ukrainian election crisis, US and EU authorities worked together on a daily basis and closely coordinated their efforts to influence developments.² US and EU policies have diverged since the Orange Revolution, however; while both Washington and Brussels have provided various forms of economic and diplomatic support for the new democratic government of Ukraine, they differ over Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. In broad terms, the United States and most of the new EU members (i.e. the former communist states of central and eastern Europe) favor stronger efforts to integrate Ukraine into NATO and the EU, while other European governments are more reluctant or cautious.³ This topic is covered more in subsequent sections.

The US and EU have also closely cooperated to promote democratic change in Belarus. In an increasingly coordinated fashion since 2003, Washington and Brussels have condemned the political repression and non-democratic practices of the government of President Alexander Lukashenko, and imposed diplomatic and other sanctions as a means of exerting pressure for change. Both have also supported pro-democracy forces, civil society groups, and independent media in Belarus. Joint US-EU pressure on Belarus increased significantly following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and in the run-up to the March 2006 presidential elections.⁴ Following the elections, which both Washington and Brussels condemned as non-democratic, and the repression of opposition protests which followed, both the US and EU responded by imposing travel bans and freezing the assets of top Belarusian officials. Both have also stressed their intention to continue closely coordinating their policies to "support the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus" (White House 2006a)

Transnistria

Transatlantic cooperation to resolve the frozen conflict in Transnistria has been described as "almost exemplary" (Popescu 2005, 35). In early 2003, Washington and Brussels jointly imposed visa bans on Transnistrian leaders as a means of pressuring the separatist

² On the US and EU roles during the Orange Revolution and election crisis, see Sushko and Prystayko (2006); also Kempe and Solonenko (2005). On EU policy towards Ukraine after the Orange Revolution and the divisions within the EU about integrating Ukraine, see Gromadzki, et al (2005); Gromadzki and Sushko (2005); and Kuzio (2006).

³ Within the EU, the European Parliament also advocates greater efforts to integrate post-Orange Revolution Ukraine, including an Association Agreement that would set it on the path to EU membership.

⁴ On US and EU policy towards Belarus before the 2006 elections, see Lynch (2005).

regime in Tiraspol. Later the same year, both pressured the Moldovan government to not to accept a Russian proposal for ending the conflict – the “Kozak Memorandum” – because it called for the creation of a Moldovan federation that would preserve Transnistrian autonomy and allow the continued presence of Russian troops in the region. Both have also pressed Moscow to abide by its 1999 OSCE commitment to remove its troops and weapons stocks from the disputed region. In late 2005, the United States and EU officially joined the five-party talks on ending the dispute (also involving Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Transnistrian authorities, and the OSCE) as observers. With US support, in late 2005 the EU also deployed a border-monitoring mission along the Ukraine-Transnistria border, in order to prevent smuggling and increase economic pressure on the separatist regime. Because of increased EU involvement, Washington has been content to play more of a backseat role on the Transnistria issue in recent years, but transatlantic cooperation remains necessary to resolve the conflict.⁵

The South Caucasus

The United States and EU have also begun cooperating more closely in the South Caucasus, which is a region of increasing strategic importance for both. US efforts in the region have focused on economic, military, and diplomatic support for the new democratic government of Georgia following the November 2003 “Rose Revolution.” It has also sought to cultivate closer ties to the oil-rich and secular Islamic (yet authoritarian) state of Azerbaijan, while maintaining good relations with its rival neighbor Armenia. Washington has played an active role in international efforts to resolve the region’s various frozen conflicts, as a means of promoting Georgia’s territorial integrity and security, reducing Russia’s influence in the region, and ensuring the stability and security of this vital energy and transport corridor. The US is co-chair (along with France and Russia) of the OSCE Minsk Group mediating between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh, and is also a member (along with Germany, France, the UK and Russia) of the Group of Friends assisting the UN Secretary-General’s efforts to settle the Abkhazia conflict in Georgia. Since 9/11, the US government also increasingly views the South Caucasus, given its proximity to Iran and Central Asia, as a “frontline region” in the global “war on terrorism” (Jones 2004).⁶

To the satisfaction of the United States, the EU has also recently embarked on a more active role in the South Caucasus. The EU dispatched a “Special Representative” to the South Caucasus in 2003, and the region was included within the ENP in 2004. The ENP Action Plans that have been proposed for each of the three South Caucasus states emphasize progress towards democracy, good governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights as a condition for improved economic and political ties with the EU. They also focus on the resolution of outstanding regional conflicts and improved interstate relations as a condition for further integration (European Commission 2005). Although

⁵ On US and EU policies on Transnistria, see International Crisis Group (2006a); Vahl (2005); Popescu (2005); Hyde Smith (2005); and Vahl and Emerson (2004).

