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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES  
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EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

TITLE/TITRE:

***The European Union:  
Progenitor of 'Soft' Superpower***

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## ABSTRACT

There are three conflicting opinions today concerning the EU and its superpower status. One argument is that the EU will *never* achieve superpower status as we know it, while another belief is that the EU *already is* a superpower. The paper will support a third argument that the EU *will eventually emerge* as a global superpower but must concentrate its efforts on developing and projecting its ‘soft’ power while still maintaining a moderate amount of military hard power. The paper will demonstrate that given today’s global threats, the EU must evolve into a ‘*soft superpower*’ designed not to compete with the United States but to complement it. Primarily through the use of soft power skills, the EU will attempt to create the global fertile conditions so that national governments and political bodies can cultivate global peace, stability and prosperity.

The EU is emerging at the right time, with the right political actors, with the right mix of hard and soft power to deliver a command performance on the world stage. If it eventually becomes a superstate, prevents its population decline, prevents its economic decline and permits Turkish membership, it will clearly have all the ‘right stuff’ to enter through the superpowerdom gates.

*The EU will remain a unique combination of the intergovernmental and the supranational. Such a Europe can, in its economic and political strength, be a superpower.<sup>1</sup>*

British Prime Minister, Tony Blair

## **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this paper is to discuss the emergence of the European Union (EU) as a global superpower. There are three conflicting opinions today concerning the EU and its superpower status. One argument is that the EU will *never* achieve superpower status as we know it, while another belief is that the EU *already is* a superpower. The paper will support a third argument that the EU *will eventually emerge* as a global superpower but must concentrate its efforts on developing and projecting its ‘soft’ power while still maintaining a moderate amount of military hard power. The paper will demonstrate that given today’s global threats, the EU must evolve into a ‘*soft superpower*’ designed not to compete with the United States but to complement it. Primarily through the use of soft power skills, the EU will attempt to create the global fertile conditions so that national governments and political bodies can cultivate global peace, stability and prosperity.

To achieve its aim, the paper will commence by explaining what power and superpower actually mean. A brief overview of the European Union will then be discussed touching on social, economic and political axes. The paper will then discuss why hard power does not always work and how it can actually be counterproductive in

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<sup>1</sup>Tony Blair, British Prime Minister. Taken from his speech in Warsaw in 2000 at the Polish Stock Exchange. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Year in Review”. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-215363/United-Kingdom>; Internet; accessed 7 April 2007.

attaining a nation's aims given today's challenging environment. A substantial portion of the paper will discuss the EU charting its own future as it struggles with its own security and defence issues. This struggle seems to have caused a rift within the EU and within the transatlantic NATO alliance with some of the 'Old Europe'<sup>2</sup> members going in one direction, while other European members heading in another. The EU collectively however, is seeking out its own 'softer approach' identity. A brief section on the EU's future will be discussed then the paper will end with a summary and conclusion.

### **VARIOUS TYPES OF POWER**

How are power, hard power, soft power and superpower defined? Joseph S. Nye Jr., professor of international relations at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, is a scholarly expert on power. He defines power as simply "the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcome one wants."<sup>3</sup> Nye states that influence can be coerced through military action or threats, induced with economic payments or you can attract or co-opt others into getting your desired outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Most people are familiar with the concept of hard power. Typically, people see hard power emanating from the barrel of a gun. Use of military force or threat of force has been used effectively on occasion. During the Cold War for example, the threat of

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<sup>2</sup>'Old Europe' in this context, links back to then US Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld's pejorative comments about Germany, France and Belgium not participating in the Iraq invasion. Whereas other European countries such as the UK, Spain and Italy did join the US as the coalition of the willing. The point here is that there is no single unified EU military body per se and the governments of the EU member states sometimes disagree on how to employ their military forces. This needs to be sorted out before the EU achieves full superpower status. This 'old Europe' issue will be amplified later in the paper.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph S. Nye Jr., "The benefits of soft power" *Harvard Business School*. 8 February 2004. <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4290.html>; Internet; accessed 16 April 2008. From December 1995 through June of 2004, he was the Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*,

nuclear annihilation of both the United States and the Soviet Union kept each other in check. The commonly known concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD) served to balance and stabilize the bipolar world of the Cold War era. The application of tough economic pressures and sanctions are also seen as hard power tactics.<sup>5</sup>

