

Europe: Vanishing Mediator

Etienne Balibar

Voices from America

Allow me to begin these considerations on the uncertainties of Europe's political identity at the beginning of the twenty-first century by reflecting on voices from abroad. Since September 11, many calls have been directed to "Europe" or "the Europeans." This is flattering for us, but also embarrassing; we understand that we really exist, but we fear some misunderstanding. I shall concentrate on the calls coming from the United States, and for the sake of simplicity I will be very quick on the *official* (or quasi-official) ones, which express the view of the current administration, examining in more detail those coming from *liberal* intellectuals.

One set of appeals comes not only from President Bush and his advisors, but also from speeches and writings of those who, at least for the time being, support his policies (notably the group of well-known intellectuals who, in the wake of the war in Afghanistan, gathered around the "Propositions" of the Institute for American Values – among them such different figures as David Blankenhorn, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington, and Michael Walzer¹). Their formulations vary from "Wake up, Europe! Fascism is back!" to "Join us in the Just War" through the now famous "Whoever is not with us is against us" (which in fact sounds more like a warning than a call). They refer either to American interests or to common Western interests – much less, I must say, to the interest of international law and institutions. They insist on legitimacy or efficiency (which in a sense meet on diplomatic terrain, where in order to be efficient, for example in rallying a broad international coalition, you have to be also legitimate). But they remain *unilateral*, as they embody a strong notion of *leadership*, based on material *hegemony* and most of the time also on the idea of a global *mission* of the dominant power to uphold Peace, Order, and Civilization and protect "Democratic Values." This leaves little room for self-criticism, for the discussion of goals and methods, not to speak of possible contradictions between the domestic interests of the hegemonic power and the universal or common interests that it claims to represent.

We should not, however, underestimate the extent to which a broad acceptance of this point of view, which by nature doesn't seem very attractive, has been helped not only by the *overwhelming material hegemony* (economic, military, and ideological as well after the collapse of Communism and Third World nationalism)

of the American “hyperpower,” but also by the traumatic effects of the September 11 attack on New York, the “world city,” the cosmopolitan city par excellence.² In a sense the US “enjoys” a paradoxical combination of opposite statuses: dominant hyperpower *and* victim, a situation that produces powerful effects of identification.

Quite different, however, were the calls coming from the liberal intellectuals of America – “liberal” in the sense that, despite their obvious divergences (they range politically from socialism to neo-republicanism), they advocate the same basic principles: inalienable individual civil rights and legal protections, accountable government, civilian control over the military, international law over national interests. This call is indeed self-critical; it is voiced by a “minority” that wants to distinguish itself from the “majority” in its own country, criticizing the choices that are imposed by the majority and their elected representatives. It is a call not only for *support* but for *help* (“Help us, Europe!”), implying that the Europeans should *influence* American internal and external politics, for the sake of Europe itself, for the sake of America, and for all the others. The underlying idea (“multi-lateralist” in the broad sense) is that in a globalized world no power (not even the biggest) can “save” itself *alone* (not to speak of saving others), but that it could very well “doom” itself and others.

I shall recall some of the voices from America that could be heard in this sense in the last months, insisting at the same time on the importance of the ideas they contain and on some of the antinomies I think they involve. I have selected four significant (and very diverse) voices: Bruce Ackerman, Immanuel Wallerstein, Timothy Garton Ash, and Edward Said.

a) To begin, Bruce Ackerman. The prominent jurist and political philosopher from Yale published an article in *The London Review of Books* with the title “Don’t Panic.”³ He starts with the idea that “the attack of 11 September is the prototype of similar events that will litter the twenty-first century” and that “if American reaction is any guide we urgently require new constitutional concepts to deal with the protection of civil liberties.” Otherwise, he prophesizes: “a downward cycle threatens . . . even if the next half-century sees only four or five attacks on the scale of 11 September, this destructive cycle will prove devastating to civil liberties by 2050.” However, “an absolutist defense of traditional freedom” is not the right response on the side of liberals (he defines himself as *civil libertarian*). Not only would it not allow any democratic government to achieve popular support and not help prevent future terrorist strikes, it would leave totally unanswered the constitutional problems that emerge in situations of crisis. Declaring his concern to “prevent politicians from exploiting momentary panic to impose long-lasting limitations on liberty,” Ackerman is especially critical of the notion of a “war on terrorism” (a “war” already announcing itself as “without end”), which can and will be used both to cancel civil liberties (for Americans and non-Americans alike) and to destroy the democratic balance of powers between the executive, Congress, and the judiciary. What he advocates is a carefully controlled

“state of emergency” with legal and temporal limits, where as many “normal” institutions as possible keep working under the internal and external scrutiny of the “defenders of freedom.” And he concludes:

Europe is already influencing this political dynamic. The Spanish government’s refusal to hand over suspected terrorists has checked the Bush administration’s ardour for military tribunals. The French citizenship of the suspected ‘20th terrorist’ helped persuade the Attorney General to try Zacarias Moussaoui in a civilian court. . . . In the future, it will not be enough to defeat proposals that threaten permanent damage to civil liberties. . . . A framework law emerging from any major European state would have worldwide influence. It would help us see the ‘war on terrorism’ for what it is: an extravagant metaphor blocking responsible thought about a serious problem.

Even if you take into account that this was written for a European journal, it remains surprising and striking. The appeal seems to imply that certain traditions rooted in European politics form a legal pole of resistance against the tendencies towards the *militarization of politics* inside and outside America that threatens the very values in whose name the “war on terrorism” is declared and fought. It also suggests that Europe could and should act as a bulwark of *international law*, which is an essential safeguard against the corruption of constitutional principles (in particular the balance of powers that lies at the core of American constitutionalism) that may result from a “war without an (ascribed) end” – in other words, a permanent state of exception.

b) In a public lecture delivered in December 2001, Marxist historian and social scientist Immanuel Wallerstein explained how he saw the prospects of relationships between the US and the world in the completely new situation that the destruction of the Twin Towers represented for Americans.⁴ “It is clear at this point that, even if the events of September 11 will not alter the basic geopolitical realities of the contemporary world, they may have a lasting impact on American political structures.” In a certain sense, powerful America discovers, or fears discovering, that it is vulnerable. Wallerstein discusses the vulnerabilities of US hegemony by comparing it with previous examples in history. His thesis is that US hegemony is no longer based on unchallenged economic superiority, but only on military capacity. He describes the successive strategies that were implemented after World War II to eliminate forces and powers considered contrary to US interests around the world: containment, neutralization, intervention, subversion, selective “anti-proliferation” military policies:

As a policy, non-proliferation seems doomed to failure. . . . But there is also a moral/ political question here. . . . The US trusts itself to use such [nuclear] weapons wisely, and in the defense of liberty (a concept seemingly identical with US national interests). It assumes that anyone else might intend to use such weapons against liberty. . . .

Personally, I do not trust any government to use such weapons wisely. I would be happy to see them all banned, but do not believe this is truly enforceable in the contemporary interstate system. So personally I abstain from moralizing on this issue.

Wallerstein distinguishes between the belief that “America and Americans are the cause of all the world’s miseries and injustices,” which he denies, and the belief that “they are their prime beneficiaries,” which he endorses. He expresses his fear that America, while trying to “rebuild” the power that the Twin Towers symbolized, might sacrifice the ideals of freedom and universality that went along with the traditional privileges. Finally, contrasting a rational view of the uncertainties of the world’s future with the irrational attempt by President Bush to “offer the American people certainty about their future . . . the one thing totally beyond his power to offer,” he addresses to his fellow Americans an eloquent plea for helping rebuild the world based on equality instead of privilege, universality instead of globalization. This is where a reference to Europe (among others) surfaces again:

What the United States needs now to do is to learn how to live with the new reality – that it no longer has the power to decide unilaterally what is good for everyone. . . . It has to come to terms with the world. It is not Osama bin Laden with whom we must conduct a dialogue. We must start with our near friends and allies – with Canada and Mexico, with Europe, with Japan. And once we have trained ourselves to hear them and to believe that they too have ideals and interests, that they too have hopes and aspirations, then and only then perhaps shall we be ready to dialogue with the rest of the world, that is, with the majority of the world.