⁶ On US policies in the South Caucasus, see Shaffer (2003) and Berman (2004). On US policies towards Georgia specifically see Lynch (2006), pp. 50-54.

the EU has no direct involvement in international efforts to end the region's frozen conflicts, limiting its involvement to economic rehabilitation projects in Georgia and support for existing UN and OSCE mediation efforts, Brussels has indicated its willingness to play a larger role. The EU has also joined with the United States to press Moscow to abide by its 1999 Istanbul OSCE commitments to close its remaining military bases in Georgia.⁷ Thus, while there is little evidence of direct transatlantic policy coordination in the South Caucasus, in contrast to the coordination of policies on Ukraine, Belarus, and Transnistria, US and EU policies in the region can be considered complementary. It remains to be seen whether increased coordination will occur in the future, but such cooperation could face some hurdles, as is discussed more below.

Israel-Palestine

The lack of US engagement in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and one-sided US-support for Israel have been major points of contention between Washington and European governments since the election of George W. Bush in 2000. Since Bush's re-election in 2004, however, US attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has grown and some increase in US-EU cooperation on this issue is evident. This is no doubt due to European pressure and Washington's desire to gain EU cooperation with its broader Middle East policy. In February 2005, while on her fence-mending visit to Europe, US Secretary of State Rice declared that the United States and EU "are going to be very strong partners as we try and realize the opportunities before us in the Israeli-Palestinian issue" (US Department of State 2005). At the June 2005 US-EU summit, Washington and Brussels reaffirmed their joint commitment to the Middle East peace process, including the timely withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank and the creation of an independent, democratic Palestinian state (White House 2005).

In the summer and fall of 2005, the United States and EU both acted to facilitate Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, and in November, last-minute intervention by Secretary of State Rice helped broker an agreement on an EU operation to monitor the Rafah crossing point on the Egypt-Gaza border. In the spring of 2006, Washington and Brussels worked together with Israel and other members of the Quartet (Russia and the UN) to approve an EU-proposed mechanism for providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians that bypassed the Hamas-led Palestinian government. Despite such recent cooperation, however, there remain substantial differences of view on the Israeli-Palestinian issue that will no doubt continue to bedevil US-EU relations and endanger broader cooperation in the Middle East. These differences continue to center on relations with Hamas (Washington refusing to consider dealing with Hamas, while the Europeans are more willing to do so) and uncritical US support for Israel. Because of its one-sided support for Israel, its refusal to engage with unfriendly regimes, and other Middle East policies (especially the Iraq invasion), Washington has lost considerable influence in the Middle East, while the EU's position and status have grown. This shift in the balance of influence will no doubt have major consequences for future US-EU cooperation in the Middle East.

⁷ On EU policies in the South Caucasus, see Lynch, ed. (2003); Macfarlane (2004); and International Crisis Group (2006b); On Georgia specifically, see Lynch (2005).

Syria

Syria provides another example of US-EU cooperation. In September 2004, the US and French governments cooperated to secure passage of a UN Security Council Resolution demanding that Syria withdraw its military and intelligence presence in Lebanon. Joint US-European (especially French) pressure on Syria to implement the resolution then increased dramatically following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005. Both Washington and European governments have supported the follow-up UN investigation into Syria's involvement in the assassination, and they have warned Syria to avoid further meddling in Lebanese affairs.

Nevertheless, Washington and Brussels generally favor different approaches towards relations with Syria. The Bush administration favors economic sanctions and isolation, in response to Syrian involvement in Lebanon, engagement in WMD-related activities, and support for international terrorism and the insurgency in Iraq. The ultimate goal of US policy appears to be regime change in Damascus, even if this will be "on the cheap" (i.e. by non-military means) (Leverett 2006, 83). The EU, by contrast, has little enthusiasm for regime change and prefers instead a policy of "engagement." Thus, in October 2004 the EU and Syria initialed an Association Agreement, viewed as a stepping stone towards deeper cooperation within the framework of ENP, which provides for increased access to EU markets in return for Syria's agreement to cooperate in international efforts to limit the spread of WMD-related goods. While formal signing and ratification of this agreement is on hold due to the events of early 2005, it will likely be revived once the furor over the Hariri assassination dies down. Washington's refusal to engage with Damascus to end the Israeli-Lebanon crisis in the summer of 2006 could also widen the gap between Washington and Brussels on policy towards Syria. Recent transatlantic cooperation on Syria, therefore, may be only a temporary exception to broader policy disagreement.