Soft power, as stated by Nye, is “co-optive power – the ability to shape what others want – that can rest on the attractiveness of one’s culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices.”<sup>6</sup> Soft power flows from the attractiveness of one’s political values, economic successes, cultural values and legal institutions that are seen as being legitimate and having moral authority. These effects may take years to produce the desired results with no guarantee of success. Soft power can however, help frame various issues and set agendas that can effectively address global issues.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of a ‘superpower’ is relatively new to global politics. A superpower “is a country that has the capacity to project dominating power and influence anywhere in the world, and sometimes, in more than one region of the globe at a time.”<sup>8</sup> The term superpower<sup>9</sup> as we know it today, was coined by William T.R. Fox, an American foreign policy professor who used it to describe a power that was greater than the term ‘Great Power’ during his time period. Immediately after WWII, there were only two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Following the Cold War and with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, most scholars agree that the United States became

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>8</sup>Lyman Miller. “China an emerging superpower?” *Stanford Journal of International Relations*; [http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/6.1.03\\_miller.html](http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/6.1.03_miller.html); Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

<sup>9</sup>William T. R. Fox, *The Superpowers: The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union – Their Responsibility for Peace* (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1944), cited in “China: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Superpower?” Lecture, Casa Asia, Barcelona, 13 September 2005 by Rosita Dellios <http://www.casaasia.es/pdf/9200595422AM1127202862621.pdf>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

the sole global superpower. A superpower's basic components can be calculated along four axes of power: military, economic, political and cultural.<sup>10</sup> These four axes will now be examined from a EU/US perspective as a basis of comparison.

### **THE EU – A QUICK OVERVIEW**

The principal challenge in determining whether or not the EU can be considered as a superpower is that it depends largely on comparison to the United States. Currently, the US acts as the sole superpower benchmark. Given that the US military is so 'mind-bogglingly' far ahead in its capabilities and spending than any other military, most conventional thinkers argue that no other superpower will be able to emerge for decades.<sup>11</sup> The military gap is simply too wide for any country or alliance to bridge in the foreseeable future. Other political theorists such as Professor John McCormick, argue that the hard power military component of superpowers no longer play the vital role it did in the past and, thus, the EU has superpower status today.<sup>12</sup>

Before the paper addresses the military role of a superpower, it will provide a brief EU overview of the three other superpower components: the economic, political, and social ones. The EU is an economic and political partnership between twenty-seven democratic European countries<sup>13</sup> representing a population of 495 million citizens (the

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<sup>10</sup>Miller.

<sup>11</sup>Some estimates state that 2008 forecasts for US defence spending is an astonishing \$603 billion US. This is more defence spending than the rest of entire the world combined at \$500 billion US. For a further breakdown of defence spending, see Global Security.Org. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/spending.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

<sup>12</sup>John McCormick, *The European Superpower* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) 6.

<sup>13</sup>The 27 EU countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

US only has 303 million citizens). The European Union derives its core strength from the diversity of its twenty-seven sovereign democratic member states with its official motto being “united in diversity.” Politically, the EU has France and the United Kingdom as members representing two out of the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council<sup>14</sup>. This gives the EU significant political clout. The EU countries have set up three main bodies to administer the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are: the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe); the Council of the European Union (representing national governments); and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).<sup>15</sup> In economic terms, the EU is a colossus with a 2007 GDP of \$16 trillion US<sup>16</sup> whereas the US has a smaller 2007 GDP of \$13.8 trillion US.<sup>17</sup> Culturally, the EU comes in as a close second to America’s Madonna, Mickey Mouse and McDonald’s with media stars such as soccer player David Beckham, rock bands like the Rolling Stones, actors such as Keira Knightly and Jude Law, and of course films such as the Harry Potter and James Bond sequels.<sup>18</sup> The essay will now venture into the realm of hard power and discuss how misuse of hard power can be counterproductive.

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Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK; note - Canary Islands (Spain), Azores and Madeira (Portugal), French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Reunion (France) are sometimes listed separately even though they are legally a part of Spain, Portugal, and France; Candidate countries: Croatia, Macedonia, Turkey.

<sup>14</sup>France and the UK also have nuclear weapons which provide them a certain amount of political clout.

<sup>15</sup>Europa. “The EU at a glance”. [http://europa.eu/abc/panorama/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/panorama/index_en.htm); Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>16</sup>CIA. The world factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html#Econ>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>17</sup>CIA. The world factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html#Econ>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>18</sup>The cultural perspective was gleaned from the author watching pop culture shows from MTV, ET, CBC, CNN and BBC sources.



## **HARD POWER CAN BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE**

*America had declared war against God and his messenger. [We] called for the murder of any American, anywhere on earth, as the individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it. We believe that the worst thieves in the world today and the worst terrorists are the Americans. Nothing could stop you except perhaps retaliation in kind. We do not have to differentiate between military or civilian. As far as we are concerned, they are all targets.*<sup>19</sup>

Osama bin Laden

On 22 July 2004, the 9/11 Commission Report was released to Congress. The independent, bipartisan ‘National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States’ was established by Congress in 2002 to investigate the events of and circumstances surrounding the 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks. One of the many insights it revealed was what provoked the horrific 9/11 attacks. The report stated that Osama bin Laden stressed “grievances against the United States widely shared in the Muslim world. He inveighed against the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, which is the home of Islam’s holiest sites, and against other U.S. policies in the Middle East.”<sup>20</sup> One of the root causes of the 9/11 attacks was the projection of US hard power. The fact that the US being the only global superpower, yet suffered an attack “of

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<sup>19</sup>Osama bin Laden. The 9/11 Commission Report. Chapter 2.1. <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/sec2.pdf>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>20</sup>Osama bin Laden. The 9/11 Commission Report. Executive Summary, 3. <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/execsummary.pdf>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

unprecedented shock and suffering in the history of the United States”,<sup>21</sup> illuminates the dangers of projecting hard power.

Other examples where the use of US hard power has failed and is currently failing were during the Vietnam War, Somalia and in Iraq. As of April 2008, there have been approximately four thousand US troops killed and thirty thousand US troops wounded in Iraq<sup>22</sup> and tragically, the political strategic end state of peace and stability in the region does not seem anywhere close at hand.

Largely due to the Bush Administration crudely asserting US hard power in a ‘go it alone’ approach and disregarding international institutions and alliances, *nationalism* in many countries is being defined, in part, as anti-Americanism and standing up to the lone superpower.<sup>23</sup> Having entire cultures and national identities so focused on hating a particular country is an extremely untenable position to be in and will take generations to mend. The EU therefore, must avoid being hated by using its soft power skills in a multilateral environment.

According to McCormick, “globalization and interdependence have undermined old-style power politics and replaced it with a more complex and nuanced set of international relationships.”<sup>24</sup> He further states that “ownership of the means of production is more important than ownership of the means of destruction, and

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<sup>21</sup>The 9/11 Commission Report. Executive Summary, 1.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/pdf/execsummary.pdf>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>22</sup>Global Security.Org. [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_casualties.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_casualties.htm); Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>23</sup>Fareed Zakaria. “Hating America” *Foreign Policy*, No. 144 (Sep-Oct., 2004) 47-49; <http://www.jstor.org/action/showArticle?doi=10.2307/4152983&Search=yes&term=hating&term=america&item=1&returnArticleService=showArticle&ttl=1491&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DHating%2BAmerica%26x%3D6%26y%3D12>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

<sup>24</sup>McCormick, 2.

cooperation is more effective than coercion.”<sup>25</sup> In this new global environment, the interests and values cultivated and projected by the European Union have produced a new type of superpower - a superpower that prefers implementing soft power skills over hard power projection.