I understand Wallerstein’s position as expressing a neo-universalistic perspective. It takes the form of a defense of *multilateralism* against the attempt to recreate the conditions of a past economic hegemony by implementing a military superiority that remains unchallenged on its own level, but is entirely vulnerable to the new kind of threat that develops *within the limits* of the dominant system. Our permanent concern should therefore be to resist the polarization of the world into the mimetic figures of *Leviathan* (the world-monopoly of “legitimate” violence) and *Behemoth* (the ubiquitous power of subversion based on “fundamentalist” religious creeds). Accordingly, it is necessary to recreate a *multipolar equilibrium* of forces (be they national or post-national) that counteracts this polarization. In a more recent talk delivered at the “anti-globalization conference” in Porto Alegre, Wallerstein publicly endorsed the necessity of backing the development of the European Union, precisely in order to counteract American hegemony: even if Europe is also an “imperialist” power, there are “primary” and “secondary” contradictions (remember Mao!), and a multipolar world offers more possibilities for democracy and social transformation than a world with a single superpower.⁵

c) I take my third example from the article published in *The New York Times* in April 2002 by the British historian and eastern Europe expert, Timothy Garton

Ash (who teaches at Oxford but also works at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University), with the unambiguous title, "The Peril of Too Much Power."⁶ This is also a voice "from America." Garton Ash begins by stating that "for most of the twentieth century, the defining political question was: What do you think of Russia? At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is: What do you think of America?" He deems the picture of America as "a dangerous selfish giant, blundering around the world" and "an anthology of what is wrong with capitalism" to be a caricature, especially if this serves to prove the moral superiority of Europe: "Of course America can't be reduced in this way. Apart from anything else, it is much too large, too diverse, too much a cornucopia of combinations and contradictions to allow any simple interpretation."

He goes on to recall how "America is part of everyone's imaginative life, through movies, music, television and the Web, whether you grow up in Bilbao, Beijing, or Bombay. Everyone has a New York in their heads, even if they have never been there." In a sense it is not the existence of an American, but of a European culture that is doubtful. But then comes the problem of the use of America's power and the effects of the enormous imbalance of power in the world. Not since Rome has a single power enjoyed such superiority, he explains, "but the Roman colossus only bestrode one part of the world. Stripped of its anti-American overtones, the French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine's term *hyperpower* is apt." "The fundamental problem is that America today has too much power for anyone's good, including its own." The example of US policy in the Middle East clearly shows that there is a problem when the Americans intervene as well as when they refuse to intervene: "When a nation has so much power, what it doesn't do is as fateful as what it does." Garton Ash especially fears the consequences of an American (or American-led) war in Iraq without any simultaneous initiative to negotiate a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which would unite the Islamic world against the West while dividing Europe from America, "with disastrous consequences for years to come." Finally, he explains that, "contrary to what many Europeans think, the problem with American power is not that it is *American*," but that it is *unchecked*. What applies to domestic politics (and is embodied in the American Constitution), i.e., "the necessity for each power to be checked by at least one other," also applies to world politics – hence the crucial question: "Who, then, should check and complement American power?" Internal democratic controls are no longer sufficient or working. "International agencies, starting with the United Nations, and transnational nongovernmental organizations are a place to start. But they alone are not enough. My answer is Europe – Europe as an economic equal to the United States and Europe as a close-knit group of states with a long diplomatic and military experience." A difficulty remains, however: "the gulf between its military capacity and that of the US grows ever wider." Europeans therefore face a "complicated double task": "to strengthen [their] capacity to act outside [their] own borders while disentangling the idea of a stronger Europe from its sticky anti-American integument" – in

short, making Europe a “partner” (with a capacity to resist...) but not a “rival” of the US. Garton Ash firmly believes that the US itself has no real interest in remaining in the position of “lonely” hyperpower.

d) And finally I want to quote from a recent article by Edward Said, “Europe versus America.”⁷ Reporting from England, Said emphasizes cultural differences between the US and Europe, especially the disproportionate power of religious fundamentalism: “religion and ideology play a far greater role in the former than in the latter... the vast number of Christian fanatics in the US, who form the core of George Bush’s support and at 60 million strong represent the single most powerful voting block in US history.” This American fundamentalism has merged with the conservative ideology of “American Values” developed during the Cold War and has become “a menace to the world.” It produces the “unilateralist” external policy, the belief that the US, as an “elect nation,” has a divine mission to be fulfilled by all means. This leads to the only seemingly paradoxical combination of deep anti-Semitism (“many of these Christians... believe that all the Jews of the World must gather in Israel so that the Messiah can come again”) and the global threat of the Arab-Islamic world confronting Israel. Said then embarks on a synthetic comparison of the ideologies and political systems on both sides of the Atlantic: “There is no trace of this sort of thing in Europe that I can detect. Nor is there that lethal combination of money and power on a vast scale that controls elections and national policy at will.” In practice, Europe remains more democratic, its citizens have more effective control over its politicians, they are less exposed to ideological blackmail when they dissent from official policy (to be “un-American,” the cardinal sin...), they have a less Manichean view of the world. “No wonder then that America has never had an organized left or real opposition party as has been the case in every European country.”

But finally comes the concern, which is double: that Europe lose its political identity, and that it prove unable to act as a pole of resistance against American unilateralism:

Tony Blair’s wholeheartedly pro-American position therefore seems even more puzzling to an outsider like myself. I am comforted that even to his own people he seems like a humourless aberration, a European who has decided in effect to obliterate his own identity... I still have time to learn when it will be that Europe will come to its senses and assume the countervailing role to America that its size and history entitle to play. Until then the war approaches inexorably...

Contradictions and Illusions

We certainly cannot ignore this call coming from the intellectuals of America (and also from other parts of the world, albeit not exactly in the same terms; each would deserve its own analysis). It really touches our common interests. We may observe that all these texts have a certain “family resemblance.” But we suspect

that they include deep contradictions, and we fear that they have substituted an imaginary Europe for the real one.

Obviously (and understandably), some American liberals share the view that America is the model democracy – they are especially concerned with the future of democracy in America, which they think should be an interest of the whole world – while others, from a more “global” or “systemic” point of view, believe that the democratic character of the US will itself entirely depend on the way America behaves towards the rest of the world (any country that oppresses others cannot be itself a free country). Even more striking are the diverse ways in which these voices refer to the great divides of the world after the Cold War. Some of them ask us to “be Western” fully, others want us to “be European” proper, i.e., to destroy the fake identity of the Western World (or Camp) – thus perhaps pushing America more effectively back toward its own “European” traditions. Others imagine that Europe may become the intermediary, or at least one of the intermediaries, in the great “negotiation” that should take place in the end between the American “Empire” and its real “others”: the peoples and cultures from East and South, the Mediterranean, the Third World. These considerable differences are indeed mirrored in our own reactions.

But what I find even more striking is the latent tension between two opposite ways of formulating the call to Europe: either as a demand for *checks and balances* to countervail the American (super)power, or a demand for *mediation* within the “war of civilizations” that America is apparently now waging. If you choose the first formulation, you are in a “strategic” logic, where the relations of forces ultimately resolve into military terms, quantitatively and qualitatively (how many troops and weapons? how do you use them?). Why in this case address Europe rather than, say, Russia, Japan, or China? Perhaps because the authors of these texts more or less transfer onto Europe the ideal model of “force merged with right” (the rule of law, the constitution of liberty) that they fear America is now betraying. If you choose the second formulation, you are in a logic of “moral” and “social” influence, which certainly does not ignore relations of forces, but sees them as only one aspect of a more comprehensive process of cultural transformation. In that case, the apparently irreversible gap in military power between the US and Europe is not necessarily a handicap for Europe. But the question of whether it really offers an *alternative* to American policy becomes more embarrassing. Clearly, “multilateralism” does not mean exactly the same thing from these two points of view. The first is compatible with a confrontation between rival “isolationisms” (more or less what Chancellor Gerhard Schröder was reproached for during his last electoral campaign, when he “unilaterally” announced that Germany would not follow the US in any war in Iraq⁸). Whereas the second implies that political isolation today, among allies or even adversaries, has become obsolete and impossible to achieve. Rather than a “right of intervention,” what we are confronted with would be a “fact of intervention,” i.e., interdependence: we cannot ignore it, only perhaps organize it and modify its consequences.

Certainly it would be interesting to examine how certain European voices, official or not, reacted to these demands. But let me refer instead to the way they have been quickly refuted in America. I am particularly thinking of the essay on "Power and Weakness," published by former State Department expert and member of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Robert Kagan, which has received considerable attention on both sides of the Atlantic.⁹ "It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world," writes Kagan, targeting the kind of "European opinion" on whose emergence and development American liberals place their hopes. "Europeans believe they are moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation." But while Europe would have entered "a post-historical paradise, the realization of Immanuel Kant's *perpetual peace*," the United States "remains mired in history, exercising power in the anarchic Hobbesian world where international rules are unreliable and where security and the promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might."

One may wonder, then, whence the European rejection of the use of force as a means to solve international conflicts originates? This is not, says Kagan, because Europeans possess a special character or nature. In past centuries, when they dominated the world, they never shied from using force to increase or maintain their power, but they have become weaker, and quite simply they no longer have the capacity for power politics. As it were, Europe and America have "exchanged" their political cultures: it is now Europe that has adopted the Wilsonian discourse, dreaming of "civilizing the world" by putting an end to war and doing away with *Machtpolitik*, whose terrible effects Europeans have experienced on their own soil. Nice project indeed . . . with one proviso: what makes European pacifism and moral conscience materially possible is American military power itself:

The irony is that this trans-Atlantic disagreement is the fruit of successful trans-Atlantic policies. As Joschka Fischer and other Europeans admit, the United States made the new Europe possible by leading the democracies to victory in World War II and the Cold War and by providing the solution to the age-old 'German problem.' Even today, Europe's rejection of power politics ultimately depends on America's willingness to use force around the world against those who still do believe in power politics. Europe's Kantian order depends on the United States using power according to the old Hobbesian rules.

As a result, "this has put Europeans and Americans on a collision course." Formally speaking they remain allies, but the former see the latter as a "rogue colossus," and the latter see the former as an obstacle, if not a potential traitor. Perhaps it would be better to acknowledge this contradiction, rather than desperately trying to fill the cultural gap.

I don't believe I distort the meaning of Kagan's analysis if I say in a nutshell: the "European" position, expressing something like a religion of law, is at the same

time *powerless* (“how many divisions, Europe?,” we might ask, echoing Stalin) and *illegitimate* (since it disguises a historical regression as moral progress, misrepresenting its real weakness as an imaginary strength). Finally, it is *self-destructive*, since it undermines the defense capacities of the western democracies, under attack everywhere in the world, which remain their only safety. It is decidedly not America that has “too much power,” but Europe that has too little...

A double question is at stake here. *There is a question concerning the “power” of Europe.* In a sense, Europe as a whole is even *less* powerful (not *more*) than its constitutive nation-states, or its power is less effective, harder to implement (hence the project of many: to “reinforce” it, to achieve more “integration”...). *And there is a question concerning the “political capacity” of Europe* in today’s world, in particular its capacity to help resolve conflicts (be they “old” or “new,” as Mary Kaldor would put it¹⁰), and hence the concept of the political by which it is to be measured.

Here is the position I now want to develop: undoubtedly, from a certain point of view, *Europe does not exist, it is not a political “subject”* (the subject of a political power). And in this sense to ask Europe to disturb ongoing processes and plans, to “check and balance” other powers, is a pure illusion. But on the other hand you cannot (or you can less and less) reduce the idea of “mediation” to *the alternative of power politics (ultimately relying on military force) and “moral” powerlessness*, even if you admit that it must eventually find some diplomatic and institutional expression. The question then becomes: how to imagine *a change in the relationship between “politics” and “power,” or perhaps better, in the very notion of “power.”*

I agree that the European political capacity, the condition for its autonomy, in a sense simply does not exist. “Economic weight” is a weak argument, especially in a globalized economy. Even if you crown it with a (partially) common currency, it still represents only a variable statistical aggregate, precisely as long as no corresponding “strategy” or “economic (therefore also social) policy” exists. If you reflect on the recent confrontation at the UN Security Council about the right of the US to launch what it called itself a “preventive war” against Iraq, you see clearly that it was not “Europe” that provisionally checked the power of the US, or at least deprived it of whatever legitimacy it might otherwise have claimed. It was a conjunctural (and highly fragile) convergence of middle-range powers (France, Germany, Russia, China, Mexico...) that refused to become completely “marginalized” in international relations. They did not include all of Europe, and not all of them were European. In addition, they wouldn’t have achieved anything without certain internal divisions of the American strategy itself.

Above all, there is a strong case for Europe’s incapacity to *solve its own problems without American “help.”* Europe proves unable to solve the Irish problem, where two of its old nations are involved, each with its own “diaspora.” It proved

unable to prevent the civil war in (former) Yugoslavia, which produced the worst crimes against humanity in Europe since Nazism, whether by offering a framework for development and coexistence to the various Balkan communities (which belong since time immemorial to the European ensemble), or by launching a military intervention to neutralize the aggressors and protect the populations (after which it was NATO under American leadership that did it, with questionable results). The US then has good reason to argue that, ever since the two world wars, it was its intervention that stopped the bloodshed and opposed savagery on European soil (although it tends to “forget” that the Soviet “patriotic war” against Nazism played at least an equally important role). What seems to be a characteristic of the twentieth century and could characterize the twenty-first as well is not a “European mediation” in conflicts involving America, but rather an “American mediation” in conflicts that tear apart Europe and prove that it is unable to provide an effective political expression for the historical and moral identity it claims to represent. And this is equally true of the way Europe deals with violent situations at its “borders” (and, in fact, in which it is so intimately involved that the distinction with the previous “internal” cases sometimes seems quite artificial). Algeria, Palestine-Israel, Chechnya – these are the names of a long series of shameful collective resignations of Europe. Each time, in different ways that stem from its colonial history, its own ethnic and religious divisions, its wars and genocides, Europe was involved as a cause or a mirror of these “unsolvable” conflicts whose continual deterioration threatens its own civility and moral identity.

History seems to show that in order to exist, any political entity (call it a “state” in the broad sense) needs an “Idea” or a universal project to unify its human and material forces. But Europe’s project can no longer be to subjugate the world, as in the colonial era. Nor can it be a messianic project of announcing (after the Christian or the Communist model) the birth of the “New Man.” Indeed, Europe can try to exercise a “civilizing” influence in the world, and to build the moral conditions of its own construction, but in order to do so it has to be more active. By abandoning the Chechens to the total war waged against them by post-Soviet Russia, Europe maintains its tradition of blindness in the face of genocide and effectively denies the “European” character of Russia, destroying the possibility of finally lifting the “Iron Curtain” (or its latest replica). The Russians can do what they like since they are not “applying” to the EU... By practically endorsing the plans of the US-Israel alliance in the Middle East (with some limited counterweights: periodical statements that the UN resolutions should be enforced, humanitarian projects that neither protect the Palestinians from colonization and state-terrorism nor completely convince them to reject terrorism), the Europeans help the development of a new “generalized” anti-Semitism in the world, where Judeophobia and Arabophobia paradoxically merge. By keeping silent on the crimes of the Algerian army (which seem to match the crimes of the Islamic terrorist groups) and backing the repression of democratic movements by other authoritarian regimes in northern Africa, while at the same time racially and

culturally discriminating against their own “immigrant” populations from the Maghreb, they provoke a disastrous collapse of the “Euro-Mediterranean” project, to which I will return.

But, we may ask, is this the only way to analyze the situation? I would suggest that the new “global” conjuncture offers other alternatives. Undoubtedly the cultural divisions and conflicting interests of the world also affect us in Europe and could become acute. There is to date no strong symbol of a common identity that could help neutralize or suppress them. Undoubtedly Europe and America are not separate spaces, any more than Europe and Eurasia, or Europe and the Middle East. In this respect, some countries owe to their history, their geography, or their demographic composition the virtual capacity to “open the gates” and “build bridges”; whether you think of Britain, Ukraine, Turkey, or the Balkans, it would be absurd to try to locate them on just one side of an external “European border.” Undoubtedly Europe does not have the capacity to build a *Grossraum* on the continent, to impose a kind of European Monroe Doctrine (a geostrategic idea invented in the 1930s by Carl Schmitt to justify German imperialism, now retrieved by some in a democratic context...).¹¹ But you can read all this in the opposite sense. No European “identity” can be *opposed* to others in the world because there are no absolute *borderlines* between the historical and cultural territory of Europe and the surrounding spaces. And there are no absolute borderlines *because Europe as such is a “borderline”* (or “a Borderland,” to borrow Scott Malcomson’s beautiful title for a beautiful book on the Bosphorus and its region¹²). More precisely, it is a palimpsest of borderlines – a superimposition of heterogeneous relations to other histories and cultures, which are reproduced within its own history and culture.

We must therefore focus our attention on a very singular pattern of dialectical interactions between the “interior” and the “exterior.” This was precisely the theme of a recent essay by the Director of the Institut français des Relations Internationales, Thierry de Montbrial, acting Chair of the French Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, “Europe: la dialectique intérieur-extérieur.”¹³ Like many others, Montbrial draws lessons from recent international events. He too agrees that there is an amazing disproportion between Europe’s limited influence in international relations and its economic prosperity, a military gap that automatically confers the responsibility for decision-making in security matters upon the US, and he depicts a sharp contrast between Europe’s incapacity to define a common foreign policy and the “strong demand on Europe” that he perceives in the world, from the former Soviet empire to Latin America. He quotes a “Brazilian authority” who explains this “insufficient offer” as a consequence of Europe’s remaining “ashamed of the way it destroyed itself in the first half of the twentieth century...” His own explanation is different, however. It takes the form of a dialectical reversal. In the history of the building of nation-states, it was the strong pre-existing national unity, feelings of belonging and identity, that made it possible for the state to mobilize all the human and material resources needed to

achieve international goals. But now, in the case of the European project, however impressive the achievements since 1957 may appear, the reverse is true: a “European Europe” can emerge only if foreign policy shapes domestic policy. A truly unified foreign and defense policy are impossible immediately, but a “combined intervention” of the European nations in the “great politics” of world affairs (e.g., decisions concerning war and peace, as in the Iraq case) could result from a permanent alliance between the three major European powers (Great Britain, France, Germany), which would agree to consult the others following certain established rules...

This idea of a “dialectical relationship” between interior and exterior is well meant, but I fear something like a *petitio principii* in the (very conventional) way it is used here. Why should it be easier to have a “common political will” emerge at the level of the three European “great (in reality, medium) powers,” rather than at the level of all members of the EU, or rather than developing a majority opinion at the European level, especially when it comes to discussing “world affairs”? The opposite could very well be the case. But above all I think that the change of method advocated here must be much more radical if we are to cope with our new situation. I myself would suggest that we draw all the consequences from the fact that *Europe is a borderland* rather than “has” (or “will have”) *borders* – which quite naturally leads us to completely reexamine the relationships between “strategy,” “power,” “agency,” and “subjectivity” (or “identity”). *Agency* must have a priority over *identity* if we are to overcome the dilemma of a strategy that presupposes the autonomy of the subject which conceives and implements it. What is at stake is indeed a complete change in the way *relations of power* are calculated, imputed, and recognized on a world scale.

Towards a European “Anti-strategic” Policy?

I am convinced that only a transformation in the way we understand the concept of politics in relation to the idea of power will allow us to tendentially escape the aporias affecting the notion of a “European policy” and give a realistic content to the notion of a “European mediation,” which combines such opposite demands as increasing Europe’s role in world affairs and deconstructing the myths of European closure and exclusive identity (“Fortress Europe,” in its most aggressive formulation). How, then, to both *individualize and desubstantialize Europe*? Is this really possible?

It will only become possible if, responding to the calls addressed to us and drawing lessons from historical experience, we criticize to the roots the presupposition of most of the arguments concerning politics and power: that an effective action can take place only when the agent has exclusive control over some resources and is able to use them as a unified “sovereign subject,” at the very least enjoying a stable and recognized identity. This was typically the objective of the classical nation-state, and the EU seems to be forever searching for similar constitutional and administrative tools to achieve the same result. What I suggest is that

we explore a completely different path, where *power does not predate action but is rather its result*, in the sense that it depends on the goals one wants to achieve. It is action, or agency, that produces the degree and distribution of power, not the reverse. As Michel Foucault used to explain, agency is “power acting upon power”; it is therefore the (efficient) use of *the other’s power*, which also results from its own orientation.¹⁴ For the same reason, a “collective identity” is not a given, a metaphysical prerequisite of agency, or least of all a mythical image that could be forcefully imposed upon reality by inventing this or that historical criterion (e.g., “Christian Europe”¹⁵). It is a *quality* of collective agency, which changes form and content in time as new agents come into play and new solidarities are built among those who, not long ago, were ignoring or fighting each other.

It will be useful to recall, in a schematic manner, the historical experiences that contributed to shaping contemporary Europe, especially in the past century. The lessons to be drawn are clearly not beyond dispute; they can be interpreted variously in different places on the continent and according to particular social and political affiliations. But they have become to a large extent part of our collective memory, active in our reflections and in the institutional realities of Europe.

a) A first lesson – let us call it *the lesson of tragedy*, because it concerns the “civil wars” that devastated the European community of peoples – initially seems to be purely negative. However, it gives its deep roots to what I would call, following Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, a “transnational public order” (not reducible to a form of moral “pacifism”) that contradicts the “Clausewitzian” equivalence of the “means” of war and the “means” of politics.¹⁶ Retrospectively, the interstate wars that periodically broke into the history of “peoples” and modified their respective powers, leading in the end to mass exterminations during the world wars and even after (as I recalled), are only one aspect of a more general system of violent conflicts which also includes “wars” between classes, religious communities, and ideologies. Here it is far from easy to distinguish between what depends mainly on ethnic, religious, or social and ideological determinations. If a lesson can be drawn from the long twentieth-century “European Civil War,”¹⁷ it should be that no “absolute victory,” no final suppression or neutralization of the “enemy,” is possible. Whenever you believe you can reach this “final” solution, you create the conditions for more destruction and self-destruction. Mutual extermination as such does not have an “end” – or, better said, it can reach an end only when it is radically deprived of its legitimacy, and if collective, institutionalized counterpowers emerge.

b) But this is an incomplete lesson, and in some sense a blind one, since it restricts the problem of violence *within a “metropolitan” framework* that cannot really be isolated. Only recently, and with considerable difficulty, have we become conscious of the fact that “barbarity” indeed circulated for centuries

between the dominant center and the dominated periphery. The critical labor of memory concerning the violence of European conquest and rule did not start with decolonization, but long after the event, as in the case of the French war in Algeria. It was clearly encouraged by the massive presence, increasingly legitimate despite all ongoing discrimination, of “postcolonial” populations within the European nations. Much remains to be uncovered and acknowledged, but this growing consciousness of the realities of colonial history, a history that has made Europe what it is, has now profoundly disturbed Eurocentric visions that used to contrast “our” civilization with “their” barbarity: the greatest barbarity certainly was not on the side we imagined, although it is not an “imperialist” privilege either (witness the tragic development of postcolonial ethnic conflicts in Africa and elsewhere).

The *positive* counterpart of all this is a powerful, irreversible process of hybridization and multiculturalism now transforming Europe in a way that differs considerably from the American “melting pot,” even if you consider such “cosmopolitan” cities as New York and Los Angeles. It started with specific, reciprocal ties between former metropolises and their former colonies (France and northern and western Africa; Britain and India, Pakistan, and the West Indies; the Netherlands and Indonesia; etc.), but is now quite generalized as a pattern of interaction between Europe as such and its “exterior.” If the first lesson to be drawn from recent European history could be called a tragic lesson of public order, we might call this one a lesson of *otherness*. It leads Europe to recognize, albeit with considerable hesitations and setbacks, that the other is a necessary component of its “identity,” and therefore of its future vitality, its “power.”

c) I would like to add a third lesson which cannot be isolated from the other aspects of European history, but has its own specific implications. It concerns the possibility of tendentially transforming the violence of social antagonisms into collective political capacities by combining the different resources for *institutionalizing conflicts* (providing antagonistic interests with formal “representation” within the state, instead of suppressing and criminalizing them), setting up *public and private* instances of social regulation (or distributing the regulating functions of “law” and “contract” in a more or less stable manner), and progressively introducing *new basic rights*, which add new positive “liberties” or, as Amartya Sen calls them, “capabilities,”¹⁸ to the existing rights of the individual, which thus become essential components of citizenship. We might call this lesson “Machiavelli’s Theorem,” referring to the political model that can be found in famous pages of his *Discourses*.¹⁹

I would admit that globalization has weakened this lesson, or confronts it with a dilemma, since it places nation-states in a defensive position, restricting their ability to mediate social conflicts and leaving them without a solution to the urgent problem of the constitution of a new “citizenship” in Europe. But the fact remains that Europe, in this respect, has a singular, if not privileged, position in the world. Europe certainly has no monopoly on pluralist, representative democracy,

but its own history of social movements (acute class struggles, to be explicit) has produced a level of institutional recognition of basic social rights that is still unrivalled in today's world. It has no monopoly on either religious tolerance or intolerance, but its own history of confessional divisions, heresies, and wars of religion has produced a form of "secularization" of politics and society that goes far beyond the classical idea of "tolerance," allowing a recognition that religious memberships are an important aspect of the constitution of "civil society" without either creating state religions or, conversely, accepting a "free" development of religions in the form of what Max Weber called a "market of salvation goods."²⁰

It would seem that this last lesson has to do with an original elaboration of *conflictual democracy*, where different heterogeneous constitutional principles are combined (therefore contributing to a revival of the old notion of the "mixed constitution," but again in a way that differs significantly from the American experience). This combination includes the development of *legal or formal democracy*, ensuring that the individuals who claim them are recognized, ultimately, as the true bearers of rights. It includes the development of *social or substantial democracy*, ensuring that inequalities are addressed and conflicting interests taken into account, so that individual freedom is not simply equivalent to competition, and competition to the elimination of the weakest within the "city." Finally, it refers to an idea of *expansive democracy* (in the language of Gramsci) or *democratic invention* (in the language of Claude Lefort), which means that politics remains open to the integration of new elements into the "common part" of mankind, and that there can be no "end of history."²¹

I should not be misunderstood: none of these "lessons" seems to me irreversible, forever valid, or unquestionable. All of them clearly remain fragile and ambiguous. After experiencing extermination on its own soil, Europe believed that it had become the natural champion of international law, which in many cases it does not itself obey. It has become conscious of the positive value of the other as such, but it continues to exclude people by systematically combining cultural criteria (practically equivalent to race) and economic discrimination. To be poor and non-white in Europe is not a good situation: it means overexploitation and insecurity, even pariah status... Europe has invented a secular state and society, but in an environment where Christian denominations were completely dominant. Many European historians and theologians even believe that it was Christianity that separated the sacred and the secular realms in general. As a consequence, secularism can be brandished as a shield against other forms of religious universalism (above all Islam) which are antagonistic to Christianity, and becomes an instrument for protecting "domestic" cults (the attitude towards Judaism in this respect being highly ambivalent, combining age-old anti-Semitism with the recognition generated by the Holocaust). The dominant form of European "secularism" (this is particularly the case with French *laïcité*) is also a form of resistance to real multiculturalism, since many cultures are deemed too "religious" to be acceptable.

Indeed, it is not far from transforming Western culture into a secular form of religion. Finally, the “European” conception of conflictual democracy that I have described is more a past ideal than a living reality: it tends to revert to purely corporatist forms as economic deregulation and globalization deprive it of its material ability to protect citizens from the brutal fluctuations of the labor market and the continuous decrease in the level of welfare.

However, these deep contradictions are part of a dynamic whose consequence could and should be to continue and broaden the European experience of politics by mobilizing all our forces – economic, cultural, intellectual, social, or legal, but also “external” – to transform international relations. Such a project would not be an exercise of power politics; it would not aim at constituting a new (great) power, but rather at constituting a *new type of power* that no one can appropriate (not even the forces that could more effectively push in that direction). This type of power is essentially a *new correlation among existing forces*; it becomes effective inasmuch as structures and relations of forces evolve, resistances and alternatives to the dominant tendencies become more consistent. This is why I preferred the expression “anti-strategic politics.” But it is not to say that we can do without initiatives, orientations, and even slogans. I have no intention of defining a “program,” but I will try to list some priorities, being aware that they concern long-term evolutions, where obstacles, setbacks, and rectifications will be inevitable.

1. *Collective Security: For Protection, Against Fortification*

In order to transform international relations, we need a *model of collective security* which opens the possibility of escaping the confrontation between “terrorist” and “counter-terrorist” forces. But the notion of “collective security,” which is constitutive of the texts on which international institutions are based (in particular the UN Charter²²), cannot remain purely formal. It cannot simply demand that the use of military force be subjected to the (admittedly very restrictive) conditions registered in international law. It must (again) become a *political goal*, thus involving *decisions* on certain crucial issues. In my view, the line of demarcation clearly passes between a *necessity* and an *impossibility*. It is necessary to take into account the real complexity and deep social roots of the *causes* which feed violence and encourage recourse to terrorist practices and ideologies everywhere in the world – not only in the “peripheries” ridden with poverty, humiliation, and corruption, but also in the “centers,” where inequalities and discrimination are growing (with probably no less corruption). But it is impossible to blindly accept violence and terrorism as real answers to exploitation and domination. This answer is neither legitimate nor effective; it destroys the very cause in whose name it is exercised. Collective security (which we should not identify with the “unilateral” defense of the *established order*, especially if this “order” more and more resembles violent disorder) therefore requires rejecting the projective

illusion of transforming the main victims of insecurity into its ultimate authors, but also leaving aside prophetic discourses which depict “the capitalist system” as the hidden cause of all violence and conflict, including those which block its own development.

What, then, are the complementary requisites of a viable model of collective security? It must maintain the possibility of at the same time actively fighting against injustice *and* combining the actions of intelligence and police services under legal control against terrorist networks, if their existence is proved (which seems to be the case of Al Qaeda, although the various powers involved – to begin with, the US – clearly do not want all its dimensions clarified). There is no doubt in my mind that, in this respect, if we agree that, for various reasons, there is currently a special threat of “Islamic terrorism” (or terrorism fueled by fundamentalist Islamist ideology), the ultimate condition for an effective “counter-terrorist” policy is an active commitment to democratic regimes emerging from within the Islamic world. Only the ensemble of societies and states where Islam is the essential cultural reference will be able to “uproot” Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, with the assistance of the international community. A model of collective security therefore rules out the substitution of joint operations that are either too difficult or too embarrassing for the hegemonic power and its clients with potentially exterministic and imperialist wars that mainly serve objectives of regional domination and prestige. The same could be said, indeed, about plans to develop the missile defense program. Above all, a policy of collective security must systematically eliminate all the factors that lead to the merging of violence “from above” and “from below,” symmetrically feeding fundamentalist ideologies and economic interests around the world.

2. General Disarmament: Who is in Charge?

It is meaningless to talk about collective security if the global level of armaments is not reduced. International institutions are not only in charge of negotiating and settling conflicts; they have been created with the goal of generalizing and controlling the process of disarmament. This is the true basis of the idea of “multilateralism,” and it cannot be set aside the moment it officially becomes a question of obtaining (if necessary, compelling) the “disarmament” of one or several states whose weapons, quantitatively and qualitatively, are dangerous “for the whole of mankind” (many of them former allies and clients of this or that superpower who changed sides). By definition, no state (“rogue” or not) can be excepted from this rule, since precisely the populations of the whole world are likely to become victims of aggressions or, conversely, of retaliations and preventive wars against particular aggressors. It had been repeatedly shown that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – and, more generally, of the constant rise of the level of military equipment in the world – has to be traced back to the great powers themselves, which produce them and develop most of the relevant research programs

(Iraq bought its lethal germs in the US...). More generally, it is meaningless to speak of a multilateralism of warfare, which in practice means an arms race, whereas a multilateralism of disarmament is surrounded by obstacles, but thinkable.

The practical consequence is that Europe should not accept the comparison currently drawn (even by honest commentators) between the “war on terrorism” and the war against Nazism, once again raising the specter of “Munich,” when the idea of disarmament is suggested. It should reject NATO plans to start a new cycle of military development (including capacities to “project” force outside Europe, to join or replace the US Army in some of its operations).²³ On the contrary, it should immediately raise the issue of a long-term reduction in the level of armaments around the world, concerning both the “new” and the “old” concentrations of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, including European arsenals and exports, under international control and inspections.

There are obvious difficulties with such a perspective, which are only too likely to lead to its abandonment. It contradicts powerful private and public interests in the production and consumption of arms, which continuously increase the level of insecurity throughout the world, producing a general militarization of social life and transforming large regions of the world into zones of endemic violence and death. To speak of disarmament, one might say, is to beg the question, to suppose that the lack of trust between mutually hostile societies – which do not share the same historical experiences and have opposite conceptions of law and politics; which are either very rich or very poor – has already been overcome. This is true enough; it proves that any serious program of disarmament has a number of material conditions, including social and political changes all over the world. This is also the reason why we should not simply identify disarmament with pacifism. Controlled disarmament should be compatible with modernized national or supra-national defense policies, provided that negotiations take place to replace offensive programs with defensive ones. Consequently and above all, it means that “the world” agrees to offer *guarantees and means of security to the American people*, which, in the long run, would appear better than the prospects of isolation, fortification, and counter-terror on a global scale. This may indeed require the experience of tragic events, such as the attacks on September 11 (or worse, which is thinkable...).

What currently blocks a process of general disarmament? The idea that there are states and forces that *ought to be disarmed* and others that are *in charge of disarming them*, or conceive of themselves as responsible for disarming others, which means that they cannot be controlled in turn. An old problem indeed, which masks the claim of *absolute sovereignty*. In practice, today only one power can make this claim: the US. This is the major obstacle to the idea of general disarmament, however multilateral and progressive. But there is a deep paradox in the notion of sovereignty, which makes it anything but unequivocal: the more the American imperial state claims to be sovereign or imposes its absolute superiority on others, the less the American people as a community of citizens enjoy sovereign

rights and powers within their own territory. The logical consequence to be drawn from this paradox is that ultimately *only the American people will be able to more or less completely disarm the American superpower*, provided they see the necessity and advantage of doing so. The American people are responsible for that, but they will exercise their responsibility only if they communicate with other peoples more than is now the case. Sovereignty is a fate of solitude, whereas negotiation and exchange reinforce one another. We have seen that some American liberals ask for a European legal, political, or strategic “initiative”: the counterpart is that we demand that America and American society “open” themselves. At the deepest level, it is indeed the same process, and the same problem. But if we want to be convinced that this is unavoidable, we need only imagine an evolution (not entirely unlikely) in which the American nation collectively acquires the same psychology that can be observed today in the case of Israel, and the dreadful consequences it would have... This is enough to conclude that it is time for European progressives to drop the “anti-imperialist” idea that American problems of security, militarized society and economy, etc. are not our problems, and that they ought to manage by themselves.

3. Local and Global Processes: Who Is Accountable, Who Can Mediate?

I am not trying to introduce a new brand of pacifism. I speak of collective security and argue against the current for a new cycle of general disarmament, but I don't speak against “interventions” – at least *any intervention* – in the violent conflicts and civil wars that tend to shape world politics today. I have recalled recent examples, both inside Europe and close to it – Ireland, Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Palestine – that show the necessity of intervention: not only *humanitarian* interventions, but also *coercive* interventions making use of the means that derive from the contemporary intersections of economic, technological, and cultural processes. Not even military “forces of intervention” should be excluded as a matter of principle, if the conditions exist for their introduction.

However, Europe might draw another lesson from its own experience: military conflicts where ethnic, religious, and cultural communities which are at the same time extremely unequal and intermixed confront each other (a general characteristic of what Mary Kaldor calls the “new wars,”²⁴ expressing “organized violence in the era of globalization”) can only be resolved *locally*. Better said, *the local and global determinations should switch roles*. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is exemplary here. Everyone now understands that the roots of further hostilities were there in the very terms of the Oslo Agreements and the ensuing “peace process,”²⁵ because they masked objective contradictions under carefully imprecise formulations, and could be immediately manipulated, not only by the Israeli government, but also by the Palestinian Authority. But the Oslo Agreements had one important positive aspect: they implied that, with the help of external mediating forces, the solution should be found *by the conflicting groups themselves*.

You frequently hear just the opposite nowadays, both in America and in Europe: that “Israeli and Palestinians have proved unable to discuss.” The result is a merging of the causes of the conflict into elements of a global conflict (including the identification of local adversaries with the macro-forces of “terrorism” and “counter-terrorism”), producing destruction and hatred that each day become more irreversible.

What I tentatively call “anti-strategy” therefore also implies systematically giving primacy to local determinations over “global” ones – because they refer to the specific historical and geographical roots of the conflict, which are also dialectically the bases for its solution, and because they allow responsibilities to be assigned, making concrete forces accountable for their actions, whereas the primacy of the global nourishes passivity by suggesting that everything is determined at the “global” level, i.e., nowhere. But to emphasize the importance of the local level is not to isolate it: we should neither deny globalization nor fetishize it as a “destiny,” but rather explore all the possibilities for setting up “multilateral” interventions which provide the conflicting subjects with observers, mediators, and witnesses who are *themselves accountable*, in order to build a space for coexistence. On the stage of globalized violence, there are today many more or less powerful and dangerous actors, but apparently only one “judge,” who is or seems to be as powerful (and therefore also as dangerous) as all the others put together. However, seen from another angle, this stage also offers many potential “mediators”: Europe is one of them, albeit not the only one. It is perhaps no accident that many of them, like Europe itself, are transnational orders, which can be found or will emerge in the near future in East Asia, in the *Cono Sur* of Latin America, in southern Africa, perhaps even in the Middle East, where a renovated “Arab League,” both democratized and liberated from the dream of the “Arab nation” (or transferring it onto more rational prospects), could play a decisive role. Maybe we could say that these potential “mediators” are the true “anti-systemic forces” of today and tomorrow, to borrow one of Immanuel Wallerstein’s favorite categories.²⁶

4. *The “Fault Line” Reduced, or the Euro-Mediterranean Ensemble*

In order to be more precise, I will now make a critical use of the debate caused by Samuel Huntington’s book *The Clash of Civilizations*, with its strategic proposal of a new “world order” based on the simultaneous acceptance of a “multicultural world” and rejection of “multiculturalism” within the West, and more specifically within America (the belonging of America and Europe to a single “Western civilization” being one of the unquestioned assumptions of Huntington’s book).²⁷ My “anti-strategic” idea that we push for the primacy of local over global determinations in order to promote the “mediated” resolution of conflicts will remain meaningless unless it is possible to define an *open, non-exclusive* frame of reference which is nevertheless geographically and historically (and therefore also

“culturally”) *sufficiently binding*. In such a frame of reference, conflicts would ultimately appear as “civil wars,” i.e., wars whose very violence and “irreconcilable” character force the community to assert itself, offering simultaneous recognition to the conflicting camps, and thus paving the way for mutual recognition or the building of “civil peace.” There seems to be an enigma, if not a logical flaw, in such a formulation: *which community* is able to play such a role? To answer the question, we must fully admit the circularity involved in the idea of creating a community in order to promote a solution for the problems which are its obstacles. No *preexisting community*, based on traditional membership and “roots,” can play this historic role, but only a community of alliances that is instituted *with a view to favoring this kind of recognition*. Let us note in passing that, to a large extent, this was precisely how modern nation-states were “invented” – as a *non-existing* solution for the problem of religious, feudal, regional conflicts, but on a different scale and following procedures that are now obsolete.²⁸

I believe that the “Euro-Mediterranean ensemble,” whose development is at the same time advocated and constantly hindered by multiple obstacles, including phobias profoundly buried in the collective unconscious stemming from centuries of religious and colonial conflicts, is nevertheless exactly such a frame of reference.²⁹ Its progressive construction, through negotiations, common projects, and simultaneous mediations in the common interest, is itself a way to affirm the originality of Europe’s positions in international relations, where the assertion of a specific identity goes hand in hand with its (seeming) opposite: the inclusion of the other within itself. This is where Huntington’s conceptualization can give us a precious *inverted* indication (a *counterfactual*, as logicians might say), since the central notion of his book is not only the concept of “borderline” separating different populations and territories, but more precisely the concept of a *global borderline* (now replacing the geopolitical borderline that used to separate the “camps” in the Cold War), which appears as a real “*faultline*.” It is along such “faultlines” that the new (coming) type of war is to develop (e.g., wars between the West and the Islamic world, or the West and the rising “Oriental” ensemble around China). According to Huntington, *it is impossible to reduce faultlines*; you can only “freeze” the violence they tend to unleash and organize the world order around the fragile equilibrium of competing, ultimately incompatible civilizations, essentially external to one another. This idea clearly derives from the geopolitical notions theorized around the Second World War by Carl Schmitt, who explained that every political institution was based on the absolute primacy of the “friend-foe” divide, and sought to transfer this idea to the new “spatial distribution of power” (*Nomos der Erde*) emerging after World War II.³⁰ Clearly, the idea of a “Euro-Mediterranean” ensemble (or alliance) expresses exactly the opposite: it does not say that there are no “faultlines” and no vested hostilities around them; it says that political institutions (the “city” and “civility”) arise precisely when hostility becomes a focal point for the elaboration of common interests and historic compromises. Such common interests express the “complementarity of

enemies,” to borrow an expression from French anthropologist Germaine Tillion,³¹ and this is what makes them politically significant.

Recent debates – sometimes virulent – about the possible admission of Turkey into the EU, which followed the electoral victory of the “Party for Justice and Development” (AKP) (a party that defines itself as “conservative” and is depicted by political scientists as “moderate Islamic”), prompted by (former French president and current Chair of the European Constitutional Convention) Giscard d’Estaing’s declarations that Turkey was “non-European” and its admission would ruin the European project,³² have had at least one good effect: they have manifested a reality that does not belong to utopia or a distant future, but is fast approaching. Whatever the (probably very great) diversity of institutional solutions, ranging from formal inclusion to close association, Turkey will not remain an isolated case. The whole of the south shore of the Mediterranean will be progressively involved in the construction of a common space of interdependence, a laboratory for new relationships between “developed” and “developing” countries, and between cultures with religious roots in antithetical versions of the same monotheistic theology – provided, of course, that the political conditions are consciously and tenaciously forged.

If such an ensemble were to come into being, it would become at once an instrument to correct inequalities in the rates of development, an intermediary structure making it easier for Europeans to effectively influence world affairs, and a powerful aegis for democratizing the Arab-Islamic regimes of the Middle East. This is the real way to overcome the old patterns of opposition between “Occidental” and “Oriental” cultures, which are only one way of understanding the history of humankind, but still cast their shadow on contemporary thought and politics. It seems obvious to me that it would also (along with other similar processes) play a very effective role in promoting collective security and reinvigorating international institutions. The alternative is grim: that the “global” logic keeps igniting “faultlines” for decades. . . .

I have been following the guiding thread provided by the obligation to “answer” the call of the American liberals, and it took us some distance from our starting point. Allow me to summarize this path, leaving aside some inevitable detours. Starting with the critique of the equivocalities of any demand that Europe act as a counterweight or a mediator, I advocated an “anti-strategic” metamorphosis of our conception of the relation between power and political capacity. Meanwhile, I made some concrete suggestions concerning the way European nations, states, institutions, social forces, and public opinion could favor a new system of international relations. Of course, any “anti-strategy” remains a strategy; if this were not the case, there would be no point in offering this idea to determinate actors in a situation that is critical, both urgent and antagonistic. What is important is to make clear how deeply we must locate the inversion of perspectives necessary to *answer the call* we receive: we must displace the call; we must call in turn on the

Americans to think in different terms; we must question the very presuppositions of the demands. We must *start changing the concept of the political*. As a way of concluding, I would like to return to my title.

In his brilliant essay “The Vanishing Mediator; or Max Weber as Story-teller,”³³ Fredric Jameson shows that at the core of Weber’s interpretation of the process of modernization or rationalization (basically a European or Eurocentric process), but also of certain Marxian descriptions of revolutionary processes in the past, there lies a dialectical figure which can be called the figure of the vanishing mediation. This is the figure (admittedly presented in speculative terms) of a *transitory* institution, force, community, or spiritual formation that creates the conditions for a new society and a new civilizational pattern – albeit in the horizon and vocabulary of the past – by rearranging the elements inherited from the very institution that has to be overcome. This is notoriously the case of the “Protestant Ethic,” centered around the paradoxical notion of “worldly asceticism,” or an immanent spiritual calling, where a twist in the meaning of religious beliefs prepares the subjective conditions for the secularized behavior of individuals and the whole society – the emergence of “rational” economic subjects. It therefore creates the conditions for its own suppression and withering away. But without this “vanishing” mediation, no transition from the old to the new society would have been possible.

It seems to me that one can play on the double meaning of this remarkable dialectical expression to discuss the paradoxical situation in which Europe finds itself today. On the one hand, one can critically assess the limits of the capacities of Europe to influence and mediate the conflicts and historical processes that are changing the structure of the world before our eyes. On the other hand, one can explore the possibilities for Europe to use its own fragilities and indeterminacies – its own “transitory” character, in a sense – as an effective mediation in the process of bringing about a new political culture, a new pattern of politics as such, in our context of acute national and international crisis. Or perhaps, even more paradoxically, one can explore the possibilities for Europe to offer itself as an instrument that other forces in the world, aiming at a transformation of politics, could use and shape to cope with the crisis.

As Umberto Eco has proposed, the only genuine “idiom of Europe” (and we know that any political entity needs an idiom or a linguistic institution) *is the practice of translation*.³⁴ This might well be the “exceptional” character of Europe, due to its specific history, in particular its global expansion and the past competition between its imperialist powers, followed by the “striking back” of the empires. Europe is not the only region in the world where translations are made, where technologies, professional instruction, literary works, and sacred texts continuously pass from one idiom to another. But nowhere – not even in India or in China – was it necessary to organize to the same degree the political and pedagogical conditions of linguistic exchange. It seems possible to imagine how this age-old institutional practice of translation, at the same time typically

“European” and impossible to enclose in the “borders of Europe” (since almost none of the great European idioms has remained national “property”...), could be expanded in two directions. It could be expanded by broadening the group of languages taught and practiced for the sake of labor and culture, thus broadening the circle of legitimate translations (starting with those – Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, etc. – that are already widely used on European soil). It could also be expanded by stretching the idea of “translation” from the merely linguistic to the broader *cultural* level. This is a decisive but still enigmatic task that involves acknowledging certain impossibilities (“non-translatable” ideas and forms) and looking for equivalences: scientific, literary, legal, and religious “universals.”

We are thus led to an additional meaning of the idea of the “Vanishing Mediator” – perhaps our utopia or our myth: Europe as *interpreter of the world*, translating languages and cultures in all directions. Europe and its intellectuals would in a sense “vanish in their intervention,” as Althusser used to say.³⁵ They would be necessary, but without monopoly. They would themselves be borderlines.

NOTES

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the New School for Social Research, New York, April 2002 and as the George Mosse Lecture at Humboldt University, Berlin, January 2003. An expanded version will appear in Etienne Balibar, *We, Citizens of Europe?*, forthcoming from Princeton University Press. It appears here with permission.

1. “What We’re Fighting For: A Letter from America,” by David Blankenhorn et al., February 2002, Institute for American Values, New York. In a new public letter (“Pre-emption, Iraq, and Just War: A Statement of Principles”, 14 November 2002), some of the initial signatories express their concern that the new strategic doctrine of “pre-emptive war,” applied to the case of Iraq by the Bush administration, is “inconsistent with the just war tradition” which legitimized the war on Afghanistan.

2. See the subtle analysis by Sophie Body-Gendrot, *La société américaine après le 11 septembre* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 2002).

3. *London Review of Books* 24, no. 3 (7 February 2002).

4. “America and the World: The Twin Towers as Metaphor,” Charles R. Lawrence II Memorial Lecture, Brooklyn College, 5 December 2001. See the complete text in English and French in *Transeuropéennes* 22 (spring-summer 2002) or on his site: <http://fbc.binghamton.edu/iwbkln02.htm>.

5. “Immanuel Wallerstein on the World Movement facing the capitalist domination,” FSM Porto Alegre II, February 2002, <http://www.attac.org/fsm2002/indexen.html>.

6. Op.-Ed., *The New York Times*, 9 April 2002.

7. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 14–20 November 2002.

8. During the German electoral campaign in September 2002, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (who was to be reelected with a narrow majority) declared that he would refuse any engagement of German troops in an American-led war against Iraq, even if it was endorsed by the UN. This led both to sharp criticism in the US and reservations from other European governments. A radical interpretation of Schröder’s intentions as paving the way for a “non-Western” Europe has been proposed by the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, “La différence de Schröder: la voix de l’Europe,” *Libération*, 7 October 2002.

9. Kagan’s essay was published in *Policy Review* 113 (June-July 2002). In France, it was translated in *Le Monde*, 27 and 28 July 2002 (extracts), and *Commentaire* 99 (winter 2002–03) with the title “Puissance et faiblesse.” I am also using the summary given by Kagan himself in *International Herald Tribune*, 27 May 2002.

10. See Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

11. The “Monroe Doctrine” was expressed in the Message to Congress by President James Monroe, 2 December 1823. It enunciated four principles: 1) that the American continents were no longer to be considered open for colonization by the European powers; 2) that the political system of the Americas was different from that of Europe; 3) that the US would consider any attempt on the part of the European powers to extend their system to the Western hemisphere as a threat to its peace and safety; 4) that the US would not interfere in the internal affairs of European countries (see R. Hofstadter, *Great Issues in American History, vol. I, From the Revolution to the Civil War* (Vintage Books, 1958), 244–47). It was later used to legitimize US imperialist policies in Latin America as “inter-American affairs.” The German conservative, later Nazi, jurist and political theorist Carl Schmitt began very early discussing its meaning for a new conception of international relations (see “Völkerrechtliche Formen des modernen Imperialismus” (1932), in Schmitt, *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar-Genf-Versailles* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1994), 184–203). In 1938 he used it to legitimize the German plans to create a “European *Großraum*” under German leadership (see “Völkerrechtliche Neutralität und völkische Totalität,” *ibid.*, 291–96). Hitler himself borrowed the formula of a “European Monroe Doctrine” in his *Reichstagsrede*, 28 April 1939, rejecting Roosevelt’s warning against German aggression against Poland. For a recent use, see Jean-Pierre Chevènement (former Socialist Minister of the Interior), “Pour une doctrine de Monroe européenne,” *La Lettre de République Moderne* 104 (Dec. 2000).

12. Scott L. Malcomson: *Borderlands: Nation and Empire* (Boston & London: Faber and Faber, 1994).

13. Published in *Le Monde*, 19 November 2002. See also his latest book *L’action et le système du monde* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002).

14. Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 208–26.

15. The expression “Christian Europe,” which comes from German Romanticism (*Christenheit oder Europa*, 1799), is constantly used by Pope John-Paul II, who urged that the coming “European Constitution” refer to the Christian values that are essential to Europe’s identity, when he received Giscard d’Estaing on 31 October 31 2002. Giscard himself expressed the same idea indirectly when he argued that Turkey, as an Islamic country, could not belong to the European Union (see *Le Monde*, 9 November 2002).

16. Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, “Contre l’ordre impérial, un ordre public démocratique et universel,” *Le Monde diplomatique* 585, vol. 49 (December 2002): 22–23. See also her book *Droit international et démocratie mondiale: les raisons d’un échec* (Paris: Les Editions Textuel, 2002).

17. This expression is used by historians of quite different orientations: Ernst Nolte, *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945. Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus*, 5e (Munich: F.A. Herbig Verlag, 1997); but also Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York Vintage, 1996).

18. Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (New York: Russell Sage; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

19. Machiavelli’s basic idea is that the strength of the Roman Republic came from the fact – half calculated, half unintended – that the antagonism between the two great social classes (the “Patricians” and the “Plebeians”) found an institutional solution with the creation, after violent revolts and repressions, of the “Tribunate of the Plebs.” See Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, Lib. Primo, Cap. Quatro, in *il Principe e Discorsi* (Feltrinelli Economica, 1984), 136–38.

20. Max Weber, “L’éthique économique des religions mondiales,” Introduction, in *Sociologie des Religions*, ed. and tr. Jean-Pierre Grossein (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 331–78.

21. “Expansive democracy” is a synonym for what Gramsci more often calls “hegemony,” i.e., a strategy of “permanent revolution” transposed within the state itself. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere*, 4 vols, ed. Giulio Einaudi (1975), 972–73, 1565–67 and *passim*; Claude Lefort, *L’invention démocratique. Les limites de la domination totalitaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).

22. *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter I, Article 1: "The Purposes of the United Nations are: 1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removals of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace . . ."

23. The NATO summit of Prague in November 2002 had admitted new members from eastern Europe, and has heard a call from President Bush to "modernize" the capacities of the European members in order to adapt to the new type of wars that the Alliance is now contemplating. "Some critics argue that, in the course of carrying out this work of political incubation, NATO has ceased to be a workable military alliance and now may be destined to wither. In fact the organization has been slowly but steadily rebuilding itself for the twenty-first century. The creation of a reaction force capable of deploying around the world is a significant step in the right direction. Whether NATO now becomes a force for combating terrorists and rogue states and for spreading democracy beyond Europe will depend on whether the political will for a strong trans-Atlantic partnership can be sustained, both in Washington and in Europe. Yet the power and potential of that bond ought to be evident in the two great achievements for which NATO can now be credited: first the deterrence of Soviet aggression and now the consolidation of a Europe that is peaceful and free." Editorial, *The Washington Post*, 22 November 2002.

24. "Precisely because the new wars are a social condition that arises as the formal political economy withers, they are very difficult to end. Diplomatic negotiations from above fail to take into account the underlying social relations. . . . Temporary ceasefires or truces may merely legitimize new agreements or partnerships that, for the moment, suit the various factions. Peacekeeping troops sent in to monitor ceasefires which reflect the status quo may help to maintain a division of territory and to prevent the return of refugees. Economic reconstruction channeled through existing "political authorities" may merely provide new sources of revenue as local assets dry up. As long as the power relations remain the same, sooner or later the violence will start again. Fear, hatred and predation are not recipes for long-term viable politics. Indeed, this type of war economy is perennially on the edge of exhaustion. This does not mean, however, that they will disappear of their own accord. There has to be some alternative . . . in particular, islands of civility might offer a counter-logic to the new warfare." Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, 111.

25. See Charles Enderlin, *Le rêve brisé. Histoire de l'échec du processus de paix au Proche-Orient, 1995–2002* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

26. Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements* (London & New York: Verso, 1989). More recently: R. Grosfoguel and A.-M. Cervantes-Rodriguez, eds., *The Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-System in the Twentieth Century (Global Processes, Antisystemic Movements, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge)* (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 2002).

27. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Touchstone 1997). See the discussion by Bruce Robbins, "Le Choc des civilisations ou comment ne pas en faire la critique/How not to Criticize *The Clash of Civilizations*," *Transeuropéennes* 22 (Spring-Summer 2002).

28. Olivier Christin, *Paix de religion* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

29. A critical view of the "Euro-Mediterranean partnership" is presented in *Critique Internationale* 18 (January 2003).

30. Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des jus publicum Europaeum* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1988).

31. Germaine Tillion, *L'Algérie en 1957* (Paris: Minuit, 1957). See my essay: "Algérie, France: une ou deux nations?" in *Droit de cité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Quadrige, 2002); English translation in *Giving Ground: The Politics of Propinquity*, ed. Joan Copjec and Michael Sorkin (London & New York: Verso, 1999).

32. See note 15 above.

33. First published in 1973 in *New German Critique*, reprinted in *The Ideologies of Theory*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 3–34.

34. Umberto Eco, *La Recherche de la langue parfaite dans la culture européenne* (Paris: Seuil, 1994).
35. Louis Althusser, *Philosophie et philosophie spontanée des savants* (1967) (Paris: François Maspero, 1974), 19.

Copyright of *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory* is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.