Iraq and Iran

Increased US-EU cooperation is also evident in two cases involving countries that are not formally addressed by ENP, but that are vitally important for Middle East politics and regional stability: Iraq and Iran. Despite the fierce opposition of many European governments and the majority of European people to the Iraq war, and the satisfaction that many Europeans have undoubtedly gained from American difficulties in Iraq, European governments also realize that it is in their interest that Iraq be stabilized and the situation there not be allowed to deteriorate further into civil war and a catalyst for broader regional conflict. Thus, the EU has offered increased support for US efforts to stabilize and rebuild Iraq. In June 2005, the EU and United States jointly hosted an International Conference on Iraq in Brussels, at which representatives from 80 governments and international organizations pledged support for stabilizing and rebuilding Iraq. The EU itself promised additional money for reconstruction and basic needs, and agreed to pressure its member states to reduce or reschedule Iraqi debt. It also promised an enhanced rule of law mission to train Iraqi police and improve the judicial

system, and Brussels announced that it would soon open a Commission delegation office in Baghdad as a gesture of its commitment to the country and region. According to EU External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, in reference to past transatlantic disputes over Iraq, the rebuilding of Iraq has now become the “inspiration for a new era of international cooperation” (Ferrero-Waldner 2005).

Iran, however, offers perhaps the best example of transatlantic cooperation in the broader Middle East since the Iraq war. Despite differing views about how to deal with the potential threat of Iran’s nuclear program, since early 2005 the United States and European governments have tried to coordinate their policies more closely, with the US backing the diplomatic efforts of Britain, France, Germany, and CFSP chief Javier Solana to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the issue. Following the Iranian rejection of European proposals in the fall of 2005, the United States and European governments have cooperated to bring the Iranian issue to the UN Security Council for possible action. In May 2006, the United States joined with the European governments and other Security Council permanent members (Russia and China) to offer the Iranian government a package of incentives (“carrots” and “sticks”) to give up its nuclear program; in this package was included, at European urging, a US offer to engage in direct talks with Iran for the first time since 1979. Skepticism remains, however, about whether US cooperation with the European strategy of engagement and negotiation is not merely tactical, reflecting the momentary absence of alternative options and hiding a more deeply held preference (or hope) for regime change. Pressure on US-European cooperation will no doubt increase following Iranian rejection of the Security Council package in August 2006, setting the stage for intensified discussion of possible sanctions.

Barriers to Cooperation: Different Realities

Despite having many common or overlapping interests and strong incentives to cooperate, the United States and EU face very different “realities” in dealing with the European neighborhood.⁸ These different realities have major implications for policy agendas and approaches, and thus pose a potential barrier to transatlantic cooperation.

For the United States, the European neighborhood is geographically distant and, with the exception of Persian Gulf oil and close ties to Israel, its level of economic, social, and political interdependence with the ENP area is relatively low. As a consequence, American vulnerability to the negative repercussions of developments in the ENP area is also relatively low, 9/11 and the threat of global terrorism notwithstanding.

For the EU, however, reality is quite different. The key factor is geography. The EU shares land (Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova after Romanian accession in 2007) or sea (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Georgia after 2007) borders with most of its actual or prospective ENP partners, and is geographically proximate to those (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Jordan) with whom it does not. Geographic proximity and close historical and political (in some cases colonial) ties have, in turn, led

⁸ Lynch (2006b) compares the different US and European “realities” in dealing with Russia.

to extensive economic relations between many of these countries and the EU. Geographic proximity has also enabled the significant movement of people (for both economic and political reasons) from these countries into Europe, from both east to west and south to north. Thus, in many ways, the geographical, economic, and social/demographic relationship between the EU and its neighbors resembles that between the United States and its southern (Latin American and Caribbean) neighborhood.

The Russia factor

A major factor in EU relations with its eastern neighborhood is Russia. Although not formally addressed by ENP, Russia is nevertheless a direct neighbor of the EU and a major presence, influence, and actor in the regions of the former Soviet space that are.

Of course, relations with Moscow are also an important factor affecting US policy in the former Soviet Union, but the United States and EU view Russia from very different perspectives, and relate to it in very different ways. While the United States views Russia from a distance, as a geo-strategic partner (in the “global war on terrorism,” for instance, or in international efforts to stop the spread of WMD or deal with Iran’s nuclear ambitions) or rival, for the EU Russia is a large and powerful neighbor, with whom it shares a common border and neighborhood. Many EU countries are heavily dependent on Russia for energy, especially natural gas, with this dependence projected to grow in the future. Russia is also an important trade and investment partner for many European countries, while some, such as Germany and Italy, are (or have been) major Russian creditors. From a security perspective, the EU needs Russian cooperation to resolve the troublesome frozen conflicts and other security problems in their shared neighborhood, providing yet another reason to maintain cordial relations. Some member states, most notably France, also view Russia as a potential geo-strategic partner in efforts to counterbalance US global dominance and promote a more multi-polar world system.⁹