### **THE EU AND MILITARY POWER**

*You gentlemen, therefore, have a most important responsibility, to recognize that your education is just beginning, and to be prepared, in the most difficult period in the life of our country, to play the role that the country hopes and needs and expects from you. You must understand not only this country but other countries. You must know something about strategy and tactics and logic-logistics, but also economics and politics and diplomacy and history. You must know everything you can know about military power, and you must also understand the limits of military power. You must understand that few of the important problems of our time have, in the final analysis, been finally solved by military power alone.*<sup>26</sup>

President John F. Kennedy

President Kennedy’s words today seem prophetic in that a state must fully understand its military and know the limits of its military power. Use of superpower hard power is not the global panacea for today’s challenges - it is only a part of the whole of government approach that must be applied in today’s complex and dynamic environment. The key to unlocking the mystery of hard power is knowing how much to use and when

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>26</sup>John F. Kennedy. Remarks at Annapolis to the Graduating Class of the United States Naval Academy, 7 June 1961. [http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/publicpapers/1961/jfk232\\_61.html](http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/publicpapers/1961/jfk232_61.html); Internet, accessed 19 April 2008.

to use it. The paper argues that the EU while enroute towards its ‘superpowerdom’, is in the process of unlocking this hard power enigma. It is on a journey to create the right military power mix – a blend that will address the EU’s security dilemma of having a large enough military force for security and defence purposes but not overly large to appear threatening to other global actors.<sup>27</sup> As we will see, this journey will lure the EU member states away from the hard power NATO alliance towards their own soft power identity.

### The Security Dilemma

In 1950, international relations scholar John Hertz coined the term, ‘the security dilemma’.<sup>28</sup> In 1952, political scientist scholar Arnold Wolfers addressed this security dilemma in a brilliant article discussing national security.<sup>29</sup> Describing the Hertz security dilemma Wolfers states, “the efforts of one side provoke countermeasures by the other which in turn tend to wipe out the gains of the first.”<sup>30</sup> The solution to the security dilemma, espoused by Wolfers, is “keeping the [security and defence] target level within

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<sup>27</sup>There is a risk that with NATO and the EU expansion, global players such as Russia and China could perceive NATO or the EU as a threat to their security and defence and consequently spark an arms race or a military confrontation that could have disastrous results.

<sup>28</sup>John Hertz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma”, *World Politics* 2, (1950): 157-180.

<sup>29</sup>Arnold Wolfers, “‘National Security’ As An Ambiguous Symbol”, *Political Science Quarterly* 67, Number 4 (December 1952): 481. Wolfers is considered by some Canadian Forces College academic staff as a ‘moderate realist’ scholar whose writings serve as a credible basis for critical assessment. Wolfers provides an excellent solution to Hertz’s security dilemma. Wolfers’ solution is relevant to the European Union quest in determining the correct mix of hard military power coupled with the soft power approach.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 495.

*moderate bounds* and of avoiding placing oneself in a position where it has to be raised suddenly and drastically.”<sup>31</sup> For the EU, this military target level will now be discussed.

The paper will now expand on the crucial issue of security and defence target level within *moderate bounds* premise and how the EU appears to be gravitating away from its US ally within NATO and towards a more “moderate” security target level. On this issue, Wolfers states that:

Nations will be inclined to minimize [security and defence] efforts, keeping them at the lowest level which will provide them with what they consider adequate protection ... in any case, together with the extent of external threats, numerous domestic factors such as national character, tradition, preferences and prejudices will influence the level of security which a nation chooses to make its target.<sup>32</sup>

McCormick adds that the EU’s choice in not building up a large military can appear to be weak but that it was a “conscious decision to pursue [moderate] military options [because] the nature of the international system today is more suited to a new model of superpower, one that prefers to avoid military solutions to problems.”<sup>33</sup>

Around a decade after the end of the Cold War, the EU members started to take a look at having a different security and defence policy separate from what the US-led NATO had to offer. In June 1999, the Cologne European Council met with the aim of strengthening the EU’s security and defence. It was agreed that the EU required “a capacity for autonomous action backed by credible military capabilities and appropriate decision making bodies.”<sup>34</sup> Further developments were made during the Helsinki

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<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>33</sup>McCormick, 6.

<sup>34</sup>Cologne European Council, Annex III of the Presidency Conclusions, 3 and 4 June 1999. 37; available from [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/57886.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/57886.pdf); Internet; accessed 27 September 2007.

European Council in Dec 1999, and more recently, with the EU's security and defence program called the 'Headline Goal 2010' that was agreed upon during the Council of the European Union in Brussels in May 2004. This document calls for the EU members states "to commit themselves to be able by 2010 to respond with rapid and decisive action applying a fully coherent approach to the whole spectrum of crisis management operations covered by the Treaty on the European Union."<sup>35</sup> Key to this rapid response force is the 'Battlegroup Concept' of 1,500 personnel based on a French/German/British initiative.<sup>36</sup> Wolfers and McCormick would argue that the Europe Union members are trying to deal with the delicate balancing act of having a moderate target level of national security and defence for protection of its values and interests while at the same time, not too large a force to "provoke countermeasures" from existing adversaries or to create new ones. Contrary to these "moderate" battlegroups, the US continues to outspend every other country in the world on defence by an extremely wide margin and keeps projecting its hard power to its own detriment.

With the disintegration of both the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, NATO's raison d'être came into question. Along with that, went the need for European hard power projection. Despite this fact, it appeared that the post Cold War NATO alliance remained relatively stable through the 1990s as it ventured into peacekeeping in the Balkans in 1992; put the call out for new members during the Madrid Meeting in 1997; and generated the idea of a rapid reaction force in 1999. The day after the 9/11 attacks of

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<sup>35</sup>Council of the European Union, Headline Goal 2010, Brussels, May 2004. 1; available from <http://www.iss-eu.org/esdp/05-gl.pdf>; Internet; accessed 27 September 2007.

<sup>36</sup>EU Council Secretariat Fact Sheet on EU Battlegroups, February 2007. 2; available from [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Battlegroups\\_February\\_07-factsheet.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Battlegroups_February_07-factsheet.pdf); Internet; accessed 19 April 2008. In addition to the committed 13 Battle Groups, an EU Naval Task Group was stood up in March 2007.

2001, for the first time in its history, NATO invoked its Article 5 clause and soon entered Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> Although there may have been tensions within the alliance on issues such as various national caveats of NATO member states, there was no evidence of an actual schism within NATO until the ultra-divisive issue of the unprovoked hard power invasion of Iraq surfaced.

One of the most profound security and defence differences between the EU and the US since the end of the Cold War deals with their perception of security threats. In one corner, the 2003 European Security Strategy document opens with, “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history.”<sup>38</sup> Whereas diametrically opposed in the other corner, US President Bush opens the US National Security Strategy by stating, “My Fellow Americans, America is at war. The grave challenge we face ...of terrorism fuelled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder...reflects our most solemn obligation: to protect the security of the American people.”<sup>39</sup> This fundamental philosophical difference would have a profound impact on how the EU and the US dealt with national security and defence issues and would ultimately lead to the creation of the tear in the fabric of the NATO alliance. The Iraq issue would further serve as a catalyst for the EU to accelerate its development of its own security and defence strategy along softer lines.

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<sup>37</sup>Nathan Nankivell, “NATO– A Future or Demise?” Canadian Institute of International Affairs. 1.

<sup>38</sup>European Union, *European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World*. Brussels, 12 December 2003. 1. available from <http://www.iss-eu.org/solana/solanae.pdf>; Internet; accessed 26 September 2007.

<sup>39</sup>United States, The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington, DC, March 2006), i. available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/intro.html>; Internet; accessed 26 September 2007.

Regarding this threat issue, Wolfers states “another and even stronger reason why nations must be expected not to act uniformly is that they are not all or constantly faced with the same degree of danger.”<sup>40</sup> One would argue that the primary reason why the US invaded Iraq was because it believed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction that created a threat to US national security. Whereas the Old Europe NATO members did not believe their national security was threatened anywhere near as much by Iraq and consequently, vehemently opposed the Iraqi invasion. This is arguably the starting point of the transatlantic rift between the Old Europe members of NATO and the US. It is also one of the first obvious signs of a European Union fracture amongst its members over military issues.

There is strong evidence that a transatlantic rift exists within NATO between the Old Europe members and the US that stems from the *hard power* driven Iraq issue. The Deputy Assistant Secretary General for External Relations in NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division, Jamie Shae, recently wrote an article in the *NATO Review* that outlines the fundamental issues causing this transatlantic rift. In his article, “A Wider Atlantic?”, Shae summarizes the root causes of the rift between the US and Old Europe over the Iraq issue as:

There are different perceptions of present threats; different attitudes to the centrality of multilateral diplomacy and multilateral institutions in dealing with the new challenges; disagreements as to whether war is necessary as a means of solving security problems and under which conditions of legality modern wars may be launched, particularly when it comes to pre-emptive and preventive conflicts.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Wolfers, 486.

<sup>41</sup>Jamie Shae, “A Wider Atlantic?”, *NATO Review*, (Summer 2004): 2. available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue2/english/book.html>; Internet; accessed 27 September 2007.



Based on a 2007 Canadian Institute of International Affairs conference consisting of a group of 80 top academics, policy makers, government officials and military experts, they agree that “the war on terror, when considered in the context of Iraq, has led to a division”<sup>42</sup> within NATO. Further adding that America’s unilateralist, ‘go it alone’ attitude has created both inter and intra-organizational tensions within NATO.<sup>43</sup> Evidence of this unilateralist thinking is seen in the US National Security Strategy where it states that while “defending the United States, the American people and our interests at home or abroad ... we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence by acting pre-emptively.”<sup>44</sup> The hard power, ‘go it alone’ approach is an anathema to the EU and is repelling them away from the US and drawing them towards their own military identity of cooperation not coercion.

## **WHY THE EU IS NOT A SUPERPOWER TODAY**

### Dissension Within the Ranks of the EU

Thus far the paper has discussed how the EU plans on becoming a superpower in the future; it will now elaborate on why it can not be considered a superpower today. There are several reasons why the EU is not ready for superpowerdom just yet. One of the reasons is that there is no central agreement on the employment of European military forces. The previous section focused on the disagreement between the Old Europe members of NATO and the US as an incentive to form a distinctly European softer

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<sup>42</sup>Nankivell, 2.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>44</sup>United States, The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington, DC, September 2002), 6; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>; Internet; accessed 24 September 2007.

military force. It also touched on the fact that within the European Union itself, there was disagreement over employment of its military forces. This highlights the need for a centrally controlled mechanism. Federalism could provide that central control.

Placing the meaning of “Old Europe” in today’s context is important in understanding both the transatlantic NATO schism and understanding why the EU does not currently have superpower status. In today’s context, while the US and some EU members saw Iraq as a direct threat to its national security and defence, the Old Europe members were diametrically opposed to the invasion of Iraq. Evidence of this divide was seen when former US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, gave an interview on 22 January 2003. Rumsfeld pejoratively referred to Germany and France as, “Old Europe” and added that getting their support for NATO forces in Iraq was very problematic. His now infamous comment was, “Now, you're thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I don't. I think that's Old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the center of gravity is shifting to the east .... Germany has been a ‘problem’, and France has been a ‘problem’.”<sup>45</sup> It would be very difficult for the global community to accept the EU as a superpower if the EU could not come to a collective agreement on whether to invade a sovereign country or not. Having such dominant European actors as France and Germany going in one direction while other dominant European actors as the UK, Spain and Italy go off in a different direction, does not bode well for EU superpowerdom. One voice that speaks for Europe as a whole is needed on such an important issue as the employment of its military forces.

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<sup>45</sup>United States. Department of Defense. News Transcript. 22 January 2003. (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2003), 8; available from <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1330>; Internet; accessed 27 September 2007.

### Other EU Weaknesses

In addition to a lack of unity and cohesion regarding EU military forces, and differences of opinions on security and defence matters, other weaknesses must be addressed before the EU can be called a superpower. The EU is currently experiencing a population decline and a reduced labour force. Some estimates indicate that the working age population will decline by 41% in Italy, followed by Spain at 35%, Greece 32%, Austria 29% and Germany at 21%.<sup>46</sup> The French International Relations Institute forecasts the EU's share of world trade to collapse from 22% in 2002 to only 12% by 2050.<sup>47</sup> John Redwood argues that although the EU economic strength is considerable, "the economies of the continent are inward-looking and the forces of protectionism are latent".<sup>48</sup> Some political scientists argue that the EU is not yet a superpower because it is not a state and so it is not in a position to be able to exploit its full potential. Furthermore, it is facing institutional fatigue from eastern enlargement, the elitist nature of the EU decision making structure and persistent high unemployment.<sup>49</sup>

## **THE FUTURE**

### Great Expectations

In a report entitled "Mapping the Global Future", the National Intelligence Council (NIC), a Washington-based think tank with close ties to the CIA states that in

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<sup>46</sup>John Redwood, *Superpower Struggles: Mighty America, Faltering Europe, Rising Asia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) 183-184.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>49</sup>McCormick, 29.

raw statistical terms, the EU is already a fledgling superpower. The report continues and adds,

While its military forces have little capacity for power projection, Europe's strength may be in providing, through its commitment to multilateralism, a model of global and regional governance to the rising powers, particularly if they are searching for a "Western" alternative to strong reliance on the United States. For example, an EU-China alliance, though still unlikely, is no longer unthinkable.<sup>50</sup>

During his 2007 speech at the College of Europe in Bruges, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband indicated that the EU should not just react to global events but actively seek to shape them by saying, "we must use our power and influence, not just to resolve conflict, but prevent it. We must show we are prepared to take a lead and fulfill our responsibilities... [global] threats provide a new raison d'être for the European Union."<sup>51</sup>

One of America's best known foreign correspondents, T.R. Reid, describes the EU as the new superpower and talks about the end of American supremacy. Reid discusses the use of the EU's soft power and comments that "only the EU has the potential to be at least an equal partner [to the US] with respects to the economy, the environment, and soft security, though not defense".<sup>52</sup>

There are big expectations on the world stage for the EU to become a more dominant global actor in shaping the conditions to solve the planet's problems. With its

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<sup>50</sup>National Intelligence Council. "Mapping the Global Future"  
[http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC\\_globaltrend2020\\_s2.html#state](http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2020_s2.html#state); Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

<sup>51</sup>David Miliband. Taken from his speech at the College of Europe in November 2007.  
<http://www.globalpowereurope.eu/2007/11/david-miliband-says-no-to-european.html> Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

<sup>52</sup>T.R. Reid, *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 196.

forward looking, culturally diverse and ever expanding membership, this ambassador of good will and progenitor of soft superpowerdom will undoubtedly rise to the occasion and help create the necessary conditions for global peace, stability and prosperity.

### Political Winds of Change

There are some new European political actors on the world stage at the moment, with the yet unnamed American guest star scheduled to arrive on 20 January 2009, which will have a positive impact on the EU.<sup>53</sup> New French President Nicolas Sarkozy teaming up with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown promises to be quite a dynamic duo and making a positive impact thus far with reaching out to the US and fostering better relations.<sup>54</sup> This will certainly stand the EU in good stead on its way to superpowerdom. Should current Democratic candidate Senator Barack Obama win the US presidency, this too would bode well for the EU and the world. Obama may very well lead the US out of the unilateral, 'go it alone', 'hard power dark days' of the Bush administration. The potential synergistic effects of the new EU/US relationship look very promising and should lead to a new era, perhaps a renaissance of peace and prosperity the world has not seen in quite some time. The EU will help shape a world that will thrive on harmony not hegemony, and will ensure soft green power will succeed where US greenbacks and green berets have failed.

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<sup>53</sup>20 January 2009 is the date the new US President will be inaugurated. It is highly likely to be Barack Obama.

<sup>54</sup>David Buyers, "Nicolas Sarkozy calls for a Franco-British Brotherhood", *Times*, 26 March 2008. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article3624398.ece>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

### A Word of Caution

The soft superpower seeds for success have already been sown for the EU. The new political actors should provide fertile ground for the EU to flourish and become the superpower some would argue, it was destined to be. What must not be forgotten during the ascension to the superpowerdom throne is the Hertz security dilemma. *If* the EU becomes overly politically aggressive in its eastern expansion of former Warsaw Pact countries and *if* the EU military were to grow too large, the ‘iron fist’ of political/military hard power could incite a new ‘iron curtain’. For the sake of global peace and stability, let us hope it is not a Russian Chinese curtain. The EU and NATO’s flirtatious affair with the former USSR states (Ukraine and Georgia) could very well be flirting with disaster.

### Are We There Yet?

No one can accurately predict a date when the EU will be universally accepted as a global superpower. As discussed, the paper reasons that the EU needs a central control mechanism such as federalism to realize its full potential. Perhaps the EU needs to become a ‘superstate’ before becoming a superpower. ‘Superstatedom’ though, is likely a long way off due to the complexities involved with getting agreement by all member states. However, should Turkey join the EU with its large population of 71.8 million, its economy of \$482 billion US<sup>55</sup>, its military and its political might, would perhaps add the

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<sup>55</sup>CIA. World factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>; Internet; accessed 19 April 2008.

critical mass needed for the EU to enter through the gates of superpowerdom. Certainly Turkey, as a potential member of the EU, with its linkages and inroads to the cultural and religious realm of Islam, coupled with its strong affiliation with Israel could go far in setting the conditions needed for a lasting peace in the Middle East. Turkey could very well be the conduit that links the East to the West, and Christianity and Judaism to Islam. It is absolutely vital ground the EU needs to cultivate for lasting peace and prosperity.

### **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

The paper has demonstrated that the European Union is an entity that is not yet a superpower but clearly has the potential to become one. An understanding of the various types of power was discussed along with the dangers associated with using too much hard power, too often. A general overview of the EU's political, economic and cultural axes was briefly mentioned. Given that the fulcrum between hard power and soft power is the military axis, a large part of the paper focused on the EU struggle with its security and defence issue. The EU's attempt at solving the security dilemma is causing some consternation both within the NATO alliance and within the EU member states themselves. It must also be cautious not to provoke the 'Bear' or the 'Dragon' from their dens by projecting what may be perceived as too aggressive political or military gestures too close to their protective lairs.

The EU is emerging at the right time, with the right political actors, with the right mix of hard and soft power to deliver a command performance on the world

stage. If it eventually becomes a superstate, prevents its population decline, prevents its economic decline and permits Turkish membership, it will clearly have all the 'right stuff' to enter through the superpowerdom gates. Its *raison d'être* will be to create the necessary conditions and environment so that other global actors can achieve peace, stability and prosperity.



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