BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Tory Case

East and West

CHRIS PATTEN

Not Quite the Diplomat

Home Truths about World Affairs

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For my family

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I had a first-class team of officials in my private office – or *cabinet* in Brussels-speak – when I was a European Commissioner from 1999 to 2004. For the first three years, it was led by Anthony Cary, for the last two by Patrick Child. They were respectively the best that Britain's Foreign Office and Treasury could have provided. The whole team contributed to my education and therefore to this book, and Anthony Teesdale who works in the European Parliament helped me to understand its beguiling mysteries. They were all friends and with Lavender and my daughters kept me sane and (usually) quite cheerful. The book represents my own prejudices as refined and occasionally recast by this amiable and accomplished life-support unit, for whom I was not perhaps quite the Commissioner expected. I hope it does not blight any careers.

Once again, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my agent, Michael Sissons, and to my editor, Stuart Proffitt. I hope that this book will not be as exciting an adventure for Stuart and me as the last one turned out to be.

I can only type with one finger and my writing is tiny and wickedly crabbed. The book would not exist without patient deciphering by my wife, my daughters, Alice and Laura, Dame Shirley Oxenbury and Penny Rankin. Their reward will come in heaven. My eldest daughter, Kate Meikle, should be grateful that she was in Rome while the runes were being read.

I

Now We are Sixty

. . . I cannot deny my past to which myself is wed;
The woven figure cannot undo its thread.

'Valediction', Louis MacNeice

A few months before starting to write this book, I celebrated my sixtieth birthday. Along with all the sympathetic cards, I received information through the post about my entitlement to a winter fuel allowance and an application form for a 'free travel' bus and train pass. I guess these are prized examples of the famed European social model, cradle to (almost) grave, the need for whose comprehensive overhaul is an urgent consequence of Europe's long-term demographic changes and of its inadequate recent efforts to reinvigorate its economy. Social solidarity requires growth to pay for it, and growth requires workers to create it.

European assumptions about welfarism need to be reviewed; so do the opinions, with which citizens of my generation have grown to adulthood and aged into retirement, about the way our world works and is made both prosperous and secure. The old clichés of international governance and alliance – the Atlantic partnership, European integration, shared Western values – have given way in the blink of an eye to another set of clichés – shifting tectonic plates, the Union that hit the buffers, the Republic that became an empire. Nothing in politics is forever except, it seems, Britain's existential hunt for its own identity: to lose ourselves in Europe or to discover our post-imperial role as America's spear carrier – or at least its interpreter and

apologist to the world's wimps. Meanwhile, the great if perennially crisis-wracked European project – a union of free-trading democracies – strikes out in directions unimagined by those who first created it around Franco-German reconciliation. And Washington's leaders of the Free World (as we used to call our alliance against Soviet tyranny and Communist advance) seem keen to close the chapter, which they above all others have written, and which described, regulated and sustained so much of the life of our planet for half a century. If the Western Front has fundamentally changed, or been broken by events and cultural disjuncture, what international configuration will emerge during the short interval of years before the rise of China and India reshapes the world's power politics?

I have lived my life as a pretty enthusiastic citizen of America's undeclared empire, which chose deliberately not to impose an emperor on its denizens: a touch, that, of political genius. I was born the month before the D-Day landings brought American boots and blood to French soil for the second time in under thirty years. My father was not one of that military host. He was serving in Palestine with the Royal Air Force, leaving behind his pregnant wife and my older sister. My mother had made her wartime home in her parents' cathedral city, Exeter, until much of it was flattened in an air raid. She went north to live on the Lancashire coast beyond Blackpool in a seaside house owned by my father's brother-in-law, a prosperous wholesale vegetable merchant. There I was born in the modest comfort of a home bought, with appropriate symmetry, from the proceeds of imported Irish potatoes, whose terrible dearth had driven my father's forebears from Ireland to Lancashire in the previous century.

My wife's father was less fortunate than mine. A Cambridge athlete from the generation after the young men remembered in *Chariots of Fire*, he hurdled in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, briefly made a career with Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) and then joined the Seaforth Highlanders at the outbreak of war. He fought through north Africa and Sicily, went to Normandy in time for the fight across the *bocage* and was killed just after the Allied breakout at Falaise, shortly before my wife's birth. The list of the war dead at his Cambridge college, Pembroke, contains German names as well as British, Dominion and American. Other college memorials at Oxford and Cambridge tell the

same story. We brought young men together at our eminent universities to learn about the values of Western civilization, and then they returned to their homes and were required in due course to kill one another – from Newman's 'umbrageous groves' to trenches and tanks and the war graves of Europe, like the one near Caen where Major John Thornton, the Seaforth Highlander, lies.

The American boys who came from high corn and blue grass, from tenement block and front porch, to help save Europe once again from the bloody results of rampant nationalism, were led by men who believed that the young of their nation should not be required a third time to cross the Atlantic to rescue the old world. Europe's cemeteries contained too many of their own young heroes already. So it was scarcely surprising that American leaders, policy makers and diplomats were such enthusiastic supporters of the efforts to prevent another European civil war through a unique pooling of sovereignty between France, Germany and four other countries, initially achieved by bringing together the industries that fed modern conflict – coal and steel. European integration was an American geo-strategic objective from the very start, and for Washington it was desirable that Britain should be part of the enterprise. Our American friends did not share our own opinion that Britain could sit benignly, patronizingly, apart from the construction of a new Europe as the cherished friend and valued partner of the superpower, the leader of its own worldwide Empire turned Commonwealth, the sagacious well-wisher to our Continental neighbours in their quaint endeavours. Whatever the gallantry of our recent history, whatever the majesty of Churchill's prose, Britain was no longer a top dog, even though we could still lay claim to invitations to the top table.

I grew up during the years when Churchill still growled Britain's past glories, but when his war time lieutenants, Eden and Macmillan, were confronted in their different ways with the reality of Britain's decline. Discharged from the RAF, my father had gone to London, building on the pre-war contacts he had made as a professional musician, to become a popular music publisher, working in Tin Pan Alley. We lived in semi-detached suburban West London, an environment about which I have a passingly Proustian sensitivity. The suburban front-garden smell, to which Michael Frayn alludes at the

beginning of his novel *Spies*, I was able to identify immediately – privet! I spring from that world of privet hedges, mock-Tudor, cherry blossom, and well-polished family cars, embalmed between London's arterial roads and its Underground lines, the world in full bloom at the polar extremes of the Central line from Hainault to West Ruislip. My older sister and I were brought up in the sort of loving, comfortable home that should entitle a writer these days to sue for deprivation of literary royalties – no story here of abuse and hardship. My parents were not very political. Indeed, I suspect that my mother would have thought it vaguely indecent and certainly uncomfortable to get involved in a deep – let alone rowdy – discussion of either politics or religion. She had converted to Catholicism, with what insights of faith I know not, in order to marry my father. We were what is called 'practising' Catholics: Mass every Sunday, fish every Friday, convent school for my sister, Benedictines for fortunate me. I can still repeat most of the responses to the Latin Mass from my years in the Guild of St Stephen as an altar boy for the local, always Irish, clergy; the smell of the communion wine on their breath in the early mornings; and in one sad case the whiff of something a little stronger.

The first international event I recall, courtesy of the *Daily Express*, was the gallantry of the 'Glorious Gloucesters' in the Korean War; of much greater consequence was the Suez debacle in 1956. My father had only recently taken me aside, with much embarrassment all round, to give me a little booklet explaining, improbably, how I might in the future play my part in reproducing the species. He told me for a second time that he wanted to say a word to me privately. I was not to tell my mother or sister. What he had to say would only worry them. Events in the Middle East looked very dangerous. The British and French invasion of Egypt could trigger another much larger war. The weapons now available in the world were more terrible than any he had seen used in the last war. I might have to be prepared to behave with a maturity beyond my years – taking responsibility, for example, for my mother and sister. We returned gravely and discreetly to the two other members of the family, unaware as they were of the gathering shadows apprehended by my father. Fortunately, President Eisenhower pulled the plug on this crazy Middle Eastern adventure before

it went too far, partly because of his proper concern about its impact on opinion in the Arab world. Anthony Eden went to the Caribbean, and then to a manor house in Wiltshire; Harold Macmillan ('first in, first out' in Harold Wilson's words) went to Downing Street; I went back to cricket and Conan Doyle.

Our house was not very bookish. There were book club editions of Nevil Shute, L. P. Hartley and Nicholas Montserrat, Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki adventures, books on Second World War heroes and heroics – escapes, dam-busting, navigating cruel seas. Above all there was Damon Runyon and S. J. Perelman – a mark, I think, of how comfortably and naturally we accommodated ourselves to America's cultural imperium. My father's job probably made this inevitable. Before skiffle and the Mersey Sound, most of the popular music he published was from the other side of the Atlantic – the hit tunes of Johnny Ray, Frankie Laine, Guy Mitchell. One of his first big successes was the latter's 'She Wears Red Feathers and a Hoolah-Hoolah Skirt'. My parents' taste was rather better than this. Our 78s featured Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, big-band jazz – the music of a country that we instinctively admired and respected, glamorous, generous, gee-whiz. We were Americaphiles. How could we be anything else? All that seemed savviest and sassiest, wittiest and wisest, came from across the Atlantic. Weekly cinema visits confirmed our instincts. From one suburban film palace to another – 'Don't be disappointed if we can't get in,' my father would say on each of our visits – we followed the cultural trail blazed by Hollywood. It was a nice surprise to discover when I went to Oxford University that other countries had been making films too.

We not only loved America and most things American, without ever having been there. We were also – despite reading Lord Beaverbrook's daily newspaper – more than comfortable with our Continental neighbours. My own mother, unlike most of my friends', used garlic when she cooked, and sometimes shopped at an Italian delicatessen in Soho, demonstrating that it was possible to purchase olive oil without going to a chemist's shop. We went to restaurants whose exotic connections with the Mediterranean were advertised by the wicker-covered Chianti bottles that served as lamps. We sometimes drank wine at meals. My sister – five years older than me – left her

convent school for the French lycée, and went to Strasbourg to work for the Council of Europe for her first job, and for her second to Rome with the United Nations. We sometimes holidayed abroad, forsaking beach cricket in Devon for beach cricket (to the surprise of the locals) in Brittany. On our first foreign holiday we drove France's *pavé* roads to Luxembourg in my father's Lanchester. Visiting Paris on the way home I locked myself in the lavatory at the Weppler Hotel, an event which left me timorous about the locks in hotel bathrooms throughout my childhood.

These holidays and my father's occasional business trips to Radio Luxembourg – the pirate radio station that brought pop music and the football pools forecasts of Keynsham's Horace Batchelor to the crystal sets of Britain's youth – instilled in him a huge admiration for the recuperative skills of the French and the Germans. He tended to judge the economic ascent of France almost entirely in terms of the smoothness of the motoring, as the infrastructure of *l'Hexagone* benefited from post-war recovery. His admiration for Germany's revival was boundless. By nature a generous and kind man, he spoke more frequently of the spectacular rise of Germany from her wartime legacy of starvation and rubble than of the years he had lost, and the friends too, fighting her. Like Harold Macmillan, though he would not have known it, he regarded Germany's triumphant economic progress as a knock-down argument for joining her and others in what was then called the Common Market.

I first heard the case for this put with stunning eloquence when I went up to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1962. It was the college of Harold Macmillan, who resigned from the premiership at the beginning of my second academic year, but came in the following calendar year to address his fellow college members as the university's chancellor. It was the best speech I have ever heard, and I was pleased to hear variants of it, complete with the same thespian gestures and pauses, on several occasions during the following twenty years. The Edwardian drawl, the hooded eyes, the Donald Wolfit excess, the hand movements that followed rather than accompanied the thought just delivered, the magnificent studied put-downs, the mixture of plump archaism with demotic metaphor – all these complemented a simple argument that I have always found totally convincing, though

today there is a great deal more that can be added to it. Macmillan began by evoking the long, hot summer of 1914; described the talented friends who had left Oxford with him that year for the Golgotha of Picardy; recounted their experiences as (in Sassoon's words) 'citizens of death's grey land'; counted off those who had never returned; recalled the memorials from the Menin Gate to the great arch at Thiepval, which were forgotten as we drifted into another terrible war; pointed to the historic decisions taken at Messina and in Rome to prevent the slaughter of a third generation on our continent; and said that one day we too must be part of this adventure, whatever the present whim of an old general to whom we had in the past given so much. Know-all young cynics choked back the tears and then stood to cheer, recognizing perhaps that to speak like this of the fire, you have first to pass through it.

In my first year at Oxford, President Kennedy had skilfully defused the Cuban missile crisis, while my left-wing friends marched to the Martyrs' Memorial to denounce Yankee imperialism. In my second year, Kennedy was shot. There is famously a handful of public events in all our lives, imprinted forever on our memories. Those of us who are old enough all know where we were when we first heard of Kennedy's assassination, as we remember the circumstances on 11 September 2001, when we learned about or watched on television the atrocities in New York and Washington. During the evening of 22 November 1963, I was at a party given in college by one of my history dons when two or three hard-left students burst into the room to tell us gleefully what had happened in Dallas. For them it was almost a cause of celebration that such a popular American president should be cut down to make way for a man who could not possibly charm the world in the same way. It was the moment of my university years when I felt most outraged and most political.

Politics did not then feature much in my life. I acted, wrote revues, played rugby and cricket, and allowed myself to be stretched intellectually rather less than the elastic would actually have permitted. In so far as I had any political views, they were pretty much bang in the middle. I liked and admired Macmillan, Macleod and Butler, thought Douglas-Home's selection as Tory leader was absurd, and was attracted by Harold Wilson's look of modernity until he got into

office and we saw him in depressing action. My parents had been gentle, undemonstrative Conservatives, who voted the right way at every election but otherwise seemed largely untouched by political sentiment. That is probably as far as I would have travelled politically myself had it not been for the good fortune of winning my first ever visit to America.

An old member of the college, William Coolidge – a wealthy Boston Brahmin – had established a fund at Balliol as one of his many philanthropic benefactions, to enable a group of those who had just taken their final examinations to cross the Atlantic each year and travel around the USA. I guess that part of the intention was not simply to broaden our horizons but to invest in the creation of future Americaphiles. In most cases, including mine, that was certainly the result. The scholarship in those days was gold-plated. We crossed to New York on the *France*, drinking cocktails, watching films and failing to pick up American beauties who all seemed to dance like Cyd Charisse. Then we flew up to spend a few days with Mr Coolidge – Bill, as we were encouraged to call him – on his Massachusetts estate where the paintings were even finer than the wine. We were kitted out at the Harvard Coop – lightweight suits and slacks, burgundy loafers, Oxford cotton shirts with button-down collars – given a Hertz credit card and a thousand dollars in traveller's cheques; presented with a list of Coolidge's friends and old Balliol men who had agreed to put us up as we travelled the country; and then sent off in pairs to cross and recross America, taking either the northern or southern route.

I drove off in a Dodge Dart for Ohio, Illinois and all points westward with my friend Edward Mortimer (who was to become a distinguished foreign correspondent, commentator and author, and director of communications at the UN). It was my happy experience then and on many subsequent visits to be received everywhere with kindness and generosity. As Charles Dickens said, after his second visit to the United States: 'Wherever I have been, in the smallest places equally with the largest, I have been received with unsurpassable politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality and consideration.' Americans are exquisite hosts. 'Thank you for visiting with us,' they would say, as we were fêted from Chicago to Billings, Montana, from Salt Lake City to San

Francisco and Los Angeles. We were in southern California at the time of the Watts riots, and drove (probably foolishly) through this grim Los Angeles suburb a day or two after most of the violence had subsided. Travelling back east through Las Vegas (where we watched a historically questionable, nude showgirl tableau of the French Revolution), the Grand Canyon, Santa Fe and New Orleans, we had another brush with contemporary history in Alabama. We were driving a hire car with a Pennsylvania number plate and were taken for civil rights workers in a small town where brave young campaigners from northern campuses had recently been murdered. Our host on that part of the trip, a courtly newspaper editor, came to our rescue explaining that we were English – 'They're just like us over there,' he said to a bunch of Alabama rednecks, a comparison for which we were grateful at the time.

Back in New York, with some weeks of the scholarship still to run if we wished, Edward chose to return to Oxford to sit and, as it turned out, win the annual examination to become a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford's ancient graduate college. What should I do on my own? Bill Coolidge had a bright idea. A rich friend of his was helping to raise money for the mayoral campaign in the city of the Republican Congressman from the silk-stocking district, John Lindsay. It was suggested that I should stay in his friend's apartment (on 5th and 69th) and help on the campaign, which had its headquarters at the Roosevelt Hotel.

I turned up for duty and was assigned as an assistant to a wonderfully smart young Texan lawyer – Yale and Balliol – who was responsible on the campaign for research, particularly regarding the record of Lindsay's opponents. Sherwin Goldman was a joy to work for – witty, civilized, generous and smart as a whip. He took me in hand, giving me a crash course in New York, its politics and its cultural delights. Thanks to Sherwin, who now runs the New York City Opera Company, I got to the Met and to see several Balanchine ballets. I was also introduced to the (for me) mostly static mysteries of American football, and had my first pastrami on rye at the Carnegie Deli on 7th Avenue.

It was Sherwin, more than anyone else, who infected me with politics, a virus that I have never subsequently managed to remove

from my bloodstream. I was given my head and allowed to focus in particular on the past and present pronouncements of the Conservative candidate in the campaign, William Buckley. 'Conservative', in this case, meant well to the right of the moderate Republican, Lindsay. Buckley was a sort of cult Conservative – mannered, funny, well read. He liked to tease and shock, raping and pillaging political correctness in fluently written books and articles. He had worked hard to earn Gore Vidal's sobriquet 'Hitler without the charm'. It was a joy to mine his obiter dicta for nonsense and contradiction. I doubt whether much of my material was ever used. Buckley was not really a serious candidate in any sense, commenting memorably when asked what would be the first thing he would do were he to win the mayoralty of that difficult city: 'Demand a recount.' His main danger to us was that he might siphon off the right-wing Republican votes that Lindsay would need to beat his uncharismatic, diminutive Democrat opponent. Nevertheless, I was made to feel a crucial cog in the campaign, was given plenty of access to Lindsay himself, and became a sort of mascot – a young novelty Englishman, complete with nice manners, a funny accent and odd vocabulary. A smoker in those days, I recall the first time, like the character in a Bateman cartoon, that I asked for a fag.

John Lindsay was a great candidate – 'Supercalifragelisticexpialidocious', as the advertisement on Times Square put it. He was tall, handsome and stylish. He spoke well, looked a dream on television and appeared to enjoy the vulgarities of political campaigning – gladhanding, eating pizzas and hugging New York. I suspect he was probably a better candidate than he was a mayor, though there cannot have been many tougher jobs in those days than running that big, dangerous, glamorous, bankrupt city. He did win, sweeping the Democrats from City Hall, and thus ended for me a glorious fall in New York – golden days, exciting times. In mid-November, I embarked on the old *Queen Elizabeth* and spent four days throwing up as we crossed the stormy Atlantic.

So I came to politics by this odd if glamorous route, joining the young men and women – mostly career politicians from Oxbridge – in the Conservative Research Department in what I thought would be a fill-in job before taking up a graduate traineeship with the BBC.

'Fill-in' became permanent, to the surprise of the BBC and of all my friends. It was the first fateful decision of my life; and the rest is history, of a sort.

Since that first visit to the United States I have returned again and again, as a tourist and holidaymaker, as a lecturer, as a young Member of Parliament, as a minister, as a colonial governor, as a European commissioner, and nowadays as a university chancellor. In a tribute to Roy Jenkins, my predecessor as Oxford's chancellor, Arthur Schlesinger noted that 'few British politicians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries . . . showed much interest in the United States, or knew much about American history or institutions'. It was only after the Second World War that British politicians like Jenkins, with easier travel by jet, started to go to America in force to find out what it was really like. For my political generation, it would have been inconceivable not to be a regular visitor: there was so much in America that one needed to understand, and in due course there was so much business to do. My only two prolonged visits came, first, when I had just become an MP and, second, when I became a Cabinet Minister. I spent about a month in the summer of 1980, mostly in Washington, as a guest of the State Department, where I made a number of political friends including the moderate Republican Congressman Jim Leach who, were I to require a double (like Saddam Hussein), would do nicely. We have become even more interchangeable as life has broadened us both. In 1989, as the newly appointed Environment Secretary in Margaret Thatcher's last Cabinet, I spent a month at Berkeley, the visit arranged by a close friend, Professor Nelson Polsby, possessor of one of the sharpest minds and certainly the sharpest tongue in North America. We took our holiday there, swapping our Westminster flat and Wiltshire cottage for a funky, clapboard house just off the gourmet strip in Berkeley. There was a loom in the front room, and mind-clearing, life-changing works by Indian mystics and gurus in the bookcases. It was meant to be a working holiday. I had to give a few lectures and seminars to justify the trip. The routine was hardly demanding but it was certainly bracing. Politicians need an occasional intellectual rub-down, and Nelson and his colleagues used a loofah.