Washington and Brussels are not always going to be on the same page when it comes to dealing with Russia, therefore. US policy is more likely to be inconsistent, veering from confrontation and a willingness to challenge Russia in its “near abroad,” to passivity in the face of disagreeable Russian actions whenever Moscow’s cooperation is needed on other pressing global issues. The EU, on the other hand, seeks a more balanced and stable long-term relationship with its powerful neighbor, leading it in some cases to defer to Russian interests in the former Soviet Union in the interests of preserving good overall relations with Moscow. Different approaches towards Russia, therefore, could be an important factor inhibiting closer US-EU cooperation in the former Soviet space, as well as a potential source of transatlantic discord.

Indeed, the Russia factor has already produced two examples of policy discordance. One is the South Caucasus, where Washington has been urging Brussels to play a more active

⁹ On different US and European views and approaches towards Russia, see Lynch (2006b) and Hill (2006); also Burwell (2005) and Emerson (2004).

role (Jones 2004). However, while the EU has included the South Caucasus states in the ENP program, it has thus far refrained from more direct involvement in international efforts to resolve the region's separatist conflicts. While there are various reasons for this, a key factor is the unwillingness of some European governments (including France, Germany, and Italy) to take steps that might be viewed by Moscow as unwelcome interference in an important part of its near abroad.¹⁰ Concern about possible negative reaction by Moscow also led the EU to decide against approving an ESDP mission for the Russia-Georgia border in 2005, following Moscow's decision to block the extension of an OSCE border-monitoring mission beyond December 2004 (International Crisis Group 2006b, 10, 24-25). The EU's reluctance to engage more fully in the South Caucasus has disappointed the United States, which has sought a more active EU role in the region and more forcefully promoted Georgia's interests vis-à-vis Moscow.

A second example is disagreement over the integration of democratizing former Soviet republics into Euro-Atlantic institutions. In part because they do not want to upset Russia, western European governments have been reluctant to support the NATO ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia, and they are cautious about US plans to offer these countries participation in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the November 2006 Riga summit [although concern that both countries could view NATO membership as a stepping stone to eventual EU membership is another reason for this position]. Ironically, US support for the NATO strivings of these two countries may also be temporarily reduced by the need to gain Russia's approval for possible UN sanctions against Iran, while the NATO ambitions of Ukraine face mounting domestic political hurdles, especially after formation of the "national unity" coalition government in August 2006.

Attitudes towards Russia are not uniform within the EU, of course, and some member states, especially the new post-communist members in central and eastern Europe, are much more suspicious of Russian intentions and wary of Russian power. Generally speaking these countries, led by Poland and the Baltic states, take a much harder line towards Moscow and they are more skeptical about EU-Russia cooperation, attitudes that are easily explainable in terms of both geography and bitter historical experience. Like the United States, the new EU members are more willing to challenge Russian interests in the eastern neighborhood, and they favor a more proactive EU policy towards the countries of this region.

It remains to be seen whether the more skeptical views of Russia in the new member states will eventually change, as a consequence of the passage of time, generational change, and a diminished sense of insecurity because of EU and NATO membership. The key point is that even if they do not, they will continue to be counterbalanced by broader European interest in developing a stable and workable EU-Russia relationship that provides benefits for both.

The Southern Mediterranean and Middle East

¹⁰ On the importance of the South Caucasus to Russia, see Falkowski (2006).

The United States and EU also face different realities in dealing with Europe's southern neighborhood. For the United States, the Middle East is important as a source of energy (the US depends on the Persian Gulf region for 40% of its imported oil), as a potential source of insecurity (i.e. terrorism), and because of its close political and security ties to Israel. Nevertheless, despite the potential impact of Middle East developments on US interests and the lives of Americans, the United States and most Americans view the problems and challenges posed by the Middle East from a distance. For the EU and most Europeans, they are much more immediate.

Because of geographical proximity, European countries are the most directly affected by security threats emanating from the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East, including terrorism and WMD proliferation. Geographical proximity also makes the EU much more vulnerable to the negative spillover effects of instability in the region, such as increased illegal immigration.

A major problem is posed by the existence of sizable Muslim minorities in many European countries, the result of geographical proximity, unequal levels of economic development, and historical colonial ties between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean region. A genuine fear, which has already been realized in several cases, is of "home-grown" terrorism; the large Muslim minorities in many European cities provide a fertile recruiting ground for extremist groups and ideologies, especially the growing number of unemployed and alienated young people.

Europe also has extensive trade and economic ties with the Southern Mediterranean countries that could be disrupted by regional instability. The EU is the primary trading partner of all of the countries of the region; it is also the main provider of foreign investment and financial assistance, as well as being the main source of tourism and the primary destination for migrants (Cameron 2005, 2).

Geographical proximity, economic interdependence, and the presence of large Muslim minorities (who are not only potential terrorists, but also form a growing and increasingly important voting bloc in some European countries) helps explain why the EU is generally more interested in preserving stability than in promoting change in the Middle East, and why it is concerned about the destabilizing effects of US policies in the region. These factors also help explain the EU's more critical view of Israel and its efforts to pursue a more balanced (Israeli supporters would say pro-Palestinian) policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in contrast to the decidedly pro-Israel position of the US government, especially the current Bush administration.

To summarize, for the EU the dominant reality in dealing with the countries to its east and south is its "position as a neighbor" (Leigh 2005: 123). This means not only greater EU sensitivity to developments in its neighborhood, but also that to be successful in exerting influence the EU must "respect the sensitivities and priorities of its neighbors" and "understand and support their agenda" (Cameron 2005, 12). This position also gives the EU very different concerns and priorities in neighboring regions from those of the

more geographically distant United States, with significant implications for their respective policy agendas.

Different Agendas

Faced with different realities in dealing with the countries and regions of the European neighborhood, it is not surprising that the United States and EU have different regional policy agendas. In a nutshell, the US policy agenda for both the former Soviet Union and the broader Middle East is relatively “thin,” while the EU’s is relatively “thick.”¹¹

In the former Soviet Union, a key goal of the United States is to limit or roll back Russian influence and increase US presence in strategically significant regions such as the Black Sea basin, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Democracy promotion, while pursued for ideological reasons and as a goal in its own right, is also viewed (maybe primarily) as a means of achieving these other strategic goals. The US agenda in the former Soviet Union also includes energy security (improved access to Caspian oil and gas via pipelines that do not pass through Russia), the fight against terrorism (the South Caucasus and Central Asia are regarded by the US government as “frontline regions in the war on terrorism”) (Jones 2004), and efforts to stop WMD proliferation (eliminating or securing Soviet-era WMD materials and preventing their smuggling).

The US agenda in the broader Middle East is similarly weighted towards strategic and security goals (energy security, the struggle against terrorism and WMD proliferation). Replacing geopolitical competition with Russia, however, are efforts to contain or promote regime change in anti-Western “rogue states,” such as Iran and Syria, as well as the defense and security of Israel. Democracy promotion is also a key US goal in the region, as exemplified by the Bush administration’s “Broader Middle East Initiative,” but the suspicion remains that this is largely an instrument for achieving other strategic or geopolitical goals, or that it serves mainly to provide ideological cover for US policies aimed at regime change and redrawing the Middle Eastern political map, or as a diversion from US policy failures in Iraq..

The US policy agenda in the European neighborhood, therefore, is fairly narrow and focused. The United States is also concerned with achieving results, and fairly quickly at that, to accommodate the domestic political cycle or the notoriously short attention span of US voters and politicians. While US geopolitical and security goals in the former Soviet space and broader Middle East are very important, indeed they can be termed “vital,” they also compete for policy attention with vital US interests and goals in other parts of the world, in particular East Asia.

In comparison with the “thin” US policy agenda, the policy agenda of the EU in its own neighborhood can be described as “thick.” Rather than focusing on just a handful of

¹¹ The terms “thick” and “thin” are used by Lynch (2006b, 158) to contrast the policy agendas of the US and EU in relations with Russia.

crucial geopolitical and security objectives, the EU simultaneously pursues policy goals across a wide spectrum of issue areas in relations with its immediate neighbors.

Just how thick the EU agenda is can be ascertained by examining the content of ENP, the main policy instrument of the EU for dealing with its immediate neighbors. While the Action Plans that have been negotiated, or are being negotiated, with each of the ENP partners vary according to the situation and needs of individual countries (the principle of “differentiation”), they all give attention to cooperation in each of seven key areas: political reform (democracy and good governance), political dialogue (foreign and security policy cooperation), economic and social development, trade, justice and home affairs (immigration and judicial and police affairs), trans-border infrastructure development (energy, transportation, environment, communications, and R&D), education and people-to-people exchanges. They also focus on improving regional cooperation among neighboring countries as well as between individual partner countries and the EU.¹²

Many (if not most) of the items on the EU policy agenda do not even appear on the US policy agendas for the former Soviet Union and broader Middle East, or if they do they are far down the list in terms of priority and importance. In its relations with the Southern Mediterranean countries, for instance, a huge policy concern of the EU is illegal immigration, which takes its place alongside terrorism and WMD proliferation as a major security problem for Europe in the Mediterranean. While the United States has its own immigration problem along its southern border with Mexico, the issue of illegal population movements from Northern Africa is not a concern of its Middle East policy. Likewise, EU policy towards eastern Europe is focused on the neighborhood problems of trans-border organized crime and environmental pollution, and also aims at forestalling new applications for membership from Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia; these are policy problems that are only of secondary or peripheral concern to the United States.

Certainly, the key US foreign policy goals of fighting terrorism, stopping the spread of WMD, improving energy security, and promoting democracy are also crucially important for the EU. What is different for the EU that these goals co-exist with other important objectives on the neighborhood policy agenda, and they are enmeshed in a much broader set of policies and initiatives. In this sense, the EU neighborhood policy agenda is not so narrowly focused as that of the United States in these same regions and countries.

Moreover, while the EU is just as interested as the United States in obtaining “results” in its neighborhood policy initiatives, the EU agenda also emphasizes the importance of “process”; that is, establishing a network of workable relations with neighboring countries, so that effective cooperation to deal with common problems can be achieved.

¹² See the Action Plans that have been signed with Ukraine, Moldova, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority; as well as the proposed Action Plans for Lebanon, available at the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy Website <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm>. The ENP Strategy Paper (European Commission 2004) also outlines the basic content of the Action Plans.

The time horizons for the EU and US policy agendas are also different. While the time horizon for US regional policies is often short, due to domestic political pressures, the short attention spans of the public and politicians, or the need to respond to developments in other part of the world, for the EU it is long, due to the simple fact that the EU's neighbors are not going away or shrinking in importance; they are a permanent reality, and interdependence between Europe and its neighbors will likely only grow. While US attention may waver or wane, for the EU the immediate neighborhood is, by necessity, its most important foreign policy focus.

The difference between the US and EU policy agendas can perhaps be summarized in this way: while the US pursues fairly narrow and targeted geopolitical and security objectives in the EU neighborhood, the EU is engaged in a long-term a project of "community-building." This EU project is based upon the reality of geographical proximity, the realization that the security, stability, and prosperity of the EU and its neighbors are indivisible, and awareness that the fates of Europe and its neighbors are inter-linked. The community-building project can be characterized as one of "external governance";¹³ the EU seeking to project its norms, values, and standards beyond its borders, in an effort to establish a framework of trans-national governance with the EU at its core (a characterization which maybe explains Russian objections to the expansion of EU influence into its former dominions). The EU project may thus be justly criticized for being asymmetrical or "imperial." However, it is also a multi-faceted, long-term, and process-oriented project that reflects both the EU's position as a neighbor and its distinctive institutional character and capabilities.

The EU community-building or external governance agenda is not necessarily inimical to American interests and goals in the European neighborhood, but the EU and US agendas are different enough in terms of their emphases, priorities, and time horizons that there is considerable scope for transatlantic misunderstanding and disagreement as a result.

Different Approaches

Democracy promotion and the fight against terrorism are two goals that the United States and EU share in the European neighborhood. Moreover, these goals are closely related to the pursuit of other shared objectives, such as stopping WMD proliferation, combating international organized crime, resolving regional conflicts, and improving energy security. There would appear to be considerable potential for cooperation in pursuit of these two related goals, therefore. However, such cooperation is inhibited by different US and European understandings of these issues, as well as by divergent approaches to fighting terrorism and promoting democracy.

The US responded to 9/11 by launching a "Global War on Terror" (GWOT) that has relied heavily on military means. Within months of 9/11 it launched a successful attack on the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan. This was followed in March 2003 by a military

¹³ On the concept of "external governance" see Lavanex (2004). The concept is also central to Weber, Smith, and Baun, eds. (forthcoming).

invasion of Iraq, although the Bush administration has never successfully proven the link between Saddam Hussein's repressive regime and Islamic terrorists. The US also greatly increased its military counter-terrorism activities throughout the world, but especially in the "arc of crisis" stretching from western Africa to central and south-east Asia. Undoubtedly, a major factor in shaping this response was overwhelming US military power and resources, as well as the absence of counterbalancing constraints by other alliances or great powers, such as existed during the Cold War. The United States had the power and could respond to the terrorist challenge in this way, and so it did.

By the end of 2003, however, and especially following the re-election of President Bush in November 2004, the United States began shifting its focus in the GWOT to democracy promotion. Viewed initially as complement to military counter-terrorism activities, democracy promotion has become the central focus of US strategy in the GWOT, as exemplified by the emphasis on democracy promotion in the March 2006 US National Security Strategy (White House 2006b).

