

## Preface

In October 2003, the European Commission sponsored an extensive opinion survey in the fifteen member nations of the European Union (EU).<sup>1</sup> The survey confirmed that citizens in almost all of these European states were very concerned about the threat of terrorist attacks on their own countries.

When asked which countries posed a threat to peace, respondents in most EU states did not focus on those countries known to be harboring terrorists, such as Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. Respondents did not even focus on states known to be openly promoting terrorism, such as Iran or Syria. Rather, respondents in most EU states thought the two countries posing the greatest threat to world peace were the two that had suffered most from terrorist attacks and had been most active in fighting back against terrorism: the United States and Israel.

In the view that now seems to prevail among Europeans, resistance to terrorism will only provoke more terrorism. The correct response, most believe, is to build international institutions that can deploy peaceful means to contain the threat. This strategy does not seem plausible to most Americans, nor to most Israelis, nor to most people in Russia, India, or China. People in many other parts of the world may also have grave doubts that the United Nations can provide security. Certainly, people in the Balkans and in many parts of Africa know from bitter experience that the United Nations cannot protect them from murderous assault.

Still, the idea remains highly seductive to Europeans. The same survey found that months after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the discovery of mass graves for Saddam's victims all over Iraq, the majority of Europeans remained convinced that the Anglo-American war against

Saddam was “illegitimate” because it was not sanctioned by the United Nations. From this perspective, the continued existence of independent nations—nations still able to fight their own battles against terror threats or ignore the United Nations when necessary—is the greatest threat to peace. The two most frightening nations are, in fact, readily confused by many Europeans. In spring 2003, the president of France was the most prominent opponent of the forty nations in the Anglo-American coalition against Saddam. Mobs in Paris shouted, “Vive Chirac! Stop the Jews!” To confirm the French government’s endorsement of the slogan, Foreign Minister de Villepin declared that the war was the work of a “Zionist lobby in Washington”—that is, as he explained, of American officials with Jewish-sounding names.<sup>2</sup> In the French account, the president and vice president of the United States, the Congress of the United States, the secretary of defense, the secretary of state, and the national security advisor were all mere bystanders to American policy. The policy was actually determined by a small group of Jewish conspirators.

Few Americans will find this account very compelling. But differences in outlook between Europe and America are nothing new. They did not start with the war in Iraq, nor with the September 11 terror attacks, nor with the advent of George W. Bush’s administration. European leaders have often condemned American policies from much the same perspective as that of Foreign Minister de Villepin. In August 1943, for example, the freely chosen leader of France insisted that peace could be negotiated in Europe if only Britain were “not led by the fanatical Churchill and the United States by the Jews.”<sup>3</sup>

The United States, Britain, and other English-speaking democracies rejected that perspective at the time. Even today, French schemes for pacifying the world through special understandings between France and Germany raise doubts in the English-speaking world. But the French vision during the Second World War did attract many Europeans. They hoped for peace or an early end to war, and no price seemed too high to pay for peace.<sup>4</sup> The peace offered by Germany in 1940 particularly appealed to many Europeans because it drew on ancient European political traditions. The Germans promised a new Reich, reviving the promises of the Holy Roman Empire of medieval Europe, under which German emperors were supposed to bring harmony and peace to all the peoples

of Europe. The idea that distinct peoples could be organized in independent nations was a modern idea, a legacy of the Enlightenment. Many Europeans were quite prepared to give up on such modern, liberal ideas in deference to the nostalgic visions preached in Germany in the 1930s.

Today, many Europeans are even more eager to give up national independence to the European Union. They are prepared to transfer messianic hopes to the United Nations or to almost any international structure promising escape from the burdens of self-defense. The United States, which has invested much larger resources in national defense than other countries, has far less reason to believe that the burdens of defense can be safely offloaded onto the latest international constructions.

Yet military strength is not the main reason the United States has rejected the European vision. Even as a newly independent republic, the United States rejected the precursors of contemporary European thinking. America was founded on quite contrary principles, and the vision that captivates so many Europeans today—as different versions of it captivated so many of their ancestors—is directly at odds with American ideas of constitutional government.

In the prevailing European view, constitutions are of largely ritual significance. Anyone who can look at the United States government and see only the secret machinations of Jews must regard its constitutional structures as mere window dressing. What matters, in the European view, is not whether power is defined by a constitutional structure of offices, with accountability to other officers and an ultimate accountability to voters. What matters is whether wielders of power have the right spirit or the true faith. Those in power must be faithful to humanity or peace or some other fine ideal, or they might as well be sinister schemers.

Europeans have difficulty taking constitutions seriously. Every state in the European Union now acknowledges that its constitution can be overridden by mere bureaucratic directives from the European Commission in Brussels; there is nothing like a fixed constitution to constrain the commission itself. The arrangement is unthinkable in America but taken for granted in Europe. Many things unthinkable to Americans have been embraced by Europeans before.

On the other hand, Europeans recoil from many things Americans regard as inevitable. In a free society, there are bound to be winners and

losers in economic competition. Winners in one decade may subsequently suffer sharp reverses. Losers may pick themselves up and triumph over their previous setbacks. But in a society where government control is carefully limited by law, there are bound to be unexpected results, as different firms and individuals try different economic strategies. In most European countries, markets are distrusted. There is far less patience with the idea of unpredictable results. What if wealth is acquired by the wrong people?

