

**THE TRILATERAL COMMISSION
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**INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES
OF NORTH AMERICAN POLICY CHOICES**

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I had the opportunity today of visiting one of the very famous Mayan ruins in this vicinity. Our guide was advising us about the meaning in the Mayan language of the names of various places, so we asked him what did Cancun mean, and we were advised that it means the nest of snakes.

Now, I wondered for a moment whether such a high-minded organization as the Trilateral should really be meeting in a place so named or whether, in fact, the Trilateral consists of snakes and the place was appropriately named, but I think probably the problems of the world are such that in reality we would need the agility of the snake to get through some of the issues I propose to say a few words about.

I want to talk about Europe's relationship with the United States, both in terms of the convergences, the potential divergences, and the menu of issues that we are dealing with at the moment.

The first area where we converge is that increasingly Europeans, having seen American power in the world put at risk in Iraq—and it's still at risk—have come to realize that, in fact, for all we may complain about the United States, we do not want the United States to cease being the preeminent power in the world, because it is for us a factor of stability and predictability that is extremely important.

We also have come increasingly to realize that our economy is interdependent with the United States to a degree that most Europeans and most Americans don't realize. In effect, we own one another, literally we own one another, and anything that is bad in the United States in terms of reducing the value of the United States' economic assets immediately has an adverse effect in Europe as we see with the sub-prime event leading to difficulties for the British and the German banks.

We also share the same priorities in the world: the priority basically of preserving the advances that we have made; preserving intellectual property; preserving access to energy and preserving the value system that has underpinned our freedoms—the value of the rule of law and democracy and so forth. And we share an opposition to terrorism and to the enormous risk that would arise from the acquisition of nuclear weapons by a terrorist organization.

Where I think there is some divergence in the area of energy policy. The United States has a lot of coal as does China, as does India, but we don't. That is going to mean that the United States can perhaps take a more relaxed view about shortages of energy in the world and perhaps will take a more relaxed view on how you might use coal and the consequences for the rest of the world of the pollution and the greenhouse gases generated by coal.

¹ These remarks are the personal reflections of Ambassador Bruton, not positions of the European Commission.

Another area, I suppose, where there is a divergence is in our attitude to the Middle East and to Islam. This, like the coal issue, arises in part from our physical geography. We are closer to the problem. There are more Muslims living in Europe than are living here—ten percent of the population of France, and there are not as many of the Muslims at the upper end of society in Europe as there are in the United States or Canada. They are at the middle and lower end of society and likely to be radicalized by what might be perceived as a partial approach being taken to internal conflicts in the Middle East.

Also, we are closer to Russia.

I think the fundamental fact is that Europeans want the United States to continue to be preeminent, and I think the recent election not only of Angela Merkel but also of Nicolas Sarkozy indicates that public opinion in Europe is moving in that direction.

But we do have questions. Is the United States patient enough to exercise the sort of responsibilities that it has undertaken? For example, there seems to be an expectation in public opinion of instant results in Iraq. Well, if one expected instant results in Mesopotamia, one didn't know Mesopotamia, and if one didn't know Mesopotamia, one should not have gone there. But U.S public opinion doesn't seem to have acculturated itself to the realities of the world into which it has chosen to insert itself, and I think public opinion has to take a responsibility for that, not just politicians, but public opinion, the electorate itself. A patient public is essential for statesmanship, and I wonder if the U.S. public is patient enough for the United States to be able to perform the roles it has decided to take on.

On the question of Iran, I think there is a conflation in the discourse in the United States on Iran between the possibility of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon, and that of terrorists acquiring a nuclear weapon. It's not the same thing.

Iran is a country, and a country with a nuclear weapon, while it may be undesirable that they would acquire it, can be deterred in the same way that other countries can be deterred and have been deterred up to now successfully. Terrorists with a nuclear weapon are an entirely different matter. There is, I think, in European public opinion a puzzlement about the complacency of public opinion in the United States about Pakistan having a nuclear weapon in contrast with the almost obsessional fear about Iran possibly having a nuclear weapon. In terms of the unity and stability of the two countries, I think one could say that it's at least arguable that Iran is more stable and more likely to be capable of being deterred.

On the Middle East, I think there is in Europe a great welcome for the efforts that the Secretary of State is making to move forward on that issue. I think people in the Middle East really don't make that many distinctions between Americans of European origin, and Europeans of European origin, when either come to interfere, as they see it, in their part of the world. We've been interfering in this part of the world for quite some time going back to the Sykes/Picot Agreement in which France and Britain were involved in drawing the borders of the Middle East, to the Balfour Declaration by a British prime minister, and more recently to direct American involvement. I think we're all seeing us Europeans and Americans as people who are over here in the Middle East, that some of the people over here don't want those people over here in that way.

But for Europeans, the Middle East being closer, the issue of realizing the declared policy of creating a Palestinian state is a more urgent one. For us it is urgent that this state be created, because the situation in Gaza at the moment is untenable in both humanitarian and military terms. To have a large number of people enclosed in a space like that, where metaphorically they cannot breathe, is unacceptable, and it creates all sorts of tensions in the minds of people of similar heritage living in other parts of the world, but who identify with the Palestinians. To have a situation in the West Bank where, I think, it's 521 check

points that people have to pass through, where Israeli settlements are continuing to be built on Palestinian land at the same pace, regardless of whether talks are taking place or not between the Israeli prime minister and the Palestinian leadership, I think that's something that creates in our minds a deep sense of urgency that we need to have American or European leadership accelerating the pace towards a Palestinian state by sketching out exactly what would be the border of such a Palestinian state.

If there are to be land swaps, what land swaps?

If the Palestinian state is to be demilitarized, exactly in what way would it be demilitarized?

What police would it be allowed to retain? What powers would it have?

Would it have complete freedom of movement for goods in and out of its territory?

These are urgent questions.

These Palestinian territories have been under occupation for 40 years, and this must rate as one of the longest occupations in human history. It just can't go on too much longer if we want to have resolution of the relationship between Islam and the West.

I spoke to a minister in an Afghan Government recently. I said to him, in the case of your country, in Afghanistan, what's the primary issue that affects your relationship with the West? Is it the fact that you have troops in your country from the West? Is it a fear of being colonized? No, he said. The issue for him and for his country is the situation in Palestine. I don't know whether he was making it up because he thought it might be the answer that I was expecting to hear, but I don't believe he was. I believe he was telling the truth. Resolving this issue is the *sine qua non* for resolving the problem.

I want to make one concluding remark on the other big issue on which our public opinions diverge.

That is climate change. Europe wants binding international agreements, with penalties that are self-enforcing, and the United States wants voluntary agreements. Well, voluntary agreement is like an oral promise, not worth the paper it is written on. The task of mitigating climate change requires something more solid than a voluntary agreement.

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