*

As a specifically British minister and public servant, my contacts with America, with its political classes and policy makers, have centred on two issues, about which I shall have more to say later in this book. My first ministerial job was as Parliamentary Secretary in the Northern Ireland Office under Jim Prior and Douglas Hurd. Since then my career has been intermittently entangled with the affairs of the Province and the attempts to promote political reconciliation on our archipelago, most recently as Chairman of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland, set up under the Belfast Agreement of 1998. As a moderate and as a Catholic, I was often despatched to America to take part in conferences on the divided politics of the North and to lobby about security issues. In the first category of events, I would find myself alongside moderate spokesmen for Dublin's position (like Peter Sutherland and Mary Robinson) sharing platforms with Nationalist, Republican and Unionist leaders from the North. I used to think it educational for audiences from Boston to Los Angeles to observe the Northern Irish politicians telling audiences how culturally different they were from their political foes as they appeared with every passing row more and more similar. Peter, Mary and I would occasionally get in a word ourselves, the moderates from either shore of the Irish Sea.

Talking to American audiences in those days, and particularly lobbying on Capitol Hill, amounted to a crash course in American exceptionalism. This reflects the central role that America has played as an actor rather than a disinterested observer in so many of the dramas of the Irish story – the famine, the plague ships, the formation of the Fenians, and gunrunning in the cause of liberation and anti-colonialism. The attitude of many Americans is more naïve than hypocritical; they fail to realize how subjective is the neat division of the world into evil terrorists and noble freedom fighters. For me to use the word 'terrorism' in the context of Northern Ireland during those visits was to risk a rumpus. Friends of mine had been killed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). I had no sympathy for the use of violence for political ends: I thought it wicked. I was pleased to have the chance to argue from time to time that it was (to put at it at its mildest) 'unhelpful' that the IRA could raise money pretty openly in American cities, where they would also spend it on acquiring weapons.

For those fighting Irish terrorism, America was in this sense arguably a much bigger problem than, say, Libya. If terrorism simply divided 'us' from 'them', then in this case America was with 'them'.

I never got anywhere with my arguments. I conceded, of course, many of the grievances of Irish history: I was, after all, a British citizen because of the greatest of them all. I argued against Unionist intransigence, which has again and again searched for ways of extracting defeat from the jaws of victory, ensuring that each time the Unionist leaders are driven by reality to negotiate, they have to do so from a weaker position than the last time they were at the table. I accepted that to accomplish our security objectives there would have to be a political settlement, though this stuck in the craw of all who thought terrorist slaughter evil. In other contexts than Irish politics this sort of political realism would have been called by my American interlocutors 'rewarding violence'. But nothing changed. The collecting tins continued to be passed around; the weapons were purchased; and Irish Republican leaders who had killed and maimed were regularly welcomed to the White House – until the McCartney sisters came along – from which had rung out in recent years so many absolutist sermons about the wickedness of terrorism.

Chairing the policing commission on Northern Ireland, I made several visits to the USA with members of my team. We received much help on technical policing issues from local police chiefs, many of whom are from the Irish diaspora. We also discovered how much tougher were the rules of engagement for Northern Ireland's police officers, when faced with public order violence, than for most American forces. We were comprehensively grilled by American civil liberties organizations and by politicians about past policing practices and the steps we intended to take to make sure that the reformed and reorganized police service in Northern Ireland gave a proper and transparent priority to human rights. I regarded interrogation on these issues as wholly reasonable, and regarded our ability to satisfy these American expert concerns as one of the benchmarks for the success of our report. For me, this experience has cast an interesting light on Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo Bay and other related matters.

The second issue, which brought me sharply into contact with

American attitudes and policies, also concerned human rights, this time in Hong Kong. I have written elsewhere of my efforts as the last governor of Hong Kong to deliver on at least some of the promises made to its citizens about democracy, the rule of law and civil liberties. The support that I got in these endeavours was at best mixed. The British Government was fine, though you did not need a higher degree in reading body language to recognize that there were parts of Whitehall that believed I was several sandwiches short of a picnic. The British business community was at best nervously polite about me, but mostly hostile. The media, on the other hand, were pretty friendly. European opinion was curious about the whole fuss, by and large taking the view that this was a bit of last-minute British grandstanding. France, in particular, was not going to let anything interfere with the aims of its commercial diplomacy in China. For the most consistent, intelligent and outspoken support, I could look only to the USA. President Clinton, the State Department and politicians from both parties were regularly and openly helpful. American non-governmental organizations, lawyers' groups and human rights lobbyists batted for us; the media too. Above all, the local American business community was intelligently forthright about the importance of respecting and retaining the protection of Hong Kong's liberties through the rule of law, strong institutions and our first limited essays at democratic accountability. Again and again, they made the connection between economic liberty and political liberty, between Hong Kong's economic success and its way of life as a free society. It was good to have some friends who believed so uninhibitedly in the same things as I did – and were prepared to say so.

In the early stages of my political life, I was little involved in European affairs. Of course, the issue of Britain's membership of the Common Market – or European Community, as we came to describe it – squatted in the middle of national politics, seeping poison into the main parties. Only the Liberals, metamorphosed by Labour's upheavals of the 1980s (partly provoked by Europe) into Liberal Democrats, remained ever faithful to the European project, while periodically benefiting from its unpopularity through the support of electors who regarded their votes as a way of registering a protest

against the other parties rather than as an endorsement of the whims and fancies of Liberalism's high command.

Others with whom I worked in the Conservative Party had long been involved in various pro-European organizations, arguing the case for Britain's European destiny in language often as extreme as that of their opponents within the party. But the opposition was definitely in the minority, usually regarded as slightly cranky as well as 'unhelpful', a dreadful thing to be in mainstream Tory circles. The Conservative Party usually liked to follow its leader and it liked to be liked. The leadership was pro-European, so the loyal thing to be was pro-Europe. Moreover, bright young party members touched by the sort of ambitions that help drive our political system and government, would naturally wish to reflect the attitudes and vision of their elders. Were you more likely to be chosen for a plum parliamentary constituency by declaring your belief in Britain's membership of a club she could aspire to lead (while naturally preserving the 'special relationship' with America), or by doubting the geo-strategic wisdom of Macmillan, Douglas-Home, Heath and all the rest? It was no contest. You also had the comfort of knowing that most newspapers would applaud your pro-European views and excoriate any heresy. Several newspapers, which were then more uncritically pro-European than I have ever been, have in the intervening years totally changed their tune, perhaps – as they claim – because Europe has been transformed into a different enterprise, or perhaps because their proprietors and editors have changed or have switched their views.

There will be time later to examine just how much the European project has altered, and to consider whether there is any truth in the argument that we were sold a pup, signing up to one thing while getting quite another. What the proponents of this argument usually mean is that what we agreed to was a free-trade area but that we have found ourselves trapped in a federalist union well on the way to becoming a superstate. Odd, really, for us to join what was allegedly no more than a free-trade area, when we were already part of one, called exactly that – the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) – an organization that manifestly failed to meet our economic or political aims. The European Community that we joined expressed in those days more explicitly federalist ambitions than are usually heard today

except in one or two odd corners of Europe's chancelleries and parliaments. The federalist model exists in its most potent, albeit fictitious, form in London newspaper offices.

In 1975, shortly after I had become Director of the Conservative Research Department, we fought the referendum campaign purportedly to determine whether the cosmetic changes negotiated by Harold Wilson in our terms of membership were sufficient to allow us to confirm our place in the Community. As has been the case with Britain's two other European referendum commitments, this one was a result of government weakness. Wilson wanted to hold his party together, split as it was over Europe. The successful campaign achieved this in the short term, but short meant short. Throughout the early 1980s Labour tore itself to shreds over the subject, provoking the departure from its ranks of some of its most attractive figures as well as the establishment of the Social Democratic Party, and ensuring that it was unelectable until Neil Kinnock and then Tony Blair put it back together again. Labour's turmoil in the 1980s presaged that in the Conservative Party a decade later.

The referendum campaign was the first time I had worked closely with Margaret Thatcher, who had only recently been elected leader of the party in a surging peasants' revolt against the incumbent, Edward Heath. As the party's leading European, he was brought huffily out of the tent to which he had retreated to lick his wounds (a process that took many years), to play a prominent part in the all-party Yes campaign. Thatcher was for once wisely happy to play second fiddle. But it was not because of any hesitation about the cause. She made some good pro-European speeches, which I helped to draft, and never tried by word or gesture to put any distance between herself and Heath and his co-campaigners.

One of those on the other side of the argument was my wife Lavender's uncle, Sir Derek Walker-Smith, who later became a life peer, taking the name of his Hertfordshire constituency, Broxbourne. Derek Walker-Smith was a distinguished Conservative parliamentarian and a successful barrister. He had entered the House of Commons after the war, chaired the backbenchers' 1922 Committee and been appointed Minister of Health by Harold Macmillan. He was never happy about the decision to sue for terms to join the European

Community. His argument was principled and, as I shall argue later, the core of the case that has to be answered one way or the other, once and for all, if Britain is ever to come to terms with its place in Europe. For Derek, the great struggles in British history had been to establish and safeguard the sovereignty of Parliament. The law was made at Westminster, and interpreted and administered by the courts and judges of the land. By signing the Treaty of Rome we were conceding the supremacy of another law-making body – the European Council and Parliament – and accepting that European courts and judges should have overriding authority in the maintenance of the rule of law in Britain. This represented a rupture in our history. It changed fundamentally the way we were governed, the way free men and women chose to run their own affairs – and could they then be as free as they once had been? Were we not surrendering cherished liberties?

Derek Walker-Smith put his case for many years with the skill of a top-class courtroom advocate. The clauses of each sentence were locked in place with a jeweller's skill; the very rotundity of his prose caused gentle amusement. I once heard him declare, 'When I hear the words "economic and monetary union", I am able without undue strain or difficulty to contain my enthusiasm within the bounds of public decorum.' They don't, as my father would have said, make them like that these days. Walker-Smith fought the good fight at Westminster and he took it to the European Parliament where he became, in his later years, the chairman of its legal affairs committee. He was obsessive about his arguments in the sense that he did not give up putting them. But he did not allow this passion to subsume all other considerations: the Conservative Party's political prospects, the national interest, the obligation on responsible politicians to eschew mindless populism, moderation in all things. He did not set out to wreck the Conservative Party with whose leaders he had disagreed, and since the die had been cast believed that the role he should play was to make the best of what had been decided. This was the national interest, and he served it in the European Parliament and in organizations of European lawyers.

As a minister, my first experience of working in Brussels came as a member of the Council of Development Ministers; indeed I

was plunged into chairing it since my promotion to the Overseas Development Administration coincided with the periodic six-month British presidency of the Community. Our main task and achievement was the reform of Europe's policy of food aid, preventing the dumping of surpluses on poor, developing countries in ways that threatened their ability to sustain indigenous agricultural production. I was also caught up in lengthy renegotiation of the Lomé Convention, which had brought Europe and most of its former colonies together in a contractual trade and cooperation agreement that had first come into force in 1976. I co-chaired with a smart finance minister from Senegal the subcommittee that determined the amount of aid that would lubricate the deal and found myself locked into what has become a familiar position down the years, between the rhetoric of heads of government and the more down-to-earth preoccupations of their finance ministers.

After three years in that job I was moved in 1989 to the Environment Department, a lumbering Whitehall giant that covered a range of sensitive issues from planning, housing, urban regeneration and water privatization to local government, local tax and national and international environmental protection. Environmental issues had shot up the political agenda, with a surge of support for Green candidates in the elections that year for the European Parliament. It was thought that the department needed a friendlier face after the stewardship of my predecessor Nicholas Ridley, whose many qualities did not include public geniality.

Ridley was close to Margaret Thatcher, and a strong believer in markets. In private and in public he was stridently (and for him, in due course, fatally) critical of the European enterprise. He was by no means a safe politician, so while the Prime Minister was happy to comfort herself from time to time with his prejudices, she probably recognized that his ability to self-detonate made it necessary to keep him at a safe distance. Like Norman Tebbit, he did however have a licence to snarl. Michael Heseltine, Ridley's predecessor as Environment Secretary, had taken a particularly active interest in the economic and social renewal of Liverpool after the riots there in 1981. The Archbishop and Bishop in the city, heads respectively of the Catholic and Anglican dioceses, were particularly grateful for his leadership.

When Ridley moved into the office, he showed no interest in the city whatsoever, and after some months, the religious leaders asked if they could go and see him. The meeting was worse than frosty. Mr Heseltine, they noted, had regarded himself as the Minister with Special Responsibility for Liverpool. Did he, Nick Ridley, feel the same? Well, he drawled, he was responsible for protecting the natterjack toad, for combating pollution and for the discharge of sewage sludge, so he supposed he could add Liverpool to his list. Hearts and minds did not meet.

My difficulties in Europe as Environment Secretary were exacerbated by Ridley, who had been moved to the Department of Trade and Industry. At the time, the European Commission was trying to raise standards of environmental protection with the enthusiastic support of most of the northern member states. The Italian commissioner responsible, Carlo Ripa di Meana, whose wife's testimony concerning his performance in bed earned him a certain notoriety and the tag (for reasons into which I have never indelicately enquired) 'the orgasm of Utrecht', was putting Britain under a lot of pressure – ironically, given that our readiness to implement whatever was agreed almost certainly exceeded that of the country he knew best. A complication was that we were in the throes of privatizing the water industry – a policy regarded at the time by most of the public as a crime against nature and quite possibly a sin against the Holy Ghost. A condition of the sale of the water companies was for us to make clear to prospective shareholders and investors what health standards would be expected of them and how much additional investment would be required in order to meet these standards. My attempts to hold the line in Europe on politically defensible positions were constantly undermined by Ridley. We would argue a position in Cabinet or a Cabinet committee, but just before the meeting in Brussels Ridley would pop up the backstairs in Downing Street to convince Thatcher that we were being too feeble with the wretched Europeans and should harden our line. I would get new, sometimes incoherent, instructions giving me less elbow room to negotiate a settlement. I remember in particular being cornered during negotiations over the dumping of sewage sludge in the North Sea. This is not the easiest practice to defend, particularly in the face of assault from our marine neighbours, or indeed from

indignant British holidaymakers. (I recall the saying: 'You cannot swim off Blackpool beach any longer; you can only go through the motions.') My hands were tied by a last-minute intervention from Downing Street in response to Ridley's private lobbying. I endured an uncomfortable meeting before managing to secure slightly more flexible negotiating instructions. Looking back, it is fair to say that European membership has driven up our environmental standards, especially in relation to air and water quality.

On environmental issues, Thatcher was not always a backmarker. She was an early convert to the case that our climate was being changed by fossil fuel emissions and the destruction of tropical rainforests. She understood earlier than most others the arguments about the greenhouse effect, and enthusiastically backed my efforts in Europe and at an international conference held in London in 1990 to strengthen the Montreal Protocol's restrictions on the use of halons and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Perhaps by that stage in her premiership, it helped that the main pressure for these changes did not come through European directives.

Conventional wisdom holds that Europe brought Margaret Thatcher down. In this case, I believe that conventional wisdom is correct, though what happened was both more subtle and more complicated than that – or so it seemed to me as the minister responsible for implementing the policy that drained away most of Thatcher's public support: the poll tax. Entangled in a Downing Street duel with her Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, as well as her Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, over whether 'her' pound should shadow the Deutschmark or even join the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), the Prime Minister allowed her attention to be diverted from what she normally did best – ascertaining the impact of any and every policy on Conservative voters: homeowners and ratepayers. The Conservatives had been committed since mid-1974 to reform of the local tax system, domestic rates. Ministers had run through almost every option without picking a winner before a collection of very clever minds hit upon a woefully foolish scheme. Charity deters me from setting out the roll of honour of the poll tax's authors. Initially this tax had the dubious virtue of simplicity. Everyone would pay an equal contri-

bution to the cost of local services, reflecting not ability to pay (except at extremes of poverty) but the distributed expenditure of local councils. The poll tax, or Community Charge as it was never called save by government spokesmen, was railroaded through the Cabinet against the heavy resistance of Lawson and the Treasury. To his credit, his political judgement was absolutely correct; to his discredit he then did everything in his power to ensure that its introduction was disastrous, beginning with a financial settlement for local councils in 1989–90 that was bound to bring far higher bills for local taxpayers.

I was transferred from Overseas Development – where I had been happily removed most of the time from domestic politics – to the Environment Department in time to take responsibility for the first year's operation of the poll tax. This was what in rugby football is called a hospital pass. It did not take long for me to realize just how calamitous the new tax was likely to be. On the whole, domestic rating had weighed proportionately least heavily on middle-income families in mid-price properties in averagely prosperous areas. This is a pretty good way of describing floating voters in marginal constituencies. These were the families who were really clobbered by the new system, which also doubled at a stroke the number of direct taxpayers in the country. Shortly after I moved to the Environment Department's bleak slab blocks (now demolished) in Marsham Street, I commissioned a study of what would actually happen to people's bills in a selection of constituencies in the first year of the tax's operation. Predictably, the poll tax homed in like a heat-seeking missile on floating voters in marginal seats. I went to see Margaret Thatcher with the figures, and with a complicated and expensive but manageable scheme to cap the losses people would suffer in moving from the old tax to the new. Lawson was furious, dressed me down and complained to Thatcher – not unreasonably – that my scheme would scupper the alleged merit of the original, which linked umbilically councils' spending plans with the demands placed on taxpayers. Thatcher did not really focus on the political storm that was inevitably going to hit us. She was distracted; her mind was elsewhere, plotting the next move to thwart Lawson and Howe, Kohl, Mitterrand and Andreotti. Our scheme for partial salvation died the death of a thousand cuts and caveats in Cabinet committees. A policy only slightly

less unpopular than the Black Death was unleashed on the land, and Conservative Members of Parliament muttered darkly about what it would do to them and whether, for their part, they could do anything about it and its authors.

The feud with Lawson and Howe was only settled by their sequential departures from the Cabinet, securing in the process the deservedly rapid rise of John Major. But with each ministerial resignation came more bad blood, more turbulence in the parliamentary party. It is politically incontinent to lose senior figures like this, raging into the night. More troublesome still, Thatcher appeared to cross the line between forceful European diplomacy and obsessive hysteria. The voice went up; the support went down. The last act, to whose consequences I shall return, mixed the maudlin and the genuinely tragic. She left the stage with one last magnificent performance in the House of Commons, shouting defiance into the teeth of the gale.

As the Conservative Party Chairman under Major's premiership, I played only a small role in the successful attempts to tear the fangs out of the poll tax and to re-establish a more normal relationship with our European partners. I went with the Prime Minister to Bonn when he spoke at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (the Christian Democrats' think tank), memorably pledging that Britain would resume its position at the heart of Europe. Since my days at the Conservative Research Department I had enjoyed a close relationship with German Christian Democrats, and admired their role in the reconstruction of German democracy – in working out a philosophy that combined market economics and social responsibility – and now in the reunification of Germany. I said as much in an interview with *Marxism Today*'s highly intelligent editor Martin Jacques, and was dubbed a closet Christian Democrat by the *Daily Telegraph* and others, a label to which I do not object despite my strong reservations about the vacuity of much of the last century's Catholic social teaching.

I had established a good rapport with Chancellor Kohl, in every sense one of the political giants of the last fifty years, and this helped secure an objective born more of political common sense than of philosophical conviction. British Conservatives in the European Parliament formed a group on their own, alongside but outside the main centre-right grouping dominated by Christian Democrats. This

meant that Conservatives were less influential in the Parliament than they could otherwise have been. There were differences in national party programmes but these hardly seemed to raise insurmountable obstacles. With the strong approval and support of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Chief Whip, I set about completing the negotiations for British membership of the larger group, a process that had begun under Thatcher's premiership. It involved some bizarre outings – explaining to obscure Christian Democrat politicians that the Conservative Party had been around for some time, perhaps a couple of centuries longer than their own parties, and was not a populist rump – and having especially taxing encounters with several Italian politicians whom the judicial authorities were shortly and permanently to remove from the scene. Eventually we got what we wanted, a modest success, though one which causes apoplexy in some parts of today's Conservative Party.

The principal triumph for European policy was John Major's negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991. This was an exemplary combination of party management and European diplomacy. Major handled his Cabinet and parliamentary colleagues with great skill, keeping his ministers informed about and involved in working out all the bottom lines. He concluded the negotiations to general satisfaction across the board. Returning to Cabinet with the job well done, he received tributes all round, led warmly by the Home Secretary Kenneth Baker. So successful politically was the operation, that Europe was hardly mentioned throughout the general election campaign that shortly followed, even by those who were to become such virulent critics of the Maastricht Treaty in the next parliament. This was an assembly from which the electors of Bath, alas, excluded me, thus securing for all practical purposes my exit from full-time, mainstream British politics.

After five years in Hong Kong, trying to manage Britain's exit from empire with as much dignity and decency as was possible in the circumstances, I returned home, chaired the policing commission in Northern Ireland, and went to Brussels in 1999 as one of Britain's two European commissioners, with responsibility for external relations. Much of this book is infused with my experience in that job, working

in the boiler room of the efforts to create a common European foreign and security policy, and in the course of that work dealing with the world's only superpower, the Not-So-United States of America.

The preceding autobiographical pages – the nearest I shall ever get to writing my memoirs – will explain, I hope, the way in which I came to hold the opinions I took with me to Brussels, the intellectual baggage that I unpacked in 1999 in my flat overlooking the Parc du Cinquantenaire. I came to the job in the European Commission as someone who loved and admired America, and who believed – without a disproportionate sense of romance – that Britain had taken historically the right decision about joining the European Union, but thought as well that the politics of Britain's membership and the success of Europe itself were in the first case confused and in the second hampered by the gap between rhetoric and reality. I have some sympathy for the 'Cleopatra's nose' view of history. People *do* make a difference to the playing out of events, so perhaps the (to be polite) pretty uninspiring present generation of European leaders bears some of the responsibility for today's muddle. This is particularly true in the two countries around which the whole sovereignty-sharing enterprise was formed, France and Germany. Each country faces a complex existential question, to which I shall shortly turn. Maybe, given our own psychodrama in Britain, we should be understanding about the difficulty their leaders have in answering this question. What is clear is that so long as France, Germany and Britain are confused about their own roles in Europe, so long will Europe be mixed up too.