If governments cannot achieve adequate control, then, contemporary Europeans believe, higher authorities must be given new powers of control. Throughout the 1990s, while the United States experienced a sustained economic boom, France and Germany faced high levels of unemployment and low levels of economic growth, even with the vast regulatory powers accorded to the bureaucratic authorities of the European Union. The European Union's response to these adverse conditions was to urge wider systems of control. Developing countries must be prevented from "social-dumping" of their cheap goods in the regulated markets of Europe, it was said. European industry required more protection. Also, the earth's environment and its sustainable development required more extensive global controls.

Europeans see no reason all nations should not agree upon international regulatory standards. The United Nations has proclaimed a universal right to "rising standards of living." Who prevents the implementation of this inspiring aim of international law? Europeans are scandalized that the United States has not ratified the treaty on Economic and Social Rights, which the UN calls a "covenant." The failure to ratify this and so many other pious international conventions provokes fury. How does the United States dare to set itself apart from other nations, when all others have affirmed universal ideals?

The problem, according to some European analysts, is not that Americans are manipulated by Jews, but that their minds are numbed by Christian "fundamentalism." In the course of an extended protest against the war in Iraq, Jürgen Habermas, Germany's most celebrated philosopher, took time to express his scorn for President Bush's religious faith. In Europe, Habermas sniffed, it would be "hard to imagine a president who begins his daily business with public prayer and associates his momentous

political decisions with a divine mission.”<sup>5</sup> An earlier generation of German thinkers, no doubt, reacted with equal disgust to reports that President Roosevelt had implored “almighty God” to bless the American troops embarking for the beaches of Normandy—and offered this prayer not only in public but on the radio. It seems to have escaped the notice of thinkers like Habermas that, even after securing Germany’s unconditional surrender, the American army did not try to impose Christianity on pagan adherents of the Nazi movement. It seems inconceivable to Europeans that a faith that inspires and sustains Americans is, nevertheless, not part of our political structure.

But that is only another measure of how far apart American and European views have now become. Even the medieval church, which claimed wider political authority than modern churches, still insisted it was something distinct from government and accordingly acknowledged that government was, in principle, something distinct from religion. The faith that inspires contemporary Europeans is far more ambitious. There can be universal peace and harmony—and “rising standards of living for everyone”—if only people will embrace international authority and believe in its saving power.

Habermas coined the term “global domestic policy” to indicate the necessary reach of the new faith. It will establish a structure of international law and authority that will not merely inspire government, but will control and direct all governments in their governing duties. Those who think differently will naturally inspire resentment.

The United States began by asserting its right to independence—its right to be different. Governments have a right to be different, in the view of the American Founders, because human beings have a right to be different. The American constitutional tradition rests on the premise that “to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men”—that is, distinct governments, separate governments, sovereign governments.

It is easy to understand why the American Founders thought about rights in this way. An international authority able to secure universal peace would require the means of enforcing peace. It would require the authority to resolve every dispute that might otherwise lead to war, and then insist that its resolution could never be challenged. If it could do that, it could reasonably claim to resolve disputes provoking civil unrest

within each nation. It could reasonably claim to resolve all conflicting claims about the distribution of resources, within and between nations, and all claims about conflicting rights or crosscutting grievances, within and between nations.

Who could challenge or constrain a world authority with such immense power? Even if it were constrained by a formal constitution, who could possibly ensure that the world authority remained within its proper bounds? How could it be anything like a democracy? Would a hundred small nations outvote the half-dozen largest nations? Or would a billion Chinese, a billion Indians, and a half-billion Southeast Asians be allowed to form a permanent majority, dictating law and justice to the rest of the world?

European governments do not take the vision quite this seriously. Even in medieval times, European rulers continually flouted the ostensibly supreme authority of emperors or popes. But visions of assured universal harmony have always stirred sullen resentment and rage against those who did not openly bow to them.

Believers in a post-sovereign world order have few weapons to deploy on behalf of their vision. They are, in the main, great believers in words. They say independent states will provoke more terrorism, and insist that there can be no peace without the universal authority of the United Nations. On the more activist fringes of the European left, advocates even celebrate terrorism as the vanguard of a new, truly universal world system. But mostly Europeans preach patient faith in international institutions, and pour out their frustrated hopes in denunciations of those who fail to subscribe to the new faith.<sup>6</sup>

Their one hope is to demoralize people in independent nations, to make them question their right to govern themselves and live under their own constitutions. And, in fact, the European Union has been quite successful in bullying smaller states in Europe into compliance with European “ideals”—that is, for the most part, with highly detailed bureaucratic directives worked out by French and German bureaucrats at the European Commission.

The main point of this book is to remind readers that the United States has no reason to be defensive about retaining its independence. Our own constitutional system depends on the preservation of American independence. It is not a bad thing for the world for independent countries to remain

independent. It is not a bad thing even for small countries—or perhaps especially for small countries.

Empires throughout history have claimed to speak for humanity. In modern times, millions of Europeans placed messianic hopes in murderous dictators claiming to speak for humanity from Berlin or from Moscow. In asserting our independence, Americans should remember that they act from principles that have always offered much more to the world than the sullen resentments or hysterical hopes of Europe. Europeans are eager to forget their past experience. Americans still have every reason to hold to our own constitutional and political traditions, which have preserved the United States as a free nation and done much to maintain opportunities for free government in the wider world.