There are several reasons for this shift in emphasis. One is policy failure in Iraq. The post-invasion occupation of Iraq has been a disaster; US forces confront a bloody insurgency and rising sectarian violence, US military resources are stretched thin, and the American people are becoming less supportive of overseas military engagement. As a result, the military option is not as available for the war on terrorism and regime change elsewhere, and soft-power options are regarded more seriously. The Iraq war also cost the United States dearly in terms of international support and legitimacy, thus limiting its foreign policy effectiveness and maneuverability. An important lesson of Iraq, even for Washington neoconservatives, is that the United States needs international legitimacy to be successful in its foreign policy (cf. Kagan 2004). Promoting democracy and emphasizing the values of freedom and liberty is a way to get the United States back on the moral high ground and maybe restore this lost legitimacy. Improved cooperation with Europe has been another goal of the Bush administration in its second term, and democracy promotion is viewed as a mutually agreeable project on which the United States and Europe can come together and renew their partnership. Finally, one cannot overlook ideological motivations and the genuine commitment of Bush and his advisers to democracy promotion, a goal which taps into a long tradition in US foreign policy, dating at least as far back as the "manifest destiny" policy of the mid-19th century.

However, the current US approach to democracy promotion is a distinctive one. Among its characteristic features is an emphasis on coercive regime change, leading many skeptics to regard US democracy promotion as simply a tactic for deposing unfriendly or non-cooperative governments (a suspicion that is bolstered by US refusal to exert significant pressure on authoritarian regimes that are strategic allies, such as Saudi Arabia or Azerbaijan). The US approach to democracy promotion is also fairly superficial; it assumes that once authoritarian leaders are deposed (often with outside, i.e. US, support), new democracies can be quickly established through the simple process of holding free elections. While US support is often funneled through pro-democracy civil society groups and NGOs, relatively little attention is given to the social or economic bases of democracy, or to the long-term construction of effective democratic institutions. It also

naively assumes a universal thirst for American-style individual and democratic freedoms, thereby neglecting the role of cultural differences in shaping attitudes about politics and democracy. As one prominent American commentator has put it, the Bush administration's policy of 'democracy promotion via coercive regime change' seems to assume 'that democracy is some kind of default condition to which societies reverted once tyrants were removed, rather than a collection of complex institutions that need to be painstakingly built over the years' (Fukuyama 2005).

There are several possible explanations for this US approach to democracy promotion, including American "exceptionalism" (the belief that "we know best what democracy is," and naturally "everyone want to be like us"), and typical American impatience, the product of both cultural traits (consumer mentality and desire for instant gratification) and the US political system (an electoral cycle that demands immediate demonstrable results). US military capabilities and the post-Cold War geopolitical situation (the absence of any effective countervailing power) also combine to make the use of coercive force appear tempting and relatively easy.

An over-reliance on military force and coercive regime change also characterizes the US approach to fighting terrorism. By comparison, less high-profile police and intelligence measures seem to be undervalued or stressed less. This could again be explainable in terms of the prevailing balance of capabilities and opportunities, but 9/11 and the domestic political atmosphere in the United States also plays a role, making it easier for the US government to justify military action against easily identifiable targets, while also demanding it as an appropriate and justified response to the terrorist attacks on US soil.

The US approach to fighting terrorism contrasts with that of the EU and European governments; this focuses mainly on non-military means, and stresses the need to attack the "root causes" of terrorism, such as poverty, injustice, and political instability.¹⁴

The EU's approach to democracy promotion is also different in many ways from the US approach.¹⁵ Rather than rapid regime change and legitimization through elections, the EU's "developmentalist" approach to democracy promotion (Youngs 2004, 11) emphasizes long-term, gradual, or evolutionary change. Emphasis is placed on building the economic and social bases of democracy, including educational and cultural projects, as well as adequate institutional and administrative capacity. Political change, rather than occurring suddenly, should be gradual or step-by-step. Because EU support is usually channeled through governments rather than (often anti-government) non-official sources, the EU "top-down" approach to democracy promotion tends to reinforce stability and order rather than encourage radical change (Kopstein 2006). While in recent years the EU has indeed given greater emphasis to democracy promotion and moved this goal to the center of its foreign policy relations with neighboring countries (in large part in response

¹⁴ See, for instance, the discussion of terrorism and how to respond to it in the European Security Strategy (European Council 2003, 3 and 7).

¹⁵ For comparisons of the US and EU approaches to democracy promotion, especially in the Middle East, see Kopstein (2006); Menotti (2006); and Speck (2006).

to US policy and pressure since 2003), it has traditionally preferred to talk about spreading “good governance” rather than democracy. The EU approach, in short, assumes that democracy cannot be imposed, and that it is the end result of a long and complex process; it also expresses a preference for gradual and orderly political change.

There are many reasons for the EU approach to democracy promotion. These include the realities of geography and interdependence, which explain the EU’s preference for stability and its focus on “the dangers of precipitate political change” (Youngs 2004, 8). The European approach is also explainable in terms of the EU’s overall neighborhood policy agenda; if Brussels is to deal effectively with such problems as illegal immigration, terrorism, international organized crime, energy security, and trans-border pollution, it must have stable and effective partners to cooperate with. The EU’s long-term project of “community building” or “external governance” in its direct neighborhood, in other words, favors an emphasis on “good governance” and a preference for gradual political reform. Finally, it is explained by the EU’s distinctive historical experience (the examples and lessons drawn from its own successful integrative experience, including enlargement) and institutional capabilities (limited hard power capabilities, but an abundance of civilian or soft power instruments and capabilities).

However, there does appear to have been some convergence recently of the US and EU approaches to democracy promotion. Change has occurred mostly on the US side since 2003, with the United States moving towards the EU focus on long-term social and economic development and the “root causes” of terrorism and political extremism. This is reflected most clearly in the “Broader Middle East Initiative” (BMEI) of 2004 and the de-emphasis of coercive regime change (although the Iraq quagmire and the constraints this has placed on US military capabilities may be as much responsible for this shift). As one EU official puts it, the BMEI “marks the adoption by the United States of policy objectives long pursued by the EU itself in [the Middle East] region” (Leigh forthcoming). However, the EU has also changed its approach somewhat, placing more emphasis on democracy (as opposed to good governance) and political change, and making greater use of NGOs and non-official actors as conduits of EU support.

Nevertheless, substantial differences remain because the US and EU approaches to democracy promotion are rooted in significant historical, cultural, and institutional differences, as well as different military and foreign policy capabilities. Europeans are also concerned about the “sustainability” of the new US commitment to Middle East democracy promotion (Menotti 2006): Is the recent US shift towards the European approach merely tactical (due to military constraints, legitimacy needs, or domestic politics), or does it represent a more fundamental re-thinking of US policy and strategy in the broader Middle East? The answer to this question could have a major impact on the ability of the United States and EU to cooperate in the European neighborhood and beyond.

Conclusion

The EU's new role as a strategic actor in its own neighborhood represents both a tremendous opportunity and a challenge for the United States and transatlantic relations. If the United States and EU can find ways to cooperate in eastern Europe, the south Caucasus, and the Middle East and northern Africa, they can more effectively achieve common goals and objectives, while also rebuilding and reinvigorating the transatlantic partnership. As this paper has argued, Washington and Brussels have many common or shared interests in the European neighborhood, and many reasons to cooperate. Indeed, there are several recent examples of effective transatlantic cooperation, especially in eastern Europe. However, as this paper has also argued, further (and closer) transatlantic cooperation could be impeded by several factors. These include different geographical, political, and economic "realities" in dealing with the countries and regions of Europe's neighborhood, different policy agendas (reflecting different priorities and concerns), and different approaches to democracy promotion and combating terrorism. As a consequence, US-EU cooperation in the European neighborhood is far from automatic; in fact, it could be very problematic.

What would be the consequences if the United States and EU are unable to cooperate in the European neighborhood? At the very least, this would generate increased strain and tensions in the transatlantic relationship, thereby further "poisoning" the atmosphere of US-EU relations, with possible negative spillover effects for US-EU cooperation on other issues. But the consequences could be even more profound. On the US side, the inability to gain EU support for US policies in the former Soviet Union and broader Middle East could reinforce existing perceptions (especially strong among neo-conservatives) of the EU as an incapable or unreliable foreign policy partner, or one that is increasingly irrelevant.¹⁶ It could also strengthen the inclination of some in Washington to disaggregate the EU by seeking partners for US policies among more like-minded member states. On the European side, policy discord could bolster the perception that the United States, through the destabilizing effects of its policies, is becoming more of a threat to European security and interests than a benefactor. It could also lead to increased resentment of US influence in what might be increasingly viewed as Europe's natural sphere of influence. US geopolitical and strategic goals, in other words, might increasingly come into conflict with the EU objective of creating a "ring of friends" among the countries of its neighborhood. If this were to happen, the United States and EU could become policy competitors in the European neighborhood rather than partners.

Such an outcome is not desirable of course, so it is up to the United States and EU to find ways of reconciling their sometimes differing policy priorities, agendas, and approaches. As a beginning, US policy-makers must make a greater effort to understand the realities of the EU's position as a neighbor, and be more sensitive to the concerns and imperatives that flow from it.

¹⁶ For instance, in the words of one US policy analyst, 'If the United States and Europe do not have a joint policy (with whatever differences of emphasis there may be) in the Middle East, then they have little use for each other in international politics' (Mead 2004: 125).

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