There have always been two French visions of Europe. General de Gaulle believed in a Europe of nation states led by France and Germany, with the latter paying for its past by accepting the primacy of the French national interest on matters of major substance. Harold Macmillan said of de Gaulle, 'He speaks of Europe but he means France.' The tradition lives on. The other French conception of Europe was Jean Monnet's; his was a Europe in which the nation state submerged itself in a greater continent-wide, or at least western Europe-wide, enterprise. Nation states were old hat. It is difficult to straddle both positions intellectually and politically without the risk of serious

rupture. The French political class was able to do so for so long without too much discomfort because France was running the show, dominating the Brussels bureaucracy, standing guard over some of its sacrosanct programmes, such as the Common Agricultural Policy (the CAP), and providing both the language and the culture of decision-making. *Autres temps, autres moeurs*. In some ways I was always surprised that France had made so little fuss (at least until the treaty referendum campaign) about the transformation of the European Union, largely as a result of its successful enlargement to twenty-five states, but also as a result of profound changes in other countries, most notably Germany. So long as France does not really know what sort of Europe it wants, so long as it tries from time to time to turn the clock back almost whimsically to a golden age of French superior distinctiveness, so long as its politicians led by President Chirac remain trapped in an ignorant and impoverishing hostility to the policies required to create jobs and compete successfully in the world, it will punch significantly below its weight and Europe will be all the poorer.

There are occasional manifestations of the French trying to hold a line badly frayed by events, with which I have some sympathy. One concerned me very directly. During the behind-the-arras discussions about the choice of a new President of the Commission to succeed Romano Prodi in 2004, my own name was canvassed with some enthusiasm on both the right and the left of the political spectrum. My most prominent supporter was in fact French, the former President Giscard d'Estaing, who had recently presided over the convention that drafted a European constitution. In the margins of a meeting of European foreign ministers, Pierre de Boissieu came to see me. De Boissieu is France's senior bureaucrat in Brussels – cynical, manipulative, clever. He is the sort of Frenchman whom we British need to exist so that we can recall occasionally how wonderfully generous we were to sign the Entente Cordiale. 'Well,' de Boissieu said, 'I have been to the Elysée and I have a message for you. "They" think you're very good, but "they" can't accept you as president.' The reasons adduced were clear – Britain was outside the Eurozone and outside the Schengen area (for immigration and asylum policy). He was very civil about it; the French had been surprised at how comfortable they had

often found it to work with me; they thought I was independent-minded. But there it was. 'Let's be clear,' I said, 'you can't accept a British president.' In response, I got a wintry smile. It is worth recalling that Margaret Thatcher had twice accepted (1985 and 1989) a French candidate, Jacques Delors, and I suspect that in 2004 Mr Blair could probably have been persuaded to support the talented French Socialist Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy (now sensibly chosen to run the World Trade Organization).

At the European Council in Edinburgh (the heads of state or government summit) under the British presidency in 1992, my friend Tristan Garel-Jones, then Minister for Europe, was discussing Britain's hesitations about committing herself to European monetary union with Germany's Chancellor Kohl. He mentioned worries about loss of sovereignty. Kohl responded by saying that his own political purpose had always and everywhere been to submerge German sovereignty in a wider and broader European sovereignty. I know myself how strongly he felt that. He had been brought up near the historic borders of France and Germany, land that had been fought over again and again. He had seen the terrible aftermath of the Second World War. He wanted to end division and warfare in Europe. More than that, he believed that the emergence of an economically powerful, reunited Germany would only be tolerable to her neighbours if she subsumed herself in Europe, if Germany's national interest was clearly no more and no less than Europe's interest. To reinforce the point, Germany should be prepared to pay the lion's share for Europe's policies, subsidizing the farmers and the poorer regions throughout the Union. Germany had to show that it had slayed its demons by paying for the welfare of its neighbours.

Germany no longer has anything to prove. It is a stable, successful democracy. That has been one of the great political stories of the last fifty years. It continues to pay over the odds for the rest of Europe while also footing the continuing huge bill for reunification. The Kohl case for Europe – essentially no more war and limited German power – is still valid but cannot possibly have the same resonance for today's generation of political leaders. So what sort of EU does Germany want? Does it want to see more sovereignty shared? Hardly. In practice, it fights increasingly against the liberal economic policies coming

out of Brussels, which it fears will dismantle the last remnants of economic corporatism that formed the least attractive part of its post-war political settlement. It resists interference with the autonomous prerogatives of its regional states. No one speaks more clearly than Germany about subsidiarity, which is Brussels-speak for taking decisions at the lowest appropriate level. Where does Germany stand as Britain and France bicker about how we should handle our relations with America? Her heart is with Paris, and her head usually with London.

With France and Germany prominent advocates of the idea, the EU has expressed the ambition to make more of an effective political contribution on the world stage. It wants its member states to act and speak where possible in concert, the impact of the whole being thought to be greater than what can be achieved by individual countries. Much of this book will revolve around this question and particularly its effect on our relationship with America, our past saviour and increasingly confusing partner and friend.

It is confusing not least because it sometimes seems as though the United States is heading off in a totally different direction to the one it successfully taught us, its transatlantic cousins, to take. After the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson tried to establish a network of international agreements, rules and institutions that would compromise traditional views of national sovereignty and curtail the brutal excesses of nationalism. Wilson's world order was scuppered by Washington politics and European mistakes. After the Second World War, Wilsonism was again on parade; and this time America made it stick – the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Treaty of Rome – obliging European nation states to turn their backs on nineteenth-century assumptions about national governance and international relations. This was the only way we could be saved not only from the menace of Soviet Communism but also from our own worst, most distinctive and destructive instincts. European integration was in a sense the price we had to pay for America's protection. It was America who taught us to share sovereignty, both on our own continent and beyond. We are all Wilsonians now.

But is America? Cut through all the arguments about Iraq, the

Middle East, Iran and Afghanistan, the role of the United Nations, global democracy, proliferation of terrible munitions, terrorism, and environmental hazard. Is not the real thing we need to know simply this – does America still believe in the world she created, and encouraged and led the rest of us (to our vast benefit) to accept? Has the great republic which ruled our hearts and destinies with such accomplished imperial ease, partly because she eschewed the prerogatives of the emperor, now risked her safety and her standing by today claiming for herself imperial rights? Augustus and the wisest of his successors preserved their inheritance, and guarded the boundaries of Rome's empire by exercising restraint; Edward Gibbon's great history tells what happened when later emperors forgot that lesson. So under American tutelage, we in Europe turned our backs on the bellicose, nationalist politics of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and through our new modes of cooperation – imperfect, sometimes clumsy, even vainglorious – are now bent on coping with the problems of the twenty-first.

Meanwhile, America seems intent on going back to the politics of the century we were previously urged to abandon. Back to gun-slinging Teddy Roosevelt . . . with precision-guided missiles. Is that past to be all our futures, or can we even now, by greater European exertion, help to avoid it and save our great friend from herself? Can we help preserve the republic's mostly benign empire? Can we convince the USA, with the geo-strategic importance we benefited from in the age of Soviet threat now a subject for the history books, that Europe still counts for something, and is still worth heeding?

Sometimes historical change comes slowly, creeping up imperceptibly until you suddenly realize you are living in a new country or a new age. At other times, change arrives with dramatic speed. One moment this world, the next another – cards swept from the table. William Waldegrave, another friend of mine, and a minister in the Foreign Office, was visiting Berlin in early 1989. While he was there the East German border guards behaved badly, breaking all the established conventions, and picked up a young man who thought he had swum to safety across a boundary canal, only to be arrested by the guards as he scrambled up the bank on West Berlin's side. Waldegrave protested vehemently and publicly. Local advisers told him he had

overstepped the mark; there were ways of handling these matters, customary practices that respected the sensitivities of East Germany. East Berlin and its Communist authorities needed subtler handling. Within months, there were no East Berlin authorities, because there was no wall dividing East from West, no East Berlin, no East Germany. All gone, with no respect for those delicate sensitivities, all swept away into history's voluminous waste bin.

Will the world we have grown up in change as rapidly as that? Do we have time to shape events to our own transatlantic satisfaction before whatever is left of the Western Front is itself challenged by the rise of India and China? And what will Britain make of all this and contribute to it? Will we still be trying to work out who we are and what we want to be as the world moves on? Will we remain trapped in the past while others make the future? Time to look again at the dreams of the old lion, and to see whether we in Britain, to borrow a thought of Alan Bennett's, can really make a policy out of the Last Night of the Proms.

2

Not Tuppence for the Rest

The nations, not so blest as thee,
Must, in their turns, to tyrants fall:
Whilst thou shalt flourish great and free,
The dread and envy of them all.

'Rule, Britannia!', James Thompson

When Mr Blair's press office announced that I was to become the second British member of the European Commission in Brussels – joining Neil Kinnock there – the *Daily Telegraph*, bidding me a tear-free farewell, opined editorially that I was 'turning my back on the British way of life'. The writer packed into one curious insult much that explains the long-running psychodrama of Britain's relationship with the continent just off whose north-western shores our shared islands remain situated, despite efforts to give them a little shove (at least emotionally) towards mid-ocean. We are encouraged to believe by one of Britain's foremost and most obsessive Europhobes, Christopher Booker, that there is only a small number of plots that are used, albeit in various guises, in all storytelling. It would certainly be correct to conclude that the geo-strategic soap opera in which Britain has been engaged now for over fifty years contains not only the same plots, appearing over and over again, but much the same dialogue and even many of the same characters. This is not a storyline that includes many surprises.

The *Daily Telegraph*'s adieu begs a very large question that needs to be defined – what exactly *is* the British way of life? At which point

consensus goes up in smoke and we run the risk of provoking a row likely to break through those bounds of public decorum of which Derek Walker-Smith spoke so eloquently. However we approach that question, the way in which it is raised cuts to the heart of the problem of making Britain comfortable with a European role. It touches a raw nerve of xenophobia. We hear the distant wail of air raid sirens in the night and catch a whiff of the garlic breath of duplicity and cowardice. Those things we hold dear, those icons that help define us – warm pints of beer, pounds of our own bangers, the Queen's head on her realm's coin and paper notes, parliamentary democracy encased in Barry's and Pugin's Westminster gothic – are under attack by an insidious alien foe. All this is happening because the God-fearing taxpayers of Britain have had the wool pulled over their eyes, by a self-serving and invariably unelected elite. So, 'turning our back' on our own heritage, the high and mighty take the Eurostar to Brussels to sell the nation's birthright for a mess of euros, all in the name of a political enterprise to which the British electorate has never given its approval, having in the past been hoodwinked into signing on for a quite different political journey.

Some self-styled Eurosceptics will protest that presenting the argument about national identity and attitudes to Europe in these terms caricatures what can often be a perfectly sensible and moderate critique of the way the EU operates and the direction it has taken. There is some truth in this. The problem is that the term 'Eurosceptic' covers all manner of positions; it is stretched elastically from those who criticize aspects of policy or of EU management, while remaining more or less enthusiastic supporters of membership, to those who hate the whole enterprise and want to get out. Some Eurosceptics want the EU to make course corrections that could be both practical and acceptable to many other countries. For example, they (sensibly) wish to see a radical overhaul of the Common Agricultural Policy. Others agree with most of what the EU does but dislike a particular policy and do not wish to be part of it. For example, I think it is perfectly possible to be an enthusiastic supporter of a positive British role in Europe, while opposing our membership of the Eurozone. Maybe there is, in the medium and long term, a price to be paid for self-exclusion, economic and political, but there is also what the

former British diplomat Sir Percy Craddock might have called a 'colourable' case for this attitude. Moreover, even those who would have supported British membership of the Eurozone in the last few years would be hard pressed to find a good word for the domestic policies pursued within it by the governments of its three largest economies, Germany, France and Italy.

The supporters of British EU membership who define themselves as sceptics, partly because they doubt the wisdom of mindless enthusiasm about any human organization and refuse to suspend their rational faculties regarding the one based in Brussels, will have found much in the referendum results in France and the Netherlands in 2005 to convince them that their lack of gung-ho enthusiasm has been justified. They could recognize the EU's achievements, political and economic – from the single market to enlargement to the construction of a model of regional cooperation that provided an example to the world of how to work together to meet common threats and seize common opportunities. They could also note that the EU was not a superstate in the making but a construction of nation states, sometimes banging uneasily against one another and defining goals too often in a language spoken almost exclusively by politicians who wish to sound visionary but invariably sound distantly bombastic. They might also think that the crisis discerned by a departing limousine-load of European politicians led by Chirac and Schröder was in fact a heaven- or more accurately electorate-sent opportunity to review old assumptions, redefine purposes and trim ambitions without seeking to wreck the whole enterprise or turn it into something less than it was, a mechanism for sharing sovereignty in agreed areas of national and international life.

There are three other groups of Eurosceptics, whose views ascend the scales from wishful thinking to amnesia to hostility bordering on xenophobia. First there are those who advocate an approach to Europe in which Britain picks and chooses which policies it wants to embrace; negotiates acceptable exits from the ones it dislikes; and in the process shows the other member states the sort of Europe to which they would really like to belong, if only they could come to appreciate that *we* know what is best for them. The assumption behind this approach is that other European countries need us far more than we

need them, and that if only we spoke firmly enough to them they would fall obediently into line. This is pretty much the position that the Conservative Party has embraced officially in opposition. It would have been completely undeliverable if the party had ever got out of opposition. Charity suggests that it is naïve rather than dishonest, but whichever it is, it provides much of the percussion of the Conservative Party's thunder on Europe.

The resounding No votes in the referendums embolden some of these Conservative critics to claim a victory for their own approach. Was it not now clear that British Euroscepticism was on the march right across Europe? Were we not witnessing European voters, stumbling like the prisoners' chorus in *Fidelio* into the light, recognizing – the fools, not to have understood that we had known what they wanted all along – that the Europe project had gone too far, that Europe should become something quite different. Quite different, though quite what exactly is rarely spelled out. These Eurosceptics could take comfort at least from one thing: the votes showed that the nation state lives and flourishes. For all the horror stories about the creation of a country called Europe, here were two countries within Europe voting the same way for different reasons.

There is a second group of Eurosceptics that includes a fair sprinkling of those who used to be passionate supporters of membership. They argue, for instance, that recent developments in the EU involve the wholly unacceptable subordination of our own parliament to European institutions. But as we shall see later, it has always been the case that European legislation, once we were members of the club, 'shall be recognised and available in law and be enforced, allowed and followed accordingly'. It is difficult to believe that any moderately well-informed supporter of membership failed to understand this thirty years ago. Edward Heath had made the point explicitly, for example, in the parliamentary debate after Harold Wilson had announced his review of the case for membership in 1966:

> Those who say that the British people must realize what is involved in this are absolutely right. There is a pooling of sovereignty. Member countries of the Community have deliberately undertaken this to achieve their objectives, and, because they believe that the objectives are worth that degree of

surrender of sovereignty, they have done it quite deliberately . . . When we surrender some sovereignty, we shall have a share in the sovereignty of the Community as a whole, and of other members of it. It is not just, as is sometimes thought, an abandonment of sovereignty to other countries; it is a sharing of other people's sovereignty as well as a pooling of our own.

Moreover, the issue was at the heart of the No campaign publicity in the 1975 referendum campaign. The rejected Constitutional Treaty made no fundamental change to the role of our parliament and courts that had not been hard fact for more than half my lifetime.

The last group sometimes masquerades as one of the others. These are the people who claim to be sceptics, but are really phobic about Europe. They do not want adjustment of Britain's relationship with Europe, but changes so fundamental as to destroy the Union in any shape acceptable to its existing members. Failing such changes, they want complete withdrawal – indeed they usually want this with or without any debate about change. They sometimes canvass the Norwegian or Swiss options, 'ourselves (more or less) alone', to which I shall return in the next chapter.

While there are, as I have said, different shadings between these various allegedly sceptical positions, the portmanteau expression usually incorporates at least some policies and attitudes that would be unsustainable as a responsible set of policies for managing our relations with Europe in a way that serves our national interest. What also entitles the critic of Euroscepticism to assume the worst rather than the best about those who wear this badge is that the growth in their numbers is largely associated with the success of the EU's most hostile opponents in boiling the whole European debate down to the question of national identity and what they perceive to be a threat to bury it. Sophistication and modulation, nuance and understatement, have not been prominent in the language of the EU's detractors. They cannot regularly call up the heavy artillery, pounding European positions with some of the most high-explosive political charges, and then complain that they are being traduced as extremist.

No wonder that there is bemusement and confusion in parts of the citizenry. Flying back from Tokyo to Brussels a few years ago, I was confronted head-on by the fundamental question that continues to

curdle Britain's relationship with our European partners. My visit to Japan had itself been revealing. I had gone there just after the eruption of a media controversy at home about whether Britain's absence from the Eurozone would have any damaging impact on the enthusiasm of Asians to invest in our country. Most of the British press had pooh-poohed the idea. At my first meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister Mr Koizumi in his democratically shabby office, I embarked on a long overview of the satisfactory state of European relations with his country. As I finished my remarks, Mr Koizumi (barely containing his impatience) came directly to the point. 'When,' he asked, 'is Britain going to enter the Eurozone?' And so it continued, at meeting after meeting, from the Finance Minister to the Foreign Minister to the Trade Minister to the Nippon Keidanren (Japan's industrial federation). If Japanese investors were unfazed by our determination to sit out the first years of economic and monetary union, their representatives showed a curious way of expressing this insouciance.

Reflecting on this in my British Airways lounger at 40,000 feet, as dawn broke over the frozen Russian tundra below, my reverie was interrupted by a charming stewardess who set about laying my table for breakfast. 'Do you mind, Mr Patten, if I ask you a personal question?' Wondering what was coming next, I nervously welcomed the enquiry. 'Do you think,' she said, 'that Britain will ever actually join Europe?'

We could forget all the high-minded and low-minded politics of decades, throw the dust sheets over the conference tables, pack the visionary waffle back into the lexicons. Would we ever *actually* (a word redolent with aspiration harboured but ambition thwarted) join Europe? Who indeed could tell? The question reminds us that it is a subject for therapists as well as political scientists. It has divided parties, consumed the most promising political careers in flames, enfeebled and even destroyed governments, helped to vulgarize and demean parts of our media, distorted the debate about Britain's world role and purpose, and corroded our ability to pursue our national interest. It continues to provoke a collective nervous breakdown in the political classes. Every government eventually appears to succumb to the same virus (with only our most recent one avoiding its worst effects, at least so far). It is as though a higher destiny had ordained

that we can only have a relationship with Europe that inevitably becomes fractious and irritating, a relationship that before long has otherwise perfectly serious politicians going through a pantomime of foot-stamping, finger-wagging and name-calling. While we can absolve Mr Blair from this criticism, his Chancellor of the Exchequer does his best to hold fast to the great British tradition. Two terrible wars and a long peace marked the last century on our continent. We in Britain ended it as we began it – troubled, confused, divided about our relationship with our neighbours.

The generally accepted wisdom of modern historians, such as Linda Colley and Norman Davies, is that the whole notion of Britishness and the British way of life, which we are urged to defend against Continental combines and machinations, is a construct. What the English call the Act of Union (and the Scottish, the Treaty of Union), which bound the constituent nations of the British Isles together in the culturally diverse state of the United Kingdom in 1707, had to be underpinned by giving its citizens, and a little later in the century their German monarchs, a previously absent common identity. Britishness was constructed around the Crown-in-Parliament, the Protestant succession, the mighty empire that it assembled initially haphazardly though later with diligence, duty and sanctimoniousness, the naval might that helped secure its commerce and preserve its power, and the capitalism of the Industrial Revolution whose greatest moralist, Adam Smith, came (as Margaret Thatcher would frequently remark) from Scotland – paradoxically the principal socialist holdout against her own revolution. Time corroded these elements of the state's identity kit. The monarchy retained, mostly in a rather passive way, the affections of a majority. But it lost some of the magic and majesty on display at the 1953 coronation, well described by David Cannadine as 'a cavalcade of impotence'. Shortly after that, there was a further sense of the closing of an awesome chapter in our history at the state funeral of Winston Churchill, who is still commonly regarded as the repository and progenitor of our grandest notions of who we are. Protestantism as a state religion for understandable reasons rather lost its nerve, and together with the other Christian churches lost much of its flock to consumerism and other arid faiths. The British

Empire's sway over palm and pine was swept away, with our American friends doing what they could to speed the historical process. The attempt to replace it in the nation's affections with the Commonwealth came limply to nothing. Technological change and the economic development of other countries, primarily in east Asia, closed down industries and wrecked the communities that depended on them. The British identity needed fuel of a different sort in its tank.

Which vision of ourselves were we to draw on? There are competing notions, which perhaps cancel each other out, leaving the field to one overwhelming recent historical experience, less myth than the falsehoods that sustain nationhood in so many countries. My own preferred idea of identity rests heavily on George Orwell's observation that above all we are gentle people. I fear that this land of revolver-free policemen, polite bus conductors, and those old maids on their bicycles, made famous by John Major, as they peddled through the early morning mists to Holy Communion, was only part of the picture even when Orwell drew it. He also noted our bad teeth, British grime, intemperate boozing and foul language. One of Aden's last British governors, Sir Richard Turnbull, mourning the end of the British Empire, told Denis Healey that when it finally sank beneath the waves of history, it would leave behind it only two monuments: one was the game of Association Football, the other was the expression 'Fuck off'.

For me, the gentleness dies hard. I remember a visit to Africa when I was Britain's Development Minister in the late 1980s. We were flying from Cairo to Nairobi. Our plane developed a fault and we had to make an unscheduled landing at Addis Ababa where we were delayed for several hours. We telephoned the British Embassy but the ambassador was travelling up country. We decided in his absence that we would pass the time by visiting the office of the British Council, that admirable organization established to promote the image and cultural values of the United Kingdom in the rest of the world. Arriving at the small block where the office and its library were housed, we were surprised to see a queue stretching down the street and round the corner. Young Ethiopians were waiting patiently in the sun to borrow or return books or to look at well-thumbed editions of British newspapers and weeklies. One young man showed me the book on great British explorers that he had just read – Livingstone, Shackleton,

Scott. He had been especially impressed by Scott. Here was the stuff of high-patriotic romance – a young Ethiopian as moved as we in Britain have been by an archetypal British hero.

It surely says something about us that so many of our heroes, the emblems of our national community, were fallen but magnificent failures. One of the first poems I learned as a boy was Charles Wolfe's verses about the burial of Sir John Moore, the general who covered Wellington's retreat in the Peninsular War, at Corunna. I know of course how the poem begins:

> Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
> As his corse to the rampart we hurried . . .

But I had forgotten the last lines until, attending in the driving rain an official commemoration in Corunna itself of Moore's contribution to the struggle for Spanish independence against Napoleon's France, a better educated friend reminded me of them:

> Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
> From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
> We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
> But we left him alone with his glory!

Left alone in his own glory in a shroud woven from the snow, Scott was a similar hero whose last expedition was rightly included in a recent book of British greats – from Chaucer to fish and chips, from trial by jury to Welsh male voice choirs, from the Proms to the reading of the Saturday afternoon football results. It was hailed – 'Great Scott!' – as a part of British mythology epitomizing in Fergus Fleming's words 'a host of national traditions including monumental understatement (remember Captain Oates' last words "I am just going outside and may be some time"); the struggle against overwhelming odds; the adulation (however perverse) of amateurism; support for the underdog'. Thirty-two years after Scott's death, sixteen years after the end of the First World War, at an event in Cambridge to mark the opening of the eponymous Polar Research Institute that memorializes the explorer, Stanley Baldwin noted that Scott's life and his diaries had been a source of great comfort to the young men whose short lives had ended in the mud and blood of the Flanders trenches. Just as

patriotism was not enough, neither – Baldwin argued – was success. Play the game. Winning is not everything. Keep faith with your best selves and your own ideals. Run your own course and possess your own soul. Does all this sound a little quaint, a bit like a headmaster's prize-day speech at a minor public school? Does this gentle, principled heroism have any resonance in today's debate about identity?

One thing is for sure. We are still shaped, all of us, by our history, imprisoned some would say, even though we know so little of it. It is a rather narrow and limited historical memory of our 'finest hour' in the last war: one great dramatic moment of sustained courage so uplifting that, horrendous though some of its aspects were, we were swept along by it, our morale raised so that when we gave up our lives, we did so for 'King and Country'.

The myths of much earlier history are largely forgotten. When I was a Member of Parliament, I enjoyed the paintings in St Stephen's Hall, installed in the 1920s, which told the Whiggish story of Britain's freedom. The tale unfolds from Alfred the Great to the Act of Union, with a pleasing attendant imperial theme: Henry VII presents John Cabot with a charter to find new lands and Queen Elizabeth approves Sir Walter Raleigh's voyage to America. The measured progress in building the greatest empire the world had ever seen, around the core of the oldest parliamentary democracy, is everywhere celebrated in the Palace of Westminster. The individual stories, in each panel or engraving or stained-glass window, may stir old schoolroom memories in the minds of some of the public who throng Parliament's halls. Whether or not they really remember Cabot, or can place in order the Tudor monarchs, the British can understand one clear message – we are the freest, the boldest, the oldest, the best. And the one thing we do all remember, confirms that. We won the war.

Michael Naumann, the German culture minister, caused a furious row in 1999 when he remarked: 'England is obsessed with the war. It is the only nation in the world that has decided to make the Second World War a sort of spiritual core of its national self, understanding and pride.' Exaggerated though this may be – certainly it is not so prevalent an attitude as the right-wing press would like it to be – it does contain a few nuggets of truth. There was an enormous amount to be proud of in the way we stood, for almost two years, alone. Yet

there are other things in recent years of which we can also be proud, but which barely get a second thought. We wound up our empire with, on the whole, exemplary skill and more honour than might have been anticipated. We established a welfare democracy that worked pretty well for decades. By and large, we conducted political debate with restraint. We created the best public broadcasting service in the world. We fought Irish Republican terrorism without trampling too heavily over civil liberties. We did not entirely forget the public virtues celebrated by Michael Oakeshott: civility, courage, clubbability. Perhaps it was understandable that another great achievement did not get a look-in. We managed decline without violence or too much self-pity. From one of the 'Big Three' at the end of the war, or more accurately one of the 'Big Two-and-a-Half', we slipped to – what? A top-rank, second-division country? I suppose so, at least on a good day, though as *The Times* pointed out as long ago as 1963 in the context of the European debate, there was no divine right by which we could stay at the head of the second division.

Other European countries found it a little easier, perhaps more convenient and occasionally necessary to forget the past, or at least to reinvent it. But as Jean Monnet noted in his memoirs, 'Britain had not been conquered . . . she felt no need to exorcise the past.' We had not only been invincible; for almost two years we had stood alone – alone against most of the rest of our own continent. Some took comfort from this. At least, alone, we knew where we were. King George VI told his mother how much happier he was 'now that we have no allies to be polite to and pamper'. This was a little like whistling past the cemetery. The years 1940 and 1941 were a hard and worrying time. 'The PM,' Sir John Colville (Churchill's principal private secretary) records in his diary in September 1940, 'seems rather more apprehensive than I had realised about the possibility of invasion in the immediate future and he keeps on ringing up the Admiralty and asking about the weather in the Channel.' The Home Guard waited on the white clifftops; the Spitfires cut trails of vapour in the sky above Kent and Sussex; Mother Russia stirred in the east – and we survived by the skin of our teeth.

The bare essentials of the story are true; we did stand on our own, fortified by little more than courage, protected by little more than the

bravery of fighter pilots in their teens (or barely out of them), and by the English Channel. But there is plenty of room for myth to round off the jagged edges of the tableau. Would we all have fought on the beaches, and then contested every inch of chalk from the North Foreland to Dungeness as the German forces landed on Blighty's shore? Arguments in the British War Cabinet in May 1940 about the possibility of negotiating an end to hostilities with Germany remind us that even in the cordite atmosphere of warfare there were those arguing for compromise with evil. Since Churchill not only made our history but also wrote it, no hint of another side of the British character clouds the glorious picture. More important was the Left's rewriting of the history of the 1930s and their part in it. For Michael Foot and others the war and its early catastrophes were the result of the treason of our ruling classes, appeasers who refused to arm our threatened nation – treacherous toffs, Wodehousian in their manners and Nazi in their sympathies. The Londonderry House set was indeed pretty ghastly; many of its members were anti-Semitic. They feared that their own patrician interests were threatened by democracy and the lower orders, and could be best protected by a bit of no-nonsense, jack-booted discipline. Yet the Left's view of history ignores the fact that one reason why appeasement flourished in the 1930s is because it was popular and was indeed their own policy; the national government's foreign policy was supported by about 70 per cent of the public until Munich, and could still command a majority in opinion polls thereafter. As for Foot's Labour Party, even after it had abandoned pacifism with the election of Clement Attlee as leader in 1935, it still voted against rearmament on ten different occasions between then and the outbreak of war. The leaders of the working class were every bit as much to blame for Britain's lack of preparation, and for the shameful encouragement of German aggression, as were the partygoers at Cliveden.

Others perpetuate their own national myths, sometimes from ignorance, sometimes from political convenience, sometimes from necessary design. I lose count of the number of times I have heard American presidents date the beginning of the Second World War from the attack on Pearl Harbor. They forget the Poles, for example, who had already died by the ten thousand. America-centric history is more

excusable than the French rewriting of the past that has been necessary to create 'a certain idea of France' (to adapt General de Gaulle's phrase). The conception of '*La France résistante*', of a nation united in brave underground opposition to German occupation, is (even if one stretches Francophilia to breaking point) more than exaggeration. The fiftieth anniversary of D-Day brought with it a poll in *Le Figaro*, which showed that 90 per cent of French people thought that the Free French forces had played a major part in the liberation of 1944–45; another poll in *Le Monde* indicated that half the country thought the Resistance had done quite as much as the Allies to win the war. A remarkable number of post-war French politicians rather rapidly acquired glamorous war records or shed all evidence of more questionable ones. Thus is national history made everywhere. The real stuff of history, appearing occasionally through the mists of convenient fiction, rankles and hurts. 'I may be cynical,' Harold Macmillan wrote in his diary, 'but I fear it's true – if Hitler had danced in London we'd have had no trouble with de Gaulle.'

At the end of the war, Germany and much of the rest of Europe was flattened. The British publisher Victor Gollancz's *In Darkest Germany* described a country on the edge of starvation, at the heart of a continent roamed by ragged throngs of displaced people searching for a home. Britain, though exhausted by war, began the years of peace in incomparably better shape than her defeated or liberated neighbours. In 1947 Britain exported as much as France, Germany, Italy, Benelux, Norway and Denmark combined. In the 1940s the franc was a pretty worthless currency, and the year after the end of hostilities France's national income was what it had been in 1938. Germany and Italy were in even worse shape. If not 'To the victor belong the spoils', at least victorious Britain had a big start on her neighbours as they settled to the task of post-war reconstruction. What was this world to be like, and how were its alliances and partnerships to be configured?

Just as Winston Churchill has left his indelible print on the defining moment of our recollected history, and therefore on our sense of national identity, so too his words even more than his actions provide the prism through which we have sought to argue and define our

role in the modern world. It should be regarded as absurd to debate where we should be and where we should go at the outset of the twenty-first century through competing forensic analysis of the writing and speeches of a politician born in 1874. Churchill is fought over by pro- and anti-Europeans, each side seeking to enlist his testimony in history's dock. Truth to tell, as a witness he does not really suit anyone's arguments, though the fact that such efforts are made to shoehorn him into today's political debate is an important reminder of why that argument is so sterile and debilitating.

'Dear Winston', as Margaret Thatcher used to call him with proprietary devotion, must reach near the top of the very short list of authentic British national heroes. An unsurpassed wartime leader, he was in many ways larger than life. The story that he painted over a mouse on a Rubens (which hangs at the top of the stairs at Chequers) because he judged it too small for the composition, is classic Churchill chutzpah: audacious, theatrical, supremely confident in his own judgement and ability, and splendidly unreasonable. He deserves recognition not only as statesman, leader and historian, but as a political visionary. He was not always right. He got India badly wrong and opposed votes for women long after he should have seen the inevitability of this change, even if he could not accept the case for it. But for all that, he had great swoops of intuition about the future, which were frequently right. He often saw in events more than others could discern. He was never afraid to think big: looking abroad to discover what the future might hold, and then mobilizing intellectual and political support to meet the challenge. He was a lone voice prophesying the future in the 1930s, foreseeing the coming war with Hitler. In Fulton, Missouri, in 1946, by contrast, he was heeded. He described how an Iron Curtain had descended across the continent – and his phrase defined an era. That speech was entitled not 'The Iron Curtain', but 'The Sinews of Peace'. Churchill was not a Cassandra, predicting the worst, but a statesman striving for the best, confident that a new war could be prevented if the free world banded together to deter aggression.

As a half-American internationalist, it is not surprising that Churchill recognized the importance of the transatlantic alliance, working tirelessly and brilliantly to bring America into the war until

the Japanese did the job for him. Yet he was always clear-sighted. He accepted that American's aims would not always coincide with Britain's. This became clear after the war – with America's determination to hasten the end of the British Empire, with Suez, and with Britain's decision to develop her own nuclear weapons.

One might have expected Churchill's American affections. It is more surprising that he took such a long view of Europe. He wrote as early as 1930 about a 'United States of Europe', and his call for partnership between France and Germany in his speech in Zurich in 1946 was remarkable. But he remained ambiguous about Britain's own role. We were '*with* Europe, but not *of* it ... linked but not comprised ... interested and associated, but not absorbed'. He advocated federalism. But he saw it as something for the Continent, proceeding with Britain's benign support. Britain, for its part, played in a different, bigger league. Churchill imagined three interlocking circles or rings: of empire (the British Commonwealth), Europe, and Britain's transatlantic affinities. He bestrode all three – the 'Lord of the Rings'. It is hardly surprising that Churchill failed to see how quickly Britain's power would diminish after the end of the war; how rapidly her empire would fade to a memory; and what a small political role the Commonwealth would come to assume. What *is* remarkable, given Churchill's reputation as a patriot – indeed his magnificent life and character came close to defining patriotism – is that he saw the case for sharing sovereignty many years before that idea entered the political mainstream: a point that I will develop in the next chapter.

Churchill's enthusiasm for creating new political structures in Europe exceeded that of most of his British contemporaries, and he was certainly more positive than them about the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952. This was greeted with horror by Whitehall's establishment, with civil servants and politicians alike angry that Britain had been in the dark while it was planned, dismissive of its operational potential, and horrified at the idea of having to sell anything like it to the public. Herbert Morrison declared memorably: 'We can't do it. The Durham miners will never wear it.' Restored to office in 1951, after an election in which Europe's preoccupations hardly featured, Churchill's attention strayed from the implementation of the grand visions he had offered

in the immediate post-war years. He was focused on Cold War summitry and on demonstrating his physical fitness for the rigours of office. Elsewhere in his administration, Eden and Butler exemplified the prevailing dismissal of European integrationist pretensions; their attitude made *de haut en bas* seem like a demotic expression coined in the English language. This became more pronounced as the six founding states of the putative European Union negotiated their way towards agreement on the Treaty of Rome, with first Eden's and then Macmillan's governments curling their lip at the whole doomed enterprise or, somewhat contradictorily, conspiring to wreck it.

Believers in the alleged British tradition of wise and disinterested civil service advice would not come up with many scraps of supporting evidence from a trawl through the official papers of the period. But some did see clearly what was coming, expressing the sort of opinions that normally, in Britain, earn the description 'unsound' for their authors. As early as 1949, Sir Henry Tizard, chief scientific adviser at the Ministry of Defence, set out the true nature of Britain's position with withering accuracy: 'We persist in regarding ourselves as a Great Power capable of everything and only temporarily handicapped by economic difficulties. We are not a Great Power and never will be again. We are a great nation, but if we continue to behave like a Great Power we shall soon cease to be a great nation.' His argument was dismissed. As is so often the case in politics, it was the emperor who was the last to notice that he was in the buff.

Even relative British economic success in the 1950s, triggered by the post-war bonfire of controls, failed to generate a sense that the country was fast equipping itself for the modern world. In John Osborne's 1957 play *The Entertainer*, the comedian Archie Rice advised the audience: 'Don't clap too hard ... it's a very old building.' As that decade rolled into the next, not only did the building seem pretty decrepit – with its caretakers the butt of the young satirists of the age – but the economy began to slow, and we came to realize that the derided Common Market was catching us up and even perhaps leaving us behind. We had set up a loose free trade area of our own – the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – made up of Britain plus the six neighbours who traded most with us (supplying much of our food). But EFTA was no match for the dynamic economy of

the six Common Market countries. The relative importance of the Common Market and our Dominion partners, Australia and New Zealand, as a source of imports and a market for exports shifted substantially in favour of the former during the decade before we sued for membership terms. Britain was literally 'at sixes and sevens' in its European policy. With America's encouragement, and with a clear recognition that what he was doing could split the Conservative Party as surely as Peel had torn it asunder over free trade in the nineteenth century, Macmillan took the plunge.

Thus, we embarked on courtship, rejection, betrothal and the sort of marriage that brings complaints about the noise level from the neighbours and much employment for social workers, marriage guidance counsellors and family mediators. The initial application, famously rejected by President de Gaulle in 1963, was squeezed reluctantly out of a nation that felt bewildered by the sense that we had won the war but somehow lost the peace. Who did these people think they were to sit in judgement on our claims to join their club in our own time and on our own terms? These were the same countries that we had vanquished or saved, and now we had to go cap in hand to them. Since we were manifestly better than them, how come this odd role reversal? Exactly the same attitudes and prejudices have been predominant for the past forty years, not least in the way the British Government has presented every negotiation and every European development. The basic assumption is that no substantial initiative Europe proposes is ever going to work. Even our more balanced and moderate political leaders, such as John Major, can get sucked into this syndrome, as happened with Major's colourful denunciation of the prospects for economic and monetary union. We politicians announce that, were Europe's initiatives ever to come to anything, the result would end democratic life in 'this scepter'd isle' as we know it, castrating our freedoms and shackling our economy. When we negotiate a compromise, we announce that we have won hands down and that the amended changes that have now been agreed barely amount to a row of beans. In the recent negotiations on the proposed Constitutional Treaty, British ministers scampered under heavy media fire from the announcement of red lines that, like First World War trenches, we said we would defend to the death, to protestations that

the whole business was about as significant as discussing the London telephone directory. In attack we are diplomatic lions; in occasional and necessary retreat we are chartered accountants, claiming that nothing significant has been surrendered – just the odd decimal point adjusted in the bottom line. No wonder the British public is confused.

The equally bemused continent with which we have to deal is still regarded with suspicion as a pretty dangerous place by many Britons. During the war years, the hand of God helped to repel the Nazi hordes – an understandable identification of our lonely battle with the defence of Christian civilization. We had long felt that even if God was not actually a British passport holder, He had a particular affinity for the people of these isles. We never seemed to notice that the Germans had already laid claim to Him, even inscribing 'GOTT MIT UNS' on their soldiers' belt buckles. This squabble over God's favour inspired J. C. Squire's 1915 poem:

> God heard the embattled nations sing and shout,
> 'Gott strafe England!' and 'God save the King!'
> God this, God that, and God the other thing.
> 'Good God,' said God. 'I've got my work cut out!'

But we British believed ourselves to be a chosen people almost as clearly as many Americans have believed themselves to be. Until recent years, this Divine British Patriot was pretty clearly Protestant. As a Catholic politician, I can honestly say that I have never been aware of discrimination, though certainly back in the 1950s Catholics were regarded as just a little exotic, like Freemasons with incense and our very own dead tongue mumbo-jumbo. But the identification of the EU with the Catholic Church and Catholic political and social teaching has always made it a harder sell in Britain than it might otherwise have been. Alf Garnet's view of history did, after all, reflect a widespread view. 'God told Henry to ignore the Pope and to build His . . . kingdom on earth here in England.' And it was from then on that England began 'to win the world and rule it for its own good'. Pope Pius XII's wartime prevarications over Nazi wickedness could not have endeared European Catholicism to the British, and there has always been a sense that Catholic countries are a bit unreliable when it comes to supporting democracy. Archbishop Temple's concern

expressed in a letter in 1943, that an authoritarian organization of religion was always bound to find itself drawn to authoritarian politics, caught the mood. Catholic social policy has also caused anxiety, mixing (as it often does) wafflingly well-meaning and incompatible aims with a *dirigiste* instinct increasingly out of sympathy with the times. The lilies of the field 'toil not, neither do they spin', so one should not be too dismissive of attempts to turn the New Testament parables and homilies into policy wonkery. But there is no question that this brand of Christian Democracy is not very marketable in Britain.

Germany and France can be even tougher to hawk. 'I tries 'ard,' Ernest Bevin told the commander of the British occupation forces in Germany after the war, 'but I 'ates the Germans.' And when was that sense of Germanophobia mined to exhaustion? 'France surrenders. We're in the Finals' read the wartime newspaper hoarding, and the joke continues to today. It is much funnier if you are not a German. John Cleese's goose-step; the *Daily Mail* on the morning of the 1966 World Cup Final, 'If Germany beat us at Wembley this afternoon at our national sport, we can always point out to them that we have recently beaten them at theirs'; the *Sun* newspaper's successful campaign to prevent German soldiers from taking part in VE-day anniversary celebrations in London, 'The Sun Bans the Hun'. After sixty years, all these echoes of wartime start to seem less reflections of pride than unhealthy obsessions, unhealthy because we need to make new history, not live with our memories and trophies. To be blunt, if France after all her humiliations at Germany's hands can move on – at least with regard to her neighbour across the Rhine – why can't we?

There is a more serious side to all this. In 1945 A. J. P. Taylor produced *The Course of German History*, commissioned during the war years to explain 'The German Problem' to a British audience. What exactly *was* the problem? Taylor sets it out clearly in the first paragraph of the book:

> The history of the Germans is a history of extremes. It contains everything except moderation, and in the course of a thousand years the Germans have experienced everything except normality. They have dominated Europe, and they have been the hopeless victims of the domination of others . . . Only the

> normal person, not particularly good, not particularly bad, healthy, sane, moderate – he has never set his stamp on German history . . . Nothing is normal in German history except violent oscillations.

However accurate his historical judgement, Taylor's predictive powers have been proved wrong. History does not always repeat itself, but British policy has sometimes been dominated by the contrary point of view. Germany was governed after the war by a succession of very 'normal' people – 'not particularly good, not particularly bad, healthy, sane, moderate' – and their country became a triumph for the healing powers of democracy and socially responsible market economics. They coped with their history with a mixture of brave honesty and calculated amnesia. The fall of the Berlin Wall – one of the defining moments in our post-war world – and the subsequent reunification of Germany were handled brilliantly by Chancellor Kohl and his colleagues. Retrospective criticism of the generosity of the terms with which West Germany welcomed East Germany to a single nationhood seems to me absurd. You cannot reunite a family on the basis of two different notions of law, welfare and commerce. What should have been regarded as a moment for celebration by British politicians, whose country in the 1940s had helped to set Germany on her successful way, was regarded by some as a cause for gloomy foreboding. Could we stop reunification? How could we deal with its worrying consequences?

Though public opinion in Britain seemed from the opinion polls gratifyingly supportive of allowing the Germans to sort out their own future, Prime Minister Thatcher tried hard herself to derail this historic project with brief initial support from President Mitterrand. Her behaviour was diplomatically crass and morally wrong. Even the truth was bent to try to prove her *Sun*-headline instincts about Germany correct. The leaked record of a seminar at Chequers, held with a small group of historians to help inform her about a subject on which her prejudices were unshakeable, was drafted to reflect her own views rather than theirs. While his remarks probably came close to reflecting her private opinion, Nicholas Ridley, who had begun his political career (like Enoch Powell) as a European federalist, stepped over the line of diplomatic acceptability when he allowed himself to be quoted

as saying that the European Union was 'a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe . . . I'm not against giving up sovereignty in principle, but not to this lot. You might as well give it to Adolf Hitler, frankly . . . I'm not sure I wouldn't rather have the shelters and the chance to fight back than simply being taken over by economics.' Almost fifty years after the war's end it was back to fighting them on the beaches and the landing grounds, in the streets and in the hills. It was difficult to believe that we were talking about one of our most important friends and allies who, to her credit, simply turned the other cheek – perhaps not long-sufferingly or with pain so much as with growing contempt and pity, which is worse.

Francophobia has a long pedigree in Britain – the stuff of war, envy, slights, commercial competition. It has invariably gone hand in hand with quiet admiration – for the French quality of life, for intellectual achievement and even, in some quarters, for the reverence shown for the State and its institutions. There are also a few closet British Bonapartists, admiring the longevity of centralized institutions, like the education system. (I must say, that is not my own taste; it jars against my preference for the clutter of liberalism.) We make great efforts to overcome the natural elbowing and barging that come inevitably when two very opinionated peoples share the same neighbourhood. We signed the Entente Cordiale in 1904, only six years after the Fashoda Incident in Sudan had almost provoked a full-scale war between the two countries, and we make our regular obeisance to it. During the centenary celebrations of it in Britain, I spoke at two meetings – one with President Chirac, the other with one of his predecessors Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Giscard spoke of fly-fishing and P. G. Wodehouse, the upper-class Frenchman's admiration for a Britain of well-cut tweed and worldly-wise understatement. President Chirac's message was different. Seated in the hall of Rhodes House in Oxford, the sun streaming through the high windows on to the symbols of empire in Sir Herbert Baker's best effort at Cotswold colonial, President Chirac counted off in his beautifully modulated French all the contemporary links between the two countries – the French working in Britain, the British in France, the exports and imports, the investments and the sporting contacts. It was the real world of

Arsène Wenger and the second homes of Brits in Gascony and the Dordogne. The President noted how many of the villages near his own home in the mountainous Corrèze were being saved by British residents restoring the old houses they had bought and putting life back into villages and hamlets. I recall still the sight of the British Harrier pilot in the first Gulf War, reading a copy of one of Peter Mayle's awful books about life in Provence while waiting to take off. It was the British dream – a little slice of paradise in the French countryside, even if the natives did not all say 'zis' and 'zat' like Mr Mayle's characters.

So we ask for Weetabix and Marmite in the *épiceries* of the Lot, bring home local cheeses that run all over the car, but still assume the worst of our French neighbours whenever we get the chance. This is the country with which we generously came close to merging our destiny in the darkest days of defeat in the last war, as Churchill himself proposed. So why do we still distrust the French? It is largely, I think, because their rather tiresome exceptionalism cuts across our own bumptious certainty of our good intentions. How could anyone imagine that we are not doing our own best, in everyone else's best interests? Since Britain and France are in addition – even allowing for German global commercialism – the only two European countries with worldwide political and economic interests (some perhaps more illusory than real), there is a large stage on which we can discover each other's perfidy. This is unlikely to change. While the French government was clearly correct in its assessment of the case made for the invasion of Iraq and was equally correct about the likely results, and while it was both absurd and dishonest for the British government to lay the blame for the failure of the United Nations Security Council resolution on President Chirac, I am more frequently in the camp that criticizes French policy, for example over NATO. Yet I remain a Francophile like so many of my fellow citizens, and as a former Lord Chancellor, Elwyn Jones, put it, would regard a year without a stay in France as disappointing as a day without sunshine.

So whether it is with France or Germany that we compare Britain, let alone any of the other EU member states, we regard ourselves as fundamentally different from them – different and ultimately superior. Margaret Thatcher conceded in her famous Bruges speech in 1988

that links with Europe had been 'the dominant factor in our history', but she and many others still looked back 'to a golden age that never was' (to borrow a phrase from John Major). Golden and gloriously insular, 'this blessed plot' (the punning title of Hugo Young's masterly book on Britain and Europe, which he had once thought of calling 'this sceptic isle') had a longer and deeper tradition of liberty, parliamentary democracy and the law than our European neighbours; we had twice saved them in thirty years; we were outward looking, independent-spirited and entrepreneurial. And it took a deep sense of magnanimity on our part to forgive them for being, well, foreign. As Flanders and Swann sang:

> The English, the English, the English are best,
> I wouldn't give tuppence for all of the rest.

We have in recent years – principally through the dour oratory of Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown – trumpeted our economic superiority. Badly performing European economies are compared with peerless Britain. From time to time I have concluded that the only halfway adequate response to these comparisons between a golden period in Britain and the grim problems that allegedly crowd in on the Eurozone economies is to send food parcels. British productivity levels are behind those in most Eurozone countries, and the gap between our own and those of France, for example, has been growing. Several of them trade a substantially larger share of their gross domestic product than we do, and the Eurozone has been running a trade surplus against a trade deficit in the UK. British household debt and consumption have run ahead of European figures, which would not invariably be regarded as a sign of economic good health. Britain has done much better in recent years thanks, as economic historians note, to Gordon Brown not squandering the legacy of the Major and Clarke years. He deserves credit for that. We do have in Britain a good macroeconomic policy framework and more liberalized markets, and have been able as a result to catch up and overtake some other European economies. This does not justify what Britain's present European Commissioner Peter Mandelson called 'gloating'. Turning from overall economic performance to look at what it pays for, it would strain public credulity to claim that Britain's public services

are superior to those in most other parts of Europe. Perhaps we have a few lessons to learn from them.

I return to the basic question – what sort of people do we think we are? Our identification of ourselves as British has undoubtedly weakened as the Scottish and Welsh have asserted their own identities, and as they have become more suspicious of what they regard as English attempts to define Britishness in our own terms. It is interesting that Margaret Thatcher's assertion that she was involved in a battle royal to protect the British way of life was accompanied by a remorseless weakening of the Conservative Party's position in Scotland, leading to its obliteration there in the 1990s.

We in Britain – all the combines of our British state, separately and together – have a great history. We are the heirs to a great intellectual, political and literary tradition. No thanks to successive governments, we have fine universities, the second-best tertiary education system in the world. Our armed forces are as effectively professional as they are overstretched. We speak and write what has become the world's most used and most popular language. All that, and much more, is true. We count for something in the world and, whether through the BBC World Service or the British Council, or our aid programmes, or our trading instincts, or our diplomatic services, we make ourselves felt. To recycle an old saw, we punch above our weight. So, as James Bond says to Tiger Tanaka in *You Only Live Twice*: 'England may have been bled pretty thin by a couple of world wars [note the use of 'England'], our welfare-state politics may have made us expect too much for free, and the liberation of our colonies may have gone too fast, but we still climb Everest and beat plenty of the world at plenty of sports and win Nobel Prizes . . . There's nothing wrong with the British people.' The sentiments, for all their period charm, are not wholly misplaced, and we have at least continued to win Nobel Prizes – over forty in the last forty years alone, with Trinity College, Cambridge, winning more than France.

Where we get into trouble is when we give the impression, in the words of Noël Coward (admittedly writing a lyric about 'the pillars of London society'), that 'Nature selected us/protected us', and that we are 'Firmly convinced our position is really unique'. Others have

had, as we have noted, to escape from the traumas of their own history. Understandably, we do not feel the need to do that. But we should not be trapped by our history in a cocoon of claustrophobic self-regard. We cannot live happily ever after within the covers of Arthur Bryant's *History of Britain and the British People*, the citizens of 'freedom's own island', forever 'set in a silver sea'.

Consider only the most quantifiable of the relevant comparisons. What do the economic figures tell us? Our GDP is now fractionally ahead of that of France. Fine. But Germany's is now more than a third greater than ours, Japan's more than twice our size, the United States almost seven times. No great surprise, perhaps – we are getting used to that. Looking to the future, however, we would do well to notice that China's economy, currently growing at close to double figures per year, is already four times the size of the UK's. Even India, once the jewel in our crown, has an economy about twice the size of the UK's, with predicted growth rates that will rapidly increase the differential. It is no counsel of despair to observe that Thatcher's and Blair's Britain weighs in globally below Churchill's and Macmillan's of the 1950s and 1960s, and that their Britain was relatively less strong than Neville Chamberlain's. We are middleweight not heavyweight, and need to think through the implications of that.

Two arguments that are directly relevant to such an analysis will be dealt with in the next two chapters. First, there is the issue of national sovereignty, a matter which has fuelled the debate in the Conservative Party even if it does not entirely explain that party's flirtation with political suicide. Second, there is the debate about whether our destiny lies primarily with America, or whether we should throw in our lot enthusiastically with our Continental neighbours. This is the issue that has rewritten Mr Blair's role in history and left us bruised and bleeding in what Winston Churchill once called 'the thankless deserts of Mesopotamia', protesting our good faith and honour before a sceptical world.

The condition of our domestic written media does not make it easy to conduct these debates sensibly. There is little point in farmers grumbling about the weather, or politicians about the media; apart from other considerations, such an attitude leads towards illiberal solutions. But it is true that what was once a predominantly pro-

European press has turned about, mainly because of changes in editorship and, above all, ownership. It is also true that several of our newspapers are strongly, even rabidly, nationalist about every issue except the ownership of the media. Unlike many other countries, we do not regard holding our national passport as being a precondition for owning our national newspapers and broadcasters. Set all that on one side. We should not put too much blame on editors and proprietors for the public mood. The main blame lies with politicians. For too long, our politicians have been as weak as our journalists and proprietors have been strong. Political leaders have kowtowed to proprietors who are not, contrary to their own opinion, the primary makers of the terms of political trade. 'It's the *Sun* wot won it' was a commonly held view after the Conservative upset victory in 1992, a reference to that Murdoch newspaper's support for John Major in the election. However, the research I commissioned as Conservative Party Chairman at the time indicated that the majority of its readers throughout the campaign thought it a left-leaning and left-supporting paper.

Politicians should not run scared of newspapers, their owners and their headline writers. It is bad for the press, which gets too big for its boots, and bad for the parliamentary system of government, as we saw when Mr Blair buckled to media pressure for a referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty. Referendums are, of course, populist devices that (certainly in Britain) undermine parliamentary democracy. We should debate Europe and the issues that are raised by our membership of the EU at general elections. If these questions – like the euro and the Constitutional Treaty – are as vital as people say, they should determine who governs us. But they have twice now been pushed away into promised referendum campaigns, locked up where they cannot do too much harm. If we want a better and more constructive debate on Britain's relationship with Europe, then politicians will have to show more courage. I now turn to some of the political consequences of a failure of political nerve, and to the results of running before the wind.

3

National Sovereignty and the Descent of Conservatism

'I've got a sort of idea,' said Pooh at last,
'but I don't suppose it's a very good one.'
'I don't suppose it is either,' said Eeyore.

The House at Pooh Corner, A. A. Milne

The Conservative Party got an idea into its head in the 1990s. It was an idea that helped to wreck its prospects, delivering Britain into the hands of a Labour government shorn of principled strategic direction but rich in personal rivalry. The idea was to reverse the international posture it had first warmly embraced thirty years before when it had become a pro-European party. Labour had flip-flopped on the issue: against under Gaitskell; more or less for under Wilson; split and then against under Foot; increasingly for again under Kinnock, Smith and then Blair. When in government and electorally successful, Labour had supported membership of the European Union. There was surely a lesson for Conservatives in this. Instead, some Conservatives worked assiduously to saddle their party with a policy – or, more accurately, an attitude – whose attributes do not obviously include electoral success, unless I suppose you take the bleak view that Conservatism's predicament would be even more dire without the European albatross wrapped around its neck.

In the Conservative Party, as in other political formations, it is not necessary to have an intellectual basis for a policy, for a prevailing sentiment or for a political squawk. Indeed, Conservatives have rather prided themselves on being wise if slow-witted, as opposed to clever

and silly. Lord Salisbury's criticism of Iain Macleod as being too clever by half reflects this distaste for intellectualism, though it does scant justice to a tradition that embraces David Hume, Edmund Burke (in whose writings, as Coleridge observed, can be found 'the germs of almost all political truths') and Michael Oakeshott. But in the case of Europe, it was not deemed sufficient to have sniffed out error almost accidentally, to have stumbled on it in a belated journey back to first principles and deepest roots. There had to be a reason – an intellectual argument – for the historic change of course. Conservatives woke up to discover that Britain's sovereignty had been pilfered in the night, as surely as though bits had been removed by vandals from the Albert Memorial. Sovereignty, our ability to rule ourselves, had been seized and had to be restored.

This discovery swept through large swathes of the party while I was far from the scene. The Conservative Party was re-elected in 1992 during a recession, with the negative equity borne by too many home-owners an additional impediment to victory. Under John Major, Conservatives nevertheless polled more votes than any party in British political history before or since – half a million more than Tony Blair won in Labour's 1997 landslide, and a third of a million more than Margaret Thatcher in 1987. We led Labour in our share of the vote by over 7 per cent. Unfortunately, this large plurality did not bring with it an equivalent harvest of seats. John Major's overall majority was only twenty-one, and as I have already noted it did not include me. I went to Hong Kong, leaving behind a party that had enthusiastically endorsed the Treaty of Maastricht, warmly embraced it in its manifesto, and hardly mentioned Europe during the whole election campaign.

Observing the Conservative Party's subsequent suicidal flirtation with sovereignty from the distant Chinese coast was pretty surreal. Sovereignty was a rum concept to think about in Hong Kong. We were there in the last significant redoubt of empire under the sovereign authority of the Queen in Parliament, although we could not say as much to the Chinese. What was for us land in part ceded for all time, and in part leased for ninety-nine years, was for them territory snatched by imperialists from a dynasty whose feebleness enabled the robbery to be endorsed in unequal (that is, unacceptable if not

downright illegal) treaties. We held Hong Kong because they allowed us to do so. Not even the gallantry of a small garrison of Gurkhas and Black Watch was expected to be able to hold off the ranks of the People's Liberation Army, were they to drive south from Guangdong into the New Territories, striking towards the governor's country mansion at Fanling and its encircling golf courses. The only bunkers in this colony were full of sand.

So sensitive was this issue of sovereignty that the Joint Declaration of 1984, which set out the terms of Hong Kong's return to China, delicately sidestepped the question of its location. Was it here? Was it there? Where could it possibly be? We simply could not say. Nor could we give any credibility to the idea that even in a colony there could be citizens who might in some way share in the sovereignty that was exercised in someone or other's name by their governor. Even Hong Kong's senior civil servants, let alone her politicians, had to be kept at one remove from those negotiating the transfer of power on behalf of the British Government. For the British, then, there was no doubt about de jure sovereignty (even if we had to keep quiet about it), while the Chinese conceded de facto sovereignty until such time as suited them – and what suited them, when they were pressed for an answer, was 1997.

I was exposed to other questions of sovereignty during my governorship. I remember in particular a couple of hedge-fund assaults on the peg that joined the Hong Kong dollar to the American. This was an important foundation of the colony's stability during the years of transition. I did not want Hong Kong to be cast adrift on high seas, blown this way and that by financial gales. But avoiding that fate itself exposed us to occasional turbulence. With billions in traded currency crashing across the exchanges at the click of computers in London, Frankfurt and New York, I sometimes questioned what it meant to be sovereign in global markets where technology has speeded and amplified every economic activity.

Hong Kong survived and made it successfully through the transition to Chinese sovereignty from whatever it was that had existed before. My family packed our bags. We embarked on the royal yacht *Britannia*, and sailed through a storm of fireworks out of the harbour into

the South China Sea. We joined the largest fleet assembled by Britain east of Suez since the closure of the naval base in Singapore in the 1960s. For the last time, a royal yacht – literally, since the Prince of Wales was on board – sailed majestically through the fleet. (*Britannia* was shortly to be decommissioned – the Government thought it was too expensive to refurbish the vessel, and anyway wanted to get on with building the Millennium Dome.) We cruised on, accompanied by dolphins, flying fish and seventeen ships of the line, to Manila where we were greeted by a 21-gun salute from the Philippine navy (using, we were told afterwards, live rounds). We flew back to London, prosaically ending the British Empire in the queue for a taxi at Heathrow's Terminal Three. I was back home after five years to a political landscape totally transformed by New Labour's political sorcery and the Conservative Party's stupidity. Expressing my consternation at the prevailing scene in an early conversation with a young Conservative MP, he told me that I had lost the plot. Clearly I had, and at the same time the Conservative Party, which has always been my political home, had written itself out of the script. The great benefit of the old plot, unlike the new one, was that it usually seemed to end happily for Conservatives, an outcome too often regarded these days as a secondary consideration.

What had happened to the Conservative Party? Conspiracy and mutiny had been followed by division, division by fratricidal conflict, conflict by defeat, defeat by the imposition of a new orthodoxy, followed by more defeats. It is not the first time that the Conservative Party has torn itself to pieces in this sort of way. But in the past, the biggest splits were either over issues that touched real financial interests, or over rival and coherent visions of Britain's place in the world. When Conservatives were divided over Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws in the mid-1840s, the country gentlemen who opposed him at least had the excuse of defending their pockets. They had more time subsequently for country pursuits, spending all but five of the next thirty years out of office. In the early years of the last century, Tariff Reform split the Conservative Party into three. Its proponents saw it at the heart of a great scheme for imperial unity and industrial survival. Where is the real interest threatened in the case of our membership of the EU? Where is the coherent alternative conception of Britain's role

that can be compared with present policies – a conception that can be examined, debated, argued over, preferred, rejected? All that we can really get our teeth into is the accusation that our sovereignty is being whittled away – indeed the whittling may have reduced it already to dust. What on earth does all this mean?

Sovereignty is a notoriously slippery idea. In feudal times, the position was clear enough. Sovereignty rested with God. Royal or baronial critics of this would have done well to reflect on the meeting they would have sooner or later with their Maker, who would sit in final and unappealable judgement on them, sending some to a fate whose torments were explicitly detailed on the walls of every church. For Aquinas in the thirteenth century, human law was derived – by reason or revelation – from divine law. Valid law could not be created by an act of will.

Later, following successful assaults on ultramontanism by a scattering of kings and princes, God was good enough to delegate. Following the Act of Supremacy in 1534, sovereignty in Britain, for example, resided with the King-in-Parliament, a point that King James I sought to dispute. In a speech to Parliament in 1610, he said: 'The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for Kings are not only God's lieutenants . . . but even by God himself they are called gods.' This theory of absolute monarchy never recovered from the blow that struck off Charles I's head. The Bill of Rights in 1689 asserted that it was illegal for the king to pretend the 'power of suspending of laws, or the execution of laws . . . without consent of Parliament'. While the monarch could refuse consent or dismiss a government, parliament was in effect sovereign. And that sovereignty was no longer an expression of the will of God, but the will of the people.

As Geoffrey Howe argued in a seminal lecture at the London School of Economics in 1990, well before Conservatism's present troubles, sovereignty is customarily defined in three ways. There is, first, the notion of 'parliamentary sovereignty' according to which the UK parliament has untrammelled authority recognized by the courts to make or amend any law. This has always seemed to me pretty far-fetched since it recognizes no geographical boundary nor constitutional limit. Could this sovereign parliament – at least outside wartime – abolish our courts or scrap general elections? Second, there

is the notion of 'a sovereign authority', which appears to cover, unhelpfully if uncontentiously, all who are involved in the exercise of supreme authority by the State – monarch, parliament, courts, people. Third, there is what Howe called 'state sovereignty', which he defined as the 'notion that a country has the unique right to control its own destiny, and that its sovereignty is infringed if any other country or outside pressure exercises an unauthorised influence on its affairs'. Under this definition, the Soviet Union's sovereignty, for example, was clearly curtailed by the agreement in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 to allow other countries to assert their concerns about human rights within its borders.

Howe's central proposition was that legalistic notions of sovereignty do not capture its real practical meaning. After all, what do the concepts that he accurately set out really portend? What do we learn from the statement, for example, that 'Parliament is sovereign'? Sovereign to do what exactly? To safeguard the quality of the air we breathe, and of the 'azure main' around our 'scepter'd isle'? To roll back protectionist measures in our American markets? To prevent the nation going to war in Iraq for reasons that were at best spurious and at worst fraudulent? To hold the Cabinet, let alone the Prime Minister to account? What makes the concept of sovereignty such a difficult one is the confusion between sovereignty de jure – the supreme legal authority (often defined in ways that defy fifty years of our political history) – and sovereignty de facto – the ability to induce men and women to take a desired course of action and to deal with the problems that beset every nation state at the only level on which they can be overcome.

Hotspur understood the difference. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, Glendower says to him, 'I can call spirits from the vasty deep.' 'Why,' replies Hotspur, 'so can I, or so can any man; But will they come when you do call for them?' My favourite example from history comes later and in another country. In 1793, French Jacobins egged on by Robespierre turned violently against the more moderate Girondins, urging the arrest of that faction's leaders and wheeling cannons up to the Convention's door to underline their sovereign Rosseauian rights of participatory democracy. The President of the Convention, asserting his own sovereign legislative authority, sent a message to the

armed sans-culottes outside the building urging them to end their intimidation of the elect within. The commander of the mob sent back a simple response. 'Tell your fucking President that he and his Assembly can go fuck themselves, and if within one hour the Twenty-Two are not delivered, we will blow them all up.' The deputies tried to escape, but every exit was blocked. So they returned to the chamber and exercised their sovereign legislative authority to arrest their colleagues.

The reluctance in Britain to confront this difference between the notional and the real betrays perhaps some of our illusions about our own importance in the world, and this in turn finds its symbols in our romantic view of how we are governed. Unlike all other European countries, we have no written constitution, and so we today deride any attempts to spell out in detailed treaty language the way in which sovereignty is to be shared within the EU. When the Constitutional Treaty was still alive and – rather gently – kicking, many argued that we should not for the first time in our history be saddled with a constitution. We needed no such Continental device. We were free men and women with arrangements for self-government that had grown from the first Saxon acorn like a great oak. While we praise Westminster, parliamentary sovereignty, our independent judiciary and our own brand of civil society, what do we actually put up with? We have an electoral system riddled with unfairness; a bicameral legislative structure that the government reorganizes at regular intervals on the back of an envelope; courts whose judges are attacked by the executive because it does not care for the way they seek to protect our liberties; an executive that displays under both Labour and Conservative leadership the attributes of what Lord Hailsham once memorably called an 'elective dictatorship'; local government gutted by manic centralism (a process in which I played an ignoble part); a quangocracy that spirits responsibility away from those elected to exercise it; and a populist endorsement of referendums that undermine such authority as Parliament has left to it. Are these really the sacrosanct instruments of self-rule that need to be preserved and protected against Continental assault – if such an assault is even taking place?

Maybe the argument made more sense forty or fifty years ago when we confronted for the first time the consequences of membership of

the European club. Supporters of membership owned up to what it meant; they did not mislead but they certainly cannot be accused of exaggerating the constitutional impact. In public, the Lord Chancellor of the day, Lord Kilmuir, told the House of Lords that both courts and Parliament would be operating in a new world, with the former obliged to defer to the European Court on matters covered in the Treaty of Rome. This meant a greater loss of sovereignty than had previously been involved in joining NATO or the United Nations. It was contractual and would represent 'an unprecedented step'. Privately, he went much further in a letter to the government's chief negotiator, Edward Heath. The constitutional objections were 'serious', though not in his view 'conclusive'. But we would see the transfer of Parliament's 'substantive powers of legislating over the whole of a very important field'. He concluded: 'I am sure it would be a great mistake to underestimate the force of the objections ... But these objections ought to be brought out into the open now because, if we attempt to gloss over them at this stage, those who are opposed to the whole idea of joining the Community will certainly seize on them with more damaging effect later on.' The real charge against supporters of entry is not that they covered up what was involved – remember Edward Heath's remarks in 1966 quoted earlier – but that they did not enthusiastically take up this wise advice, partly I imagine because they too were imprisoned in a sentimental delusion about our pluperfect system of self-rule.

From the outset the Community, now the Union, has had the power to make laws that are binding on the citizens of all its member states. This has always been hotly debated and strongly contested. Derek Walker-Smith argued that British citizens would lose part of their birthright, including 'real things, deeply felt, instinctively understood and traditionally cherished by the British people'. Hugh Gaitskell spoke for many before and since when he asserted in 1962 that membership 'meant the end of Britain as an independent state. The end of a thousand years of history.' This is an argument we often hear these days. But it is plainly not new. It has always been there. What *is* new, however, is that many who opposed Gaitskell's views at the time have come around to echoing them despite the intervening forty years of history, which demonstrates that Britain remains

Britain. Gaitskell would surely have recoiled from the embrace of his xenophobic disciples today.

The 1967 White Paper on European membership asserted that: 'The constitutional innovation would lie in the acceptance in advance as part of the law of the UK of provisions to be made in the future by instruments issued by Community institutions – a situation for which there is no precedent in this country.' Four years later, explaining the content of our negotiations for membership, another White Paper stated more coyly that there would not be 'any erosion of essential national sovereignty'. This begged several questions. The word 'essential', of course, lays claim to weasel status. Above all, it ducks the issue of the virtual and the real – de jure and de facto. Yes, we were to give up notional authority in some areas to gain real power elsewhere. One important strand in British reluctance to join in the early moves in the 1940s and 1950s to establish the European Community had been the wish to preserve national sovereignty. It was all very well for the rest of Europe to combine forces and to develop supranational institutions – indeed it was probably a good thing. But Britain should remain 'master of her fate and captain of her soul'. Licentious foreigners could engage in increasingly 'federastic' practices. But we should preserve our virginity. By standing back at that time, by seeking to preserve de jure sovereignty, did we maximize our de facto sovereignty – our influence over our own destiny? Plainly not. Because we stayed out, we allowed the Community to take shape without us, and according to principles some of which were alien to us. Once it became clear that we had no future as a serious European player outside the political and economic construction that was to dominate the Continent in the second half of the twentieth century, it was too late. We knocked at the door. We were rebuffed by de Gaulle. We had to sue for entry. We got in on terms that were much less favourable than those that could have been agreed more than fifteen years before.

Similar things could be said of the debate in France at the time of Maastricht in 1991. Opponents demanded '*l'indépendence de la politique monétaire*' – or de jure sovereignty. But the *franc fort* already belonged to the deutschmark zone. So de facto sovereignty could be maximized by accepting the single currency. The Bundesbank, quite

rightly, takes account only of German interests. But the French have a seat on the European Central Bank, which has to take account of their interests too. This, indeed, is the logic of the whole European project. Its nations, by sharing de jure sovereignty, gain de facto sovereignty, or far greater mastery of their destiny.

This is the process described in the 1971 White Paper as 'a sharing and an enlargement of individual national sovereignty in the general interest'. It leads ineluctably to the process described by Lord Denning as being 'like an incoming tide. It flows into the estuaries and up the rivers. It cannot be held back. Parliament has decreed that the Treaty is henceforward to be part of our law.' Geoffrey Howe pointed out that this metaphor assumed a 'kind of irreducible dry land' of matters solely concerning Britain. So it does. Community law applies when we have willed it to apply by accepting that our interests are best served through common policies commonly applied.

Why does this often seem so intrusive? The reason is a simple one. If we are, for instance, to make a single market work then we need to remove all the obstacles, and that involves detailed legislative intervention. So the reason why ministers spend twenty-odd years considering, for example, a lawnmower noise directive is that regulation of such noise is precisely the sort of issue that can be misused as a non-tariff barrier. What else might I discover, with a modicum of exaggeration, if as a British lawnmower manufacturer I want to sell my product to France? Doubtless I will find that my lawnmower breaches scores of French regulations. Perhaps the paint contains a forbidden ingredient, or is the wrong green. Maybe the engine is too loud, and there are safety concerns. So each machine will have to be tested in Perpignan. Moreover, I will have to change the anti-clockwise cutting motions of the blade because this contravenes an ancient French right to clockwise cutting. All this may sound absurd – unless you are a lawnmower manufacturer keen to sell his product. (As I considered whether this example might be deemed a little far-fetched, I heard a radio report of complaints by British caravanners that European legislation does not cover the material used to make the sofas in European motorhomes.)

So you need laws – laws that Britain, which has stood aside from Continental practices for centuries, glorying in our differences, now

has to obey. Laws that every member state has to obey. What happens each time you agree to such a law, from environmental pollution to the regulation of financial services? If you treat sovereignty as some mystical absolute, a birthright (to follow Walker-Smith) of every Briton, handed down through the generations like a sacred flame, invisible and unalterable, then every European issue has to be resolved by answering one simple question. Does the proposal on the table require the citizens of Britain to surrender any more of their birthright? In this conception the country is giving itself away, piece by piece, 'drifting ever closer to its own destruction' (to quote from a Conservative pamphlet in 2000).

The Conservative leader who gave this drift to destruction its greatest momentum was Margaret Thatcher, who argued for, negotiated and in 1986–7 secured the legislative passage of the Single European Act (SEA). If you define sovereignty in the salami-slicing way described above – here a slice of birthright, there a slice of birthright – then this SEA resembles hacking more than slicing. We surrendered hunks of parliamentary sovereignty. It was all in an excellent cause, and followed the wise insight offered by the same Margaret Thatcher in a speech during the 1975 referendum campaign: 'Almost every major nation has been obliged by the pressures of the post-war world to pool significant areas of sovereignty so as to create more effective political units.' In this case, we were trying to achieve a principal national objective, turning a customs union into a genuine single market.

Only a small minority in the Conservative Party battled away in the birthright's cause. The legislative enactment of the SEA, for example, was driven through Parliament against scant opposition. The party as a whole still bore the stamp of Churchill's wisdom. In the parliamentary debate on the original plan for a European Coal and Steel Community operating under a supranational authority, the old hero had said: 'We are asked in a challenging way: "Are you prepared to part with any degree of national sovereignty in any circumstances for the sake of a larger synthesis?" The Conservative and Liberal Parties say, without hesitation, that we are prepared to consider, and if convinced to accept, the abrogation of national sovereignty, provided that we are satisfied with the conditions and safeguards . . . [we] declare that

national sovereignty is not inviolable, and that it may be resolutely diminished for the sake of all men in all the lands finding their way home together.' And so said (nearly) all of us in the Conservative Party, until something happened at a time that made serial acts of folly even more difficult to fathom.

The figure and views of Margaret Thatcher infuse every part of the European debate in the Conservative Party and in Britain. She was a towering figure about whom it is virtually impossible to find a neutral opinion. She is loved or hated, extravagantly adored or wildly scorned. She changed much of what she touched, not content to survive in office but determined to leave an impression and an impact – though the word 'make' may be more accurate than 'leave' since I do not believe she thought much about being followed, about political life post-Thatcher. As Denis Healey once observed, she was not a tree under whose shadowing branches much else was encouraged to grow.

Personally kind and remarkably and agreeably uncensorious about personal conduct – like many women, she was not surprised by the frailty of men – she was nevertheless a political bruiser, who understood the importance of an element of fear in political leadership. Her habit of summing up the conclusions of meetings at the outset required small acts of political courage if she was to be deflected from her preferred political course; courage plus as much or more knowledge about the issue under discussion as she invariably possessed herself, until exhaustion in her later years took its toll of her enthusiasm for reading briefs. Different colleagues pursued their own ways of trying to deal with her in her 'force of nature' mode. Peter Carrington made it clear to her in private that he was not prepared to be shouted at in meetings. She took the point. Geoffrey Howe opted for patient and, on his side at least, quiet debate. Watching him courteously approaching again and again her intellectual mangle was a little like seeing a pained country solicitor with a difficult and aggressive client.

Margaret Thatcher's career demonstrates many things. It shows the importance of ideas in politics. She was never satisfied to fight political wars over the terrain inherited from the social democracy of previous years. She wanted to shift, and to a considerable extent succeeded

in shifting, the political battlefield to the right – where she would comfortably argue for lower taxes, less regulation, increased privatization and a curb on abusive union power. There is not really a settled political philosophy called 'Thatcherism'; the 'ism' is the aggregate of what she did. Privatizing the railways was described as a 'Thatcherite' policy. But I doubt whether she would have pursued it – too messy and likely to be too unpopular. She favoured big ideas, but invariably (until near the end) pursued them pretty cautiously, carefully testing and preparing the ground. She declined, for example, to do battle with the miners until she had in place all the pieces necessary for success.

Big ideas were accompanied by a simple and clear narrative. Like Ronald Reagan, she understood that most people have little interest in politics and scant knowledge of what individual politicians stand for. She managed to weave together, as neo-Marxists have pointed out, a compelling story – at least outside Scotland and Wales – in which her instinctive feel for some of the issues of national identity helped to sell the case for a leaner, smaller state. Her idea of a state in which homeowners and small businesses were encouraged, taxes were cut and enterprise unleashed, public spending was slashed (oddly, more in rhetoric than reality) and the armed forces and the police were held in the highest esteem, was the political expression of a nation of sturdy individualists, law-abiding, God-fearing, commonsensical, making two and two equal four, grumpy about nannying from Westminster, patriotic, prepared wearily from time to time to put aside the ploughshares and take up the sword to save our untrustworthy neighbours from themselves. Among the scraps of paper in her handbag containing a few lines of wisdom from a variety of sages, you would usually have found something from Rudyard Kipling, perhaps 'The Glory of the Garden' or 'Norman and Saxon':

> The Saxon is not like us Normans. His manners are not so polite.
> But he never means anything serious till he talks about justice and right.
> When he stands like an ox in the furrow with his sullen set eyes on your own,
> And grumbles, 'This isn't fair dealing,' my son, leave the Saxon alone.

This was Thatcher's narrative, and though she appeared to know little history, she had a real feel for at least one simple version of the story of our island home.

Margaret Thatcher was also a lucky politician. True, successful politicians to some extent make their own luck. Whether it was her own intervention in the Conservative leadership election of 1975 and her handbagging of her male opponents, or Tony Blair's expert garrotting of Gordon Brown in a North London restaurant in 1994, there are moments when, if they are to succeed, politicians have to seize the moment. But like Blair, she was fortunate in her opponents whom she trapped rabbit-like in the headlights of her bandwagon as surely as, in due course, did he. In the 1980s the Labour Party was divided – over Europe, over defence, over how socialist it wished to be. It was infiltrated by extremists, whose relentless assiduity drove many traditional activists out of politics altogether. Several of its most popular leaders abandoned the party to start another, a fetal New Labour. Margaret Thatcher made the most of the disarray. When John Major faced his own first election as party leader, he confronted an opposition brought back from the dead by Neil Kinnock, an electoral system quite sharply tilted against the Conservatives, and the beginning of tactical voting between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in marginal seats. It makes his triumph all the more remarkable, explaining also why his victory secured only a small parliamentary majority. Major was not as favoured a political leader as his predecessor.

Thatcher would have been sensible to have ridden her luck for two terms and then made way for a successor. But few political leaders are wise enough – think of Mr Blair – to set themselves, as José María Aznar did in Spain, a two-term limit. As political shelf life shortens, with the increasing dazzle of publicity on leaders taking its toll on their attractiveness after an ever-shorter span, they should take a cue from the theatre and learn to leave the stage while the audience is still clapping.

The Conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott favoured continuity, disliked ideology, regarded politics as a secondary activity, and approved of a harmonious sense of community. Those of us who rather agree with him inevitably found Margaret Thatcher a shock.

To be fair, that is what Britain needed at the time, and it is why my own view of her, overall, is positive. What would continuity and consensus have meant in 1979? The task of British governments had become the management of decline, which Jim Callaghan undertook with benign competence until he was derailed by one of the principal causes of that decline, irresponsible trade union behaviour. Britain had become virtually ungovernable. Through the 1970s, the trade unions made governments and brought them down. It was a period characterized by the pursuit of an elusive 'social contract' between government and unions, under which governments undertook to deliver gifts that should never have been offered to the unions, in return for the unions making commitments that they never intended to keep. The country needed a good shaking, and being a conservative society with a very small 'c', probably also required a leader prepared to go way out in front of what had previously been deemed the consensus, and shout very loudly. The country responded by taking a few initially hesitant steps in Thatcher's direction. It is interesting that she got a serious hearing from many of the influential and intelligent liberal commentators of the day. Peter Jenkins had mapped Britain's decline, and found that what had been relative could easily become absolute unless we made fundamental changes. Hugo Young disapproved mightily of Thatcher's shrill nationalism but gave her the credit for being serious and principled. So she generally was. While her government's initial policies arguably squeezed the overall economy and even some competitive industries too hard (the concurrent tripling of world oil prices seemed to be disregarded as the policies constructed in opposition were implemented more toughly in government), a combination of tax cuts, public spending restraint, privatization of state-owned industries, union reform and deregulation of markets, turned the economy around. There was no economic miracle but the foundations were laid for an improved economic performance and for some advance in competitiveness, despite increases in productivity still less impressive than those of our neighbours.

Much more importantly, we had a government that could govern again, and we rescued from the broom cupboard all sorts of ideas about markets, tax, incentives and competition, which had been con-

signed there by political fashion for too long. While Tony Blair was still a young Labour candidate, hugging to his bosom Clause 4 of the Labour Party's constitution (committing it to nationalization) and wearing a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament badge on his lapel, Thatcher was making it possible for a Labour leader who finished up with the views he today espouses to run his party and to govern the country. Her principles blazed the trail for his (mostly) skilled opportunism.

By and large, Thatcher was surely 'a good thing' (to use the terminology of Sellars and Yeatman in *1066 and All That*). I disagreed with her from time to time, publicly and privately. She got quite a lot wrong. She had no feel for institutional pluralism, took a sledgehammer to local government and ignored the growing financial difficulties of our great universities. She could not see the point of the British Council and disliked the BBC, particularly its marvellous World Service, which attracted the wrath of some of her foreign friends, like Kenya's Daniel arap Moi. She had no feel for Scotland, defining her sense of Britishness in terms so English as to infuriate electors north of the border, whose aspirations for a measure of self-government she spurned. She was equally truculent about the sensitivities of Irish nationalism, though she did reluctantly sign the Hillsborough agreement in 1985, which pointed the way to an eventual political deal in Northern Ireland more than a decade later. Despite all this, I liked her personally and admired her politically, and took comfortably in my stride her occasional joshing about my 'wetness'. She was always much more agreeable than most of her unofficial court, which with one or two exceptions (Gordon Reece and Ronnie Miller, for example) acted as a sycophantic echo chamber for her more extreme views.

The subject of Europe had not featured much in Thatcher's speeches in opposition. She attacked the referendum on Europe in her maiden parliamentary speech as party leader, spoke in support of a Yes vote in the campaign, and occasionally called for greater European solidarity, not least in the face of the continued belligerent existence of the Soviet empire. In government, to the discomfort of colleagues and the disdain of other European leaders, she hurled herself into the debate over Britain's budgetary rebate with undiplomatic passion and

focused fury. She got most of what she wanted, which may or may not have been more than she could have been achieved using greater tact and guile. She accepted the greatest strides forwards that had yet been taken in political and economic integration with the Single European Act. She got on surprisingly well with France's socialist President Mitterrand, and badly with Germany's Christian Democrat Chancellor Kohl. Other leaders came and went. She was not a federalist and wished to explore every argument for further integration before accepting it. But an increasing number of Europe's other leaders were only federalists or integrationalists (if at all) on occasional Sundays; they went to church from time to time but few, as it were, believed in God. The bad luck all round was that her most nationalist sentiments came to the fore at the moment when the tide of integration washed further up the beach than ever before or since. Like Canute, she scolded the waves, and her acolytes do to this day, even though they have long since ceased to advance.

The speech that Margaret Thatcher made in Bruges in September 1988 is rightly seen as a watershed. Incensed by the evidence that an activist European Commission President, and a socialist to boot, was determined to press for a 'social Europe' alongside the 'economic Europe' achieved through the single market, concerned that others were moving with remarkable concord towards the creation of an economic and monetary union to underpin that single market, she determined to give the Continentals an uncensored piece of her mind. It was particularly telling because for the first time Thatcher criticized, not the policies that came out of Brussels, but the institutional structure that produced them. It was, in her argument, potentially hostile to British interests. This destroyed at a stroke the traditional British position that dealing with Europe was essentially a matter of getting the right coalition behind the right agenda to maximize the UK's influence. Bruges gave birth to a nightmare that still dominates Conservative speeches today – the imminent arrival of the superstate. National sovereignty was praised; socialism crushed underfoot. It was potent stuff, given more potency still by aggressive media spinning afterwards. The rapid obsolence of its main argument requires the quotation of the three passages that Thatcher singles out for particular mention herself in her memoirs, by which time (they were published

in 1993) it should have been obvious even to its author how out of date this proposition was.

Thatcher began by reminding her audience that the European Community and its member states were not the only manifestation of Europe's identity. To the east, other proud nations were struggling for their independence. We in the west of the continent had much to learn from their experience: 'It is ironic that just when those countries, such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the centre, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the centre, some in the Community seem to want to move in the opposite direction. We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European superstate exercising a new dominance from Brussels.'

She continued, 'Willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states is the best way to build a successful European Community . . . Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some form of identikit European personality.' She began her closing peroration declaring uncontroversially, 'Let Europe be a family of nations, understanding each other better, appreciating each other more, doing more together, but relishing our national identity no less than our Common European endeavour.'

Well, most of the countries that Margaret Thatcher praised and helped (I exclude Russia and several of the former members of the Soviet Union) have given their answer. In Warsaw, Prague and Budapest, they praised her support for their struggle for their own national identity and national sovereignty. And what did they do as soon as they had acquired that sovereignty? They applied to become members of the EU. Did they believe that they were giving up their identity as Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Slovenes to be fitted into a European identikit? Do they believe that they have exchanged commissars in Moscow for commissars in Brussels? Europe is a family of nations – indeed, our continent has more nation states within its geographical borders than ever before – and as I shall argue in a later chapter, the nation state remains the main

focus of communal loyalty and affection. What does this family of nation states have in common? Almost every member is already a member of the EU or wishes to become one. The enlargement of the Union in May 2004 was the most forceful rebuff to the Bruges argument, but is also a reason (with further enlargement to come) why the horrors predicted by Margaret Thatcher will not happen. Nation states are pooling or sharing their sovereignty in unique and unprecedented ways without giving up their national identity. They recognize that 'closer political union', as Winston Churchill said to the Congress of Europe in 1948, 'involves some sacrifice or merger of national sovereignty'. They believe that this sacrifice might be viewed, as he went on to say, as 'the gradual assumption by all the nations concerned of that larger sovereignty which can alone protect their diverse and distinctive customs and characteristics of their national traditions'.

The Bruges speech marked the beginning of the last act of the Thatcher era. It was followed by her tumultuous arguments with her colleagues about whether or not Britain should join the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). Most had favoured this course when it was first discussed in the mid-1980s, including the Party Chairman Norman Tebbit, who later became a sceptic of the most overwrought variety. Then came the rows over German reunification – a once sovereign nation bound together again. Shortly after this came the agreement at the Rome Summit of 1990 on monetary union, derided by Margaret Thatcher as 'being taken for a ride' to 'cloud cuckoo land'. But at least her critics could console themselves that three weeks earlier Margaret Thatcher had finally agreed (of course, too late and at a worryingly uncompetitive exchange rate) to Britain's entry into the ERM. Then disaster struck. Having returned from Rome, Margaret Thatcher went to the House of Commons to report on what had happened, and denounced Europe and all its works and pomps. 'No . . . No . . . No,' she yelled, noisily enough to provoke the long-suffering Howe's resignation from the Cabinet. (He was particularly disturbed by her assertion in Rome that Britain would *never* adopt the single currency.) An election challenge followed from Michael Heseltine; Margaret Thatcher failed to see him off conclusively in the first ballot and the trapdoor opened. For the record, I voted for her

on the first round. When the Cabinet was summoned one by one to advise her what to do after this setback, I told her that her position was unsustainable; that even if she were to squeak home in the next ballot (which was by no means certain), the result would be a humiliation; that I thought she should resign with dignity. I concluded that if nevertheless she pressed ahead, I would not be able to support her the next time round, not least because for her to run again would split the party. She listened politely but said little. I believe that Kenneth Clarke told her much the same.

Not only was the elevation of national sovereignty and the vilification of sovereignty-sharing curiously ill-timed given what was happening elsewhere in Europe, but it also seems in retrospect particularly paradoxical given what we know has happened across the globe in the years since. When Frederick the Great of Prussia saw the portrait of a man for whom he had very little time hanging on a wall, he is said to have declared, '*Niedriger hängen*' ('Hang it lower'). That would appear good advice to Conservatives and others when considering national sovereignty in a period when interdependence seems more obligatory than ever. The 1990s saw an upsurge in the manifestations and consequences of what we call globalization – an even bigger opening up of markets than occurred a century before, with the results augmented and expedited by technology. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, turnover on the world's foreign exchange markets rose fifty-fold. In the last fifteen years of the century foreign direct investment increased sixteen-fold. In their book on globalization, *A Future Perfect*, John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge note that 'by 1998, the world boasted 60,000 transnational companies with 500,000 affiliates, compared with 37,000 transnationals and 170,000 affiliates in 1990'. Money, goods, tourists and technology flatten borders. I will return later to this point; it is enough here to note that prosperity and security – the things people care about most – can only be secured though international cooperation. Even an island nation state like Britain finds that its borders are porous when it comes to combating drugs, crime, environmental threats, illegal migration, epidemic disease and terrorism. That is why interdependence through sovereignty-sharing makes sense, and it is why others

from Asia to Latin America to Africa have taken careful note of the sorts of cooperation we have pioneered in Europe, and are starting to copy them. Whatever else you say about the nation state – and I have already conceded its preponderant ability to attract loyalty and affection – it is difficult to conclude that its inviolate virtues constitute the basis of sensible domestic or international policies at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Why did these arguments cut so little ice with Conservatives over the last dozen or so years? Why did the Conservative Party sign up to a view of Europe that contradicted its history and desolated its future? Why did Conservatives deny the logical outcome of the policies embraced under Thatcher: the erosion of state sovereignty and the building of a borderless world through free trade, open economies and competition? Why did they fear the consequences in Europe of their own economic liberalism? Why did Conservatives work so sedulously from 1992–97 to make themselves unelectable, and then insist on playing the same lousy hand again and again? We have to return to the defenestration of Margaret Thatcher, for it is that act above all else that explains the dramatic disintegration of Conservatism as a credible electoral force, and until we Conservatives can exorcize it we shall continue to suffer electorally. One of Margaret Thatcher's friends and disciples, Jock Bruce-Gardyne, a clever MP from Scotland (though not, of course, in her days an MP with a Scottish seat), once opined that she would save the country but destroy the Conservative Party. He went on to note that both the country and the party would deserve what was coming to them. It is about time that Conservatives defied his predictions.

The removal of Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister in office, by a part of her own party in the House of Commons because they did not believe they could win an election under her stewardship and thought she was becoming increasingly and damagingly erratic in her behaviour, did not seem at the time quite such a calamitous act of regicide as it has subsequently appeared. I do not myself believe we could have won another election under her. But should we have suffered defeat anyway, reckoning on an early return to office? This was not decisive for me personally. I had thought since the previous election in 1987 that I was likely to be a 'goner' next time and had

turned down approaches to move to another much safer seat, an act that I regarded as distasteful carpetbagging. Yet whatever my personal circumstances, I do not see how anyone can happily build a strategy on the likelihood of electoral failure. It is never wise to be too smart in politics, and plotting a victory at the next election but one through defeat in the meantime is plain silly. So it was not surprising that the tribe turned on its leader.

But this was a leader with a difference. Margaret Thatcher had been the first party leader from the right of the party for as long as anyone could remember. Moreover, she had given the Right the confidence to believe that their own prejudices and opinions ran with the grain of the nation's character and interests. Not for her the task of reining in their instincts; she loosened the reins and gave them their heads. Second, she had also attracted a praetorian guard of fellow-thinking ideologues in the media, several of whom were converts from the left and felt a loyalty to her but not to the Conservative Party itself. Third, she used a good deal of her political capital in the late 1980s, at Bruges and afterwards, to drag the party into a more critical posture on Europe. This issue helped to bring her down, but her fall left behind supporters for whom any mutiny over Europe was in effect a gesture of pious loyalty to her own blessed memory.

The election of John Major brought to Number 10 the candidate who was thought to come closest to wearing her colours. Maybe he was. I had worked for and supported the election of Douglas Hurd, a man whose wisdom and intelligence I have always admired. I am not sure how much his heart was in the brief campaign. He was uncomfortable with some of the vulgarities of the enterprise: one of the reasons I appreciated him so much. Anyway, John stormed home – the representative, it appeared, both of continuity and change.

Major had never been a Thatcher acolyte. In our days together as young backbenchers I cannot remember disagreeing with him about anything very much. He was a moderate Tory, tough on economic issues, generous on social, and very, very competent – the best of our political generation. Presumably one thing that particularly pleased Thatcher about him was that he was not a smooth man; the product of a public school, then Oxbridge; a member of Brooks's or White's; a man whose opinions may have been rendered suspiciously malleable

by a mixture of privilege, guilt and ambition – today a Thatcherite, tomorrow an apostate. I doubt whether she knew him very well. But what she did know was that he had done everything she had asked him to do very effectively, and he had the great advantage of not being anyone else – Heseltine, say, or Howe.

John Major was not Margaret Thatcher either. Two in a row might have been terminally exhausting. Where she had driven her government over potholed roads and around hairpin bends at breakneck pace, he returned to a more traditional and measured style of government. Strangely, what had to some extent held together driven at a lick started to fall to pieces when the pace slowed. Major was Prime Minister for seven years; they were (at least from 1992 onwards) unhappy years for him and they ended with a terrible defeat, after a period (latterly) of very successful economic management. It is reasonable to ask how much he can be blamed for the Conservative Party's misfortunes.

John Major is a nice man, a point that is sometimes made as though it were a criticism. But just as do-gooding has always struck me as preferable to do-badding, so being nice is better than being nasty. To be absolutely accurate, John Major is certainly one of the nicest men I have ever met and arguably the nicest prime minister in my political life. What do I mean by nice? He is honest, generous, kind-hearted and inclined to think too well of others. Machiavelli would disapprove but I quite like political leaders to be nice. Major is also a clever man, much cleverer than he thinks, much cleverer than others assume can possibly be the case of someone touched by so little formal education. When he was Chief Secretary of the Treasury, departmental ministers used to have to negotiate their annual budget settlements with him. It was always a pretty intimidating meeting, which tested among other things a minister's grasp of his own responsibilities. Major would always ask politely whether you would prefer to dispense with civil service advisers and negotiate with him face-to-face. Waiting for such a meeting, in an anteroom surrounded by photographs of all his predecessors, I asked a senior Treasury mandarin, 'Who has been the best of them?' He replied, 'That one,' gesturing at Major's door. The lack of much by way of secondary education, and nothing by way of university education, had not made Major less clever, only less confi-

dent about his intellectual authority and social skills. He was sensitive about patronizing criticism, and sufficiently self-knowing to understand that he should not be. A thicker skin, a bit more ruthlessness and the willingness to trade on the tough background from which he had shot to political stardom would together have made him a happier man and probably a more successful prime minister. But I would not have liked him so much.

John Major loved the Conservative Party, or at least his rather romantic idea of the party. It had been a home for him as well as a ladder – a ladder that had taken him from Brixton, garden gnomes and clerical jobs to Downing Street and becoming the youngest prime minister since the Liberal Lord Rosebery in the nineteenth century. He believed it was imperative to hold the Conservative Party together; to avoid divisions and splits; to achieve success through unity (whereas Michael Heseltine had been said by his supporters to offer unity through success). The trouble was not that Major tried to hold the party together, but that it did not want to be held together, and fate dealt him an election result in 1992 that gave mutineers and troublemakers the Westminster arithmetic most favourable to their mischief.

As I have already noted, Major managed the Maastricht negotiations with great skill. Those were still the days when he rather enjoyed meetings in Europe. They were a showcase for his skills – greater mastery of detail than others in the room; courteous but firm argument; a perhaps excessive belief in his ability to read body language; and a clear sense of what he wanted and what he could get. An objective secured at Maastricht was to come back to haunt him. He negotiated an opt-out for Britain from the so-called social chapter, on the insistence of Michael Howard and others that it would be a ball and chain around the ankle of competitive British industry. This argument was probably exaggerated. Having opted back in to the social chapter in 1997, we do not appear to have hindered British economic progress in any significant way (though we occasionally had to fight, as over the Working Time Directive, to retain a sensible measure of flexibility in our labour market arrangements). But the social chapter was anathema to the Eurosceptics in the Conservative Right, and to more mainstream Conservatives too, and it had to be thrown overboard.

During the 1992 election campaign, Europe (to quote from the regular Nuffield election study) 'which a few months earlier, in the days of Mrs Thatcher and of Maastricht, had seemed so important, attracted little notice. Once it was over, nothing attracted more.' With the Government's slim majority of twenty-one, Conservative anti-Europeans, deploying all the sovereigntist arguments of the superstate and the loss of Britain's birthright, could achieve real and damaging leverage, and they did so straightaway against the bill to ratify the Treaty of Maastricht. We had originally thought that we could perhaps get this legislation through Parliament before the spring general election, but Major and I (as Party Chairman) had concluded that to try to do so might constrain our election timing options. When the bill was put to the Commons in the summer, opponents seized on the Danish negative vote in their own referendum on the treaty to insist that parliamentary scrutiny should be delayed. Fatally they were heeded, and by the time parliamentary debate was resumed, Britain had suffered the September humiliation of ejection from the Exchange Rate Mechanism. In retrospect it is easy to see what had gone wrong with the ERM. We went in too late; we entered at an uncompetitive rate; that rate became ever more uncompetitive as the costs of German reunification were borne by the whole system; any possibility of realignment within the system was denied by clumsy financial diplomacy on the British side and insensitive intransigence on the German. Shortly afterwards, the Germans bailed out the French, who were themselves in difficulty, having failed to do the same for the UK. It took little encouragement for most of his Cabinet colleagues at the time to denounce the Chancellor Norman Lamont's handling of this and other issues. But I doubt whether any Conservative Chancellor would have been able to avoid the deluge, which swept away the Government's reputation for competent economic management. The most valuable attribute that any government has is the benefit of the doubt. The Major Government lost it with the ERM debacle, and its subsequent splits and rows ensured that it never recovered this vital ingredient of success.

'Black Wednesday's' chaotic financial crisis emboldened the anti-Europeans, who made hay as the Maastricht legislation stumbled from one parliamentary crisis to another. In the early 1970s, Edward

Heath had been able to call on bipartisan support to get the legislation on the terms of our accession agreement through Parliament. Roy Jenkins had led a group of pro-European Labour members into the government lobbies whenever it was crucial to do so. No such support came from Labour pro-Europeans this time. Taking as a reason, or pretext, the opt-out from the social chapter, they worked to maximize the Government's embarrassment. Conservative rebels plotted with Labour whips to damage the Government at every opportunity. With the bill eventually concluded, there was no collective sigh of relief and a determination to return to normal. With the Conservative Government in retreat, the rebels (like the Party's future leader, Iain Duncan Smith) continued in hot pursuit, hounding ministers and driving policy in an ever more Eurosceptic direction. The descent into shambles continued to the election and overwhelming defeat.

Several factors fuelled the journey downhill. The Conservative Party in Parliament is not on the whole terribly interested in policy, and it was probably a mistake to think that the majority could be saved for sanity by encouraging an open debate on Europe. The normal stabilizing influence of the majority – the common-sense bottom of the party in Parliament – was largely lost in the ERM disaster. It made it look as though the anti-European argument might be correct across the board. Moreover, the newspapers that MPs and party activists read urged them on to ever greater anti-European excess. In pursuing pro-European policies in the 1970s and early 1980s, Labour moderates had done so with the backing of much of the media. Conservative pro-European moderates found themselves fighting against the tide of much media opinion. The Conservative Party, both then and since, suffered from the consequences of democratization in a contracting party. As party membership has declined and got older, so it has also increasingly reflected the views of the leader writers of the right-wing newspapers that these Conservatives read. The exchange of right-wing prejudices has become circular. More anti-European and right-wing views mean fewer party activists, and fewer party activists mean more anti-European and right-wing views. By the mid-to-late 1990s, it was tough being a moderate pro-European Tory MP in any constituency, and well-nigh impossible for anyone with such declared views to get selected as a parliamentary candidate.

The management of the party in these circumstances has been criticized. Things would not have got so bad, it is said, if Major and his colleagues had been tougher with their critics. Such a course of action would not have been easy. Dissent was driven by the mad, the bad and those beyond ambition. There were the long-time anti-Europeans. There was a group of new young members – the so-called 'Thatcher's Children' – who were regularly encouraged in private by their political matron to demonstrate their principles by voting against the Government. There were those who had failed as ministers and discovered their own consciences in dismissal from office. There were those who felt they had gained no advancement after thirteen years in office; dissidence had grown from disillusionment. Any party after a long period in office builds up such a residue of the disenchanted. It is not easy to manage. Major was always concerned lest he should push too hard and risk splitting the party like Peel. He did not want to be remembered for bringing down his own government.

The trouble is that once you start bargaining with extremists, once you start accommodating and playing for time, the slope opens up steeply in front of you. Margaret Thatcher might have offered from her handbag the slip of paper on which were written lines from another of her favourite Kipling poems:

> . . . we've proved it again and again,
> That if once you have paid him the Dane-geld
> You never get rid of the Dane.

Major promoted his opponents, 'the bastards' as he accurately called them; they behaved like even bigger bastards, leaking and plotting against him. He tossed out concessions on policy, until our posture on Europe turned into an ineffective and even embarrassing parody of Thatcherism. We blocked the nomination of the Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene as President of the Commission, and got instead a Luxembourger, who was less able and arguably more federalist than the wily Belgian. We tied ourselves in knots over voting rights and enlargement. We courted humiliation over mad cow disease, with British beef the hero of the hour in the land of the chicken tikka (provided it did not kill you). We conceded a referendum on the euro, with no discernible impact in stemming the tide of voter desertion. We

sent the Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind – a clever and wonderfully articulate Scot – around Europe to lecture our fellow member states on the sort of Europe they really wanted if only they woke up and realized it. And this is the real point. Conservative sceptics, anti-Europeans, obsessives have no idea what to put in place of the arrangements against which they rail, except the argument that we really know what is best for the rest of Europe but cannot quite describe it for the time being.

Do the most outspoken Conservative sceptics really want to stay in the Union at all? Some say they want no more than a free trade area. But we tried that and found it wanting. And why should we be able to achieve a negotiated disengagement from Europe tailor-made for all our priorities and presumably downgrading everyone else's? Some advocate that we should join Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein in the European Economic Area, or Switzerland, which has negotiated its own bilateral commercial arrangements with the EU. So we should preserve our sovereignty and give up any chance of leading Europe, by opting for life as a sort of Switzerland with the bomb.

In my job as a European commissioner I was responsible for relations with Norway, Switzerland and the rest. My conclusion was clear. They enjoyed all the enhanced sovereignty that comes with staying at home while the decisions that intimately affect their own economic life are made by their neighbours in Brussels. We put a diplomatic gloss on it of course. But to enjoy our market, they have to follow our rules: rules that they do not make or share in making. Norway, for example, applies all the single market rules in order to export to the Union. It also makes as great a budgetary contribution to Brussels as Denmark, without receiving any financial support in return. When we enlarged the Union, these outer-ring countries had to pay into the funds that we make available to help the poorer new members. I remember a Swiss negotiator telephoning me to plead that this subscription should be presented as a voluntary donation for development in the deprived parts of Europe, not an additional fee for access to a larger market. I was happy to oblige. But we both knew what the truth was. De facto sovereignty or de jure?

There are also some Conservatives who really want us out of Europe altogether. Their position is no different from that of the United

Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Some of them drifted in and out of Jimmy Goldsmith's populist Referendum Party, and they dwell permanently in the xenophobic twilight, hating Europe and not much liking the United States either. They will continue to obstruct any efforts to drag the Conservative Party back into a more sensible and comprehensible European posture.

For the time being, these Conservatives can hawk their attachment to national sovereignty, a vociferous commitment to the continuation of a millennium of glorious independence, and a hostility to the ambitions of the nightmarish superstate. Theirs is a programme whose main achievement has been to exclude from all hope of the party leadership the man – Kenneth Clarke, the successful architect of Britain's economic recovery in the 1990s – most able to exercise it in a way likely to restore the party's fortunes. Others with similar views to his are driven to the outer fringes of Conservatism, to watch with dismay the continued infatuation of the party they love with a ruinous fantasy. Such a pity, not to understand the new plot.

4

Poodle or Partner?

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return
from following after thee;
for whither thou goest, I will go;
and where thou lodgest, I will lodge . . .

The Old Testament, Ruth 1:16

The most famous speech about post-war British foreign policy was made by an American, Dean Acheson, a former US Secretary of State and one of the founding fathers of the world order shaped under President Truman's leadership. Acheson was, in the words of the British ambassador at the time, David Ormsby-Gore, an 'old and true friend of the United Kingdom'. He was also a strong supporter of European political and economic integration, believing with most of the other paladins of Washington's foreign policy establishment that America needed a genuine partnership of equals with a resurgent western Europe. Acheson's speech in December 1962 to the West Point Military Academy raised questions about Britain's international role that remain unanswered to this day.

'Great Britain,' Acheson noted, 'has lost an empire and not yet found a role. The attempt to play a separate power role – that is, a role apart from Europe, a role based on a "special relationship" with the United States, a role based on being the head of a "commonwealth" which has no political structure, or unity, or strength and enjoys a fragile and precarious economic relationship by means of the

sterling area and preferences in the British market – this role is about played out.' The truth, hot and strong, is rarely well received in diplomacy, though in my view one should not conclude from this that the word 'diplomacy' itself is generally a synonym for casuistry and polite obfuscation. Certainly on this occasion, umbrage was taken in large British spoonfuls; the nation's dignity had been outraged. The Prime Minister Harold Macmillan replied in terms with which Margaret Thatcher would have sympathized: 'Insofar as he appeared to denigrate the resolution and will of Britain and the British people, Mr Acheson has fallen into an error which has been made by quite a lot of people in the course of the last four hundred years, including Philip of Spain, Louis the Fourteenth, Napoleon, the Kaiser and Hitler.' Macmillan went on to criticize Acheson for failing to understand the role of the Commonwealth in world affairs.

Within weeks, two decisions were taken that demonstrated both the limits and the potential of the Special Relationship, and also showed the effect of that perceived relationship on others. Britain was still struggling to remain a military nuclear power of sorts. The original choice of the next generation of weaponry, the British Blue Streak, had already been scrapped in favour of a cheaper joint venture with the Americans, Skybolt. Now the Americans decided to cancel Skybolt and Britain was left begging for permission to purchase the American Polaris at a knock-down price. Reluctantly, the Americans agreed – largely, it seemed, because President Kennedy wanted to help Macmillan out of a hole. So Britain stayed in the nuclear club, with a deterrent that was anything but independent, enraging General de Gaulle in the process, confirming his instinctive suspicion that Britain was tied to Washington's apron strings, and provoking his infamous *Non* to our bid for membership of the Common Market. America had helped to abort what she wanted – an unequivocal British commitment to European integration – by allowing what she did not greatly favour – the prolongation of Britain's nuclear role. It was one of the few examples of the Special Relationship being allowed to affect America's judgement about its own national interest.

Like much else in Britain's twentieth-century story, the Special Relationship was largely the creation of Winston Churchill whose

mother of course was American. It became a mantra for successive British governments that American presidents are occasionally prevailed upon to mention with appropriate reverence. For Churchill, it incorporated both the sentimental ties that bound together Britain and its most famous former colony – ties forged out of shared Enlightenment values and the bonding of 'kith and kin', tested in battle and expressed in a common language – and a guileful geo-strategic ambition. Initially, Churchill hoped that a close partnership with America would help Britain hang on to some of its empire, or at least its status as a world power. In the former case, his hopes were rapidly dashed; in the latter, Britain managed most of the time to get its bottom on to a seat at the top table.

At its most wholesome, British enthusiasm for the American connection reflected admiration for American vigour and optimism. Churchill himself gave voice to this when, in a 1941 radio broadcast, he quoted Arthur Hugh Clough's famous lines:

> For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,
> Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
> Comes silent, flooding in, the main.
>
> And not by eastern windows only,
> When daylight comes, comes in the light;
> In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
> But westward, look, the land is bright!

'Bright', perhaps, but not always very knowledgeable about the 'old' country. I recall almost twenty years ago the poll taken at Penn State University, shortly before the actor Roy Dotrice performed his one-man show about Winston Churchill there, which showed that only one-third of the students had ever heard of the great man. What would the figures be today?

At its worst, British mush about America has contained a large ration of condescension. During the Bretton Woods negotiations of 1944, when America was firmly putting Britain in its place in the emerging post-war economic world, British negotiators comforted themselves with these lines:

In Washington Lord Halifax,
Once whispered to Lord Keynes:
'It's true *they* have the money bags,
But *we* have all the brains.'

The analogy of a once powerful empire, fallen on hard times, now playing the role of wise if world-weary friend and mentor to its youthful, unsophisticated successor has been a constant theme in Britain's transatlantic relationship since the 1940s, and we can still hear echoes of it today, albeit without Harold Macmillan's mastery of the classical comparisons. Speaking to the Labour politician Richard Crossman in 1944 about America's leadership of the Allies, Macmillan observed: 'We, my dear Crossman, are Greeks in this American empire. You will find the Americans much as the Greeks found the Romans – great big, vulgar, bustling people, more vigorous than we are and also more idle, with more unspoiled virtues but also more corrupt. We must run [Allied forces headquarters] as the Greek slaves ran the operations of the Emperor Claudius.'

It says much for Britain's American friends that they have by and large put up with this sort of maudlin and supercilious nonsense. At least French arrogance comes unvarnished, without the handwringing servility of an Edwardian retainer. David Cannadine has pointed out in his book *In Churchill's Shadow*, that Ian Fleming's James Bond has a similar Greek-to-Roman relationship with the CIA's Felix Leiter. While Bond is notionally subservient to America's secret service, he is the agent who does real damage to the enemies of Western democracy. It is, as Bond explains to Leiter in *Thunderball*, the UK that is most prominent in the front line defending the West. 'Perhaps it's just that in England we don't feel quite as secure as you do in America. The war just doesn't seem to have ended for us. Berlin, Cyprus, Kenya, Suez ... There always seems to be something building up somewhere.'

Americans occasionally play up to the corniness themselves. 'The Special Relationship,' wrote the American intellectual and former government official Eugene Rostow, 'is not a policy but a fact – a fact of history which reflects not only a shared devotion to Shakespeare and Jane Austen but the congruent interests of Great Britain and the

United States in world politics.' Is this how Mr Average American would see things? It is nice to think of American and British citizens joined culturally at the hip. Where this is so, literature is less likely to be the agent of adhesion than film, popular music or fashion. And 'national interest' is usually of more importance to Americans than anything else. As the former American ambassador in London, Ray Seitz, has argued in his memoir *Over Here*, relations between states are not often advanced by sentimentality. 'Nations pursue their interests, and important interests tend to remain stable,' he writes. 'This is how nations behave.'

During the years of the Special Relationship, a brass plate that Ambassador Seitz declined to polish, America has rightly and invariably pursued its own national interest, and Britain has invariably, and not always rightly, assumed that its own national interest was to line up dutifully behind America. This is called 'being an Atlanticist' and a 'believer' in the transatlantic relationship. The idea that occasional disagreement might make that relationship stronger does not appear to be worth serious consideration. Defining Atlanticism entirely in terms of unqualified support for whatever America says at one time or another is in her national interest, is to twist the concept into a shape that leaves no place for partnership. Good friends should give each other the benefit of the doubt. They should eschew rivalry; but one should not demand or expect subordination from the other.

America fought beside us in two world wars, understandably coming late to the slaughterhouse each time but hugely welcome and essential as an ally in the struggle to overcome the worst effects of European nationalism. It took the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Hitler's declaration of war on America to bring her into the Second World War. Polls showed that as late as October 1941 only 17 per cent of Americans favoured fighting Germany. Americans, including their president, feared that Britain would use its most powerful ally to help it hang on to its empire. The editors of *Life* magazine wrote an open letter 'to the people of England' in October 1942 in which they said: 'One thing we are sure we are not fighting for is to hold the British Empire together. We don't like to put the matter so bluntly, but we don't want you to have any illusions.' Gandhi had

told President Roosevelt in 1942 that, 'If India becomes free, the rest will follow,' and the President had no interest whatsoever in helping Britain and the other colonial powers to retain 'the archaic, medieval Empire idea'. Scolding Churchill for the suspicions he harboured about Stalin, Roosevelt said: 'You have four hundred years of acquisitive instinct in your blood and you just don't understand how a country might not want to acquire land somewhere if they can get it.' Roosevelt even tried to get the British to give up Hong Kong to the Chinese as a gesture of goodwill at the end of the war. The Americans did not hit the bullseye in that case, but elsewhere they were more successful in helping to speed the exit from empire by the colonial powers, while not always liking (as in Indo-China) the consequences.

Before the war's end, the future institutions of global governance had been planned – the United Nations at San Francisco and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. Anyone who thinks that sentimentality gets a look-in when America is negotiating about money and commerce should read Robert Skidelsky's biography of John Maynard Keynes, the head of the British delegation at the economic conference. 'The Agreement was shaped,' Skidelsky notes, 'not by Keynes' "General Theory", but by the US desire for an updated gold standard as a means of liberalising trade. If there was an underlying ideology, it was Morgenthau's [the American Treasury Secretary] determination to concentrate financial power in Washington.' Skidelsky goes on to quote the assessment of the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*: 'The delegates did not reach an "agreement". They merely signed a piece of paper which looked like an agreement.' One Bank of England official called Bretton Woods 'a swindle'; another said it was 'the greatest blow to Britain next to the war'. It certainly ended London's days as *the* financial centre of the world. The empire went, and our position as the premier financial player went as well, although London has established itself again as one of the most important financial marketplaces in the world.

Britain and America worked hand in hand in the construction of the post-war world order. For America, part of the new order was to be a politically and economically integrated western Europe. There

was a recognition, in the words of a State Department report in 1943, that 'like the little girl in the nursery rhyme, a European Union, from the point of view of our long-run economic interests, can either be very, very good, or horrid'. But by the Truman presidency, officials had come down heavily on the side of the benefits of European integration. Both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy called explicitly for a partnership of equals, with Eisenhower himself anticipating gains for peace from a 'third force Europe' that he hoped would establish 'an industrial complex comparable to the United States, having, in fact, more skilled labourers than the US'. Pascaline Winand, in her study *Eisenhower, Kennedy and the United States of Europe*, describes a two-part American programme:

> First, European energies should be concentrated on building a European political community solidly rooted in economic integration. This would give Europe greater influence in world councils and reduce the attraction of nationalism. Western Europe would therefore become the economic and political equal of the United States. Second, the potential of the European co-equal should be harnessed to that of the United States for two common enterprises – world economic development and military defence.

There was never any doubt in American minds that Britain should be a wholehearted member of this enterprise, committed to its political purposes and not hedging every pro-European gesture with qualifications and caveats. When, for example, Britain refused to participate in discussions about the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, there was much grumbling in the US Congress with some members seeking to cut off Marshall aid to Britain if she persisted in opposing membership.

American enthusiasm for British cooperation in Europe rested on a number of considerations. First, there was no sympathy for Britain's delusion that it could retain a great power role based on a few shards of the Empire and the creation of the Commonwealth. Even Harold Macmillan, the most Europhile Cabinet Minister in the early 1950s, declared unequivocally, 'The Empire must always have first preference. Europe must come second.' What was involved was both mission and status. Anthony Eden explained it like this: 'These are our family ties. That is our life; without it we should be no more than some

millions of people, living on an island off the coast of Europe, in which nobody wants to take any particular interest.' But the Empire was melting away, and the family ties were growing weaker. While appeals to Commonwealth solidarity as a reason for resisting European integration still had some resonance in the 1960s, for example when Gaitskell beat the drum, Americans were surely more perceptive in understanding that the days of the Empire were over for Britain – brought to a reasonably successful conclusion by the old imperial power – and that the Commonwealth added little political weight to our status. Governments were never able to transfer to the Commonwealth the public enthusiasm that had been generated by the Empire, and the curtailment of immigration from the Caribbean and south Asia made nonsense of efforts to suggest that the Commonwealth bestowed a common citizenship and common rights on those who had once dwelt under the Union Jack. Even in the 1990s, many Conservatives and much of the British media resisted any idea that we should be moderately generous in the award of citizenship to some of those who had lived in Hong Kong (often directly serving the colonial power), and deserved a guarantee that, if necessary, they could look to Britain for a home after 1997. *Civis Romanus sum* was not to be translated into a modern British obligation. Australia and Canada, both of course Commonwealth countries, were much more generous over the granting of citizenship to Hong Kong residents. They were a lot more maternal than the so-called Mother Country, and have benefited greatly from the Hong Kong migrants that Britain turned away.

Second, Americans undoubtedly felt that Britain would provide the European integration process with the benefits of its experience and good sense. Better, they believed, to have Britain helping to steer in the front seat, rather than simply offering advice and criticism from the back. This sentiment could easily shade into seeing Britain as a potential American Trojan Horse in Europe, able to ensure that western Europe did not embrace policies inimical to American interests. This was what de Gaulle feared; that Britain would get its marching orders from Washington and see every European issue from the American viewpoint. It is not an entirely fair assessment of America's intentions, but there is a bit of truth in it.

Third, Americans believed that the net effect of Britain joining the Common Market would benefit American trade. Britain's growth rate, which then lagged behind that of the six Common Market countries, would be stimulated by membership and this would increase American opportunities for trade and investment.

The fact that America supported British membership was one of the reasons why much of the British political establishment was so lukewarm about the idea. Clearly, it was felt, America wanted to see Britain placed firmly in the second division, a middle-ranking European country not a world-class player. This suspicion was strengthened by the lamentable Suez expedition of 1956; one of several examples in the years since Munich (Iraq being the most recent) of the alleged lessons of that humiliating meeting in 1938 being used to justify a disastrous foreign policy initiative. For Harold Macmillan, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Egyptian leader Colonel Nasser was 'an Asiatic Mussolini', and Britain and France had to cut him down to size before he destabilized the Middle East. The Americans, it was reckoned in London, would look the other way. 'I know Ike,' said Macmillan, 'he'll lie doggo.' The implicit assumption was that Americans would allow Britain and France to go on acting like imperial powers. Washington would provide cover for their occasional imperial adventures. The miscalculation could not have been greater. The Americans were horrified, not least by the impact of the invasion on opinion in the Arab world. At the UN they demanded British and French withdrawal, and threatened to kick away the props under the pound and the British economy unless Britain complied straightaway with international opinion. There was no choice: the economy was too weak for Britain to defy America, and the sterling area – a last vestige of world-power standing – had to be preserved. Britain backed off, reminded with bruising force of our real status in the world.

While the British Government moved quickly to try to repair the Special Relationship, there is no doubt that it took a heavy hit as a result of the Suez fiasco. Noël Coward spoke for many in Britain when he argued that the Americans had 'behaved vilely'. There had, of course, always been an undertow of anti-Americanism in wartime and post-war Britain, directed initially against those GIs who were

'overpaid, overfed, oversexed and [thank heavens] over here'. Anti-Americanism was to be found on the right, for instance in the novels of Evelyn Waugh, and on the left, in the work of Graham Greene. American 'betrayal' at Suez stoked it up; some shopkeepers put up signs 'No Americans served here'. Macmillan worried that it would increase an isolationalist mood in Britain, which was already directed against Europe. In December 1957, he noted 'the anti-Americanism of many of our supporters, which of course reached its culminating point at Suez but has not yet died down. It is partly based on real apprehension and partly, I am afraid, represents the English form of the great disease from which the French are suffering more than any other people – that is, looking backwards to the nineteenth century instead of looking forwards . . .' Some of the anti-Americanism was cultural. There was a worry that we were being swamped by American values, exemplified above all by Hollywood's domination of the cinema industry. We tried to protect our own film-makers with subsidies, quotas and levies, but despite the efforts of the Ealing film studios, the Californian tide of glamour, sex and violence continued to wash over us. Concerns about the Americanization of the British way of life were at the heart of the debate in the 1950s about the introduction of commercial television.

By the late 1960s anti-Americanism was more associated with the political Left than the Right. Vietnam was the cause, with the young in particular identifying with the poor Asian peasants who withstood whatever tonnage of munitions American B-52s dropped on them. Around the world, America's enemies attained heroic status on the left. This produced some stomach-turning results such as the lionizing of Cuba's wretched dictator Fidel Castro. What began in Vietnam and Cambodia was continued in Chile and Central America. The Sandinista Left became a significant element in British municipal socialism. A Prince Valiant of this movement was David Blunkett, later to become the hammer of civil libertarians in Tony Blair's Labour government. Interviewed in 1983 about the tradition of raising the American flag on the Fourth of July over the city hall in Sheffield (where he presided over a council of comrades), he responded, 'Independence Day. It would be nice if we were independent of the United States, wouldn't it?' Mr Blunkett deserves some sort of recognition

for having made the journey from populist left to authoritarian right without being touched by even the shadows of the European liberal tradition.

But the Special Relationship lived on. It survived the British withdrawal from east of Suez in 1967, the biggest military recognition yet of our reduced circumstances. It was battered by Harold Wilson's sensible refusal to commit British troops to the American side in the Vietnam war, and by American snubbing of his piddling efforts to mediate between them and the North Vietnamese. It leapfrogged the Heath years, when that short-lived and ill-starred prime minister declined to reach for the old familiar comfort blanket and made it clear that he was a European prime minister above all, not an American surrogate. But then it came roaring back to life again during the Thatcher years when, despite rows over the American invasion of Grenada, public hostility to the bombing of Libya, American pressure to curtail European dependence on Soviet energy supplies, and concerns in London about President Reagan's flirtation with Mr Gorbachev over nuclear disarmament, the relationship was sprinkled with stardust and put to music. President Reagan and Margaret Thatcher got on conspicuously well; ideological soulmates, they sensed that they were cresting together a wave of anti-Communism and free market economics. Perhaps their joint resolve to stand up to Soviet pressure and to assert the moral superiority of the Western cause, coupled with their recognition that Mr Gorbachev was a different sort of Soviet leader, helped to quicken the collapse of Russia's Communist empire in Europe. Elsewhere the 'special' fruits of the Special Relationship were difficult to spot, though at least the Americans – after considerable initial misgivings and hesitations – provided some intelligence and logistical support as Britain sought (rightly) to preserve the last remnants of the Empire from Argentinian rapacity in the South Atlantic.

Before the Iraq war, conventional wisdom had it that whatever was left of the Special Relationship had largely disappeared with the end of the Cold War and the fundamental shift that this engineered in America's geo-strategic interests. Ambassador Seitz saw the successful coalition politics of the first Gulf War as 'the last hurrah of the old regime'. He regarded disagreements and misunderstandings about

Bosnia in subsequent years as a sign of changed times. Before turning to the most recent manifestation of Britain's understanding of its relationship with America, and America's views on what is required of its junior partner, it is worth reviewing how in practice each side has seen the relationship.

For America, it has been useful to have a dependable ally who never strays far from Washington's pursuit of its own strategic interest. Britain and others are allowed to depart from the script when issues like trade, the environment and economics are concerned. But anything touching on security brings with it a three-line whip. On the whole, America has believed that its interests are best served with Britain on the inside in Europe rather than outside. She is still more interested in European integration than in British sovereignty. British membership of the European Union can complicate the relationship with Washington, often in ways that Washington finds difficult to understand since it still tends to confuse a union, in which sovereignty is shared at a deep and comprehensive level, with an alliance. But while membership can snarl up the relationship, it is vital to it. British withdrawal from the EU, even semi-detachment, would greatly worry most of America's foreign policy establishment. America also feels that it is entitled to intervene in British politics on the Irish issue, and latterly has been encouraged to do so, with the aim both of pushing the peace process forwards and of securing its outcome. I wonder myself how much payback has been received from American investment in Gerry Adams and Sinn Féin. I suspect that Mr Adams has got more out of Washington than London and Dublin have got out of Mr Adams. Maybe I allow myself to be excessively influenced by a personal distaste for those who fudge the distinction between politics, murder and crime.

What counts in the scales on the British side? We persuade ourselves that we can influence our most powerful ally in ways that we presumably deem beneficial to our national interest. Since the days when Churchill's efforts to broker agreements between the USA and the Soviet Union were brushed aside by Washington, the influence has been much exaggerated. Where substance is important to America, the most that Britain can usually do is to affect process. In return for the prospect of influence we provide a sign to the world that America

is not unilateralist. Britain is a multilateral emblem to pin in America's lapel. Perhaps our privileged status as friend of first resort underpins our position in NATO and on the Security Council of the UN. We have access to intelligence, particularly through global eavesdropping, which would otherwise be denied us, and who knows what errands we perform in return? This is as valuable as intelligence ever is. The former Cabinet Secretary Lord Butler has said that intelligence is uniquely worthy of scepticism. We are a nuclear power thanks to American largesse. British officials also usually find it easier to deal with their American cousins, though this is not always the case – as any trade negotiator will attest, or as I can myself confirm from my involvement over recent years in negotiating, among other things, issues of transport security with Washington. An exaggerated combination of the sentiments in this paragraph submerges two simple propositions. First, Britain will usually agree with the United States on security issues. Where we and our friends in Europe do not do so, it is sensible and in the interests of Britain, Europe, America (and usually the world) to work to try to reach agreement. But if Britain announces at the outset that whatever America finally decides to do, her eternally subordinate ally will be in her traditional place, then she ceases to serve Britain's national interest and probably in the long run does few favours to America, either. Second, foreign policy should not be a brain-free zone. 'Feel' is no substitute for cerebral activity; hearts and flowers should not take precedence over reason.

As we have seen, it has been a constant theme of American foreign policy for sixty years that Britain should be a part of the process of European integration. It has equally been a constant in British policy that we should be an influential player in both Brussels and Washington; it has even been argued that playing the European game hobbles Britain internationally and as an independent partner of America. We search desperately for an answer to Dean Acheson's question about our international role – an answer that avoids any clear choice. The dilemma is well illustrated in Richard Weight's superb history of post-war Britain, *Patriots*. Drawing on the work of Nick Cull, professor and film historian, Mr Weight takes the popular British film *The Italian Job* as a metaphor for the British problem. In the film, a

gang of typical British characters shows what chumps the Continent's 'bloody foreigners' are. The gang plans and carries out successfully a gold bullion robbery in Turin, masterminded by a patriotic convict played by Noël Coward (who, six years before the film was made in 1969, had told the annual dinner of the Battle of Britain veterans that 'England has become a third-rate power ... we are vulgarized by American values'). The intention is that stealing the bullion will help tackle Britain's balance of payments crisis. The gang makes its escape from Turin in a fleet of Minis, the last mass-market favourites of the British car industry, soon to be as dead as Mr Cleese's parrot. The robbers change from their cars to a coach that, racing through the Alps, takes a bend too fast and only just manages to stop with the front end on the road and the back, containing the stolen gold, hanging over a precipice. Every move towards the gold by the gangsters jeopardizes the delicate balance of the coach. As the credits roll, the gang leader Michael Caine says, 'Er, hang on a minute, lads, I've got a great idea.'

The great idea for Britain has been ... what? To go it alone? To seek a comfortable berth in Washington's back pocket? To throw in our lot with our European partners? Can we confound those who tiresomely insist, like the late Mr Acheson, that we really have to choose, and show them how Britain can bridge the Atlantic, a solid and dependable link that can carry traffic in both directions? Which brings us rather obviously to Mr Blair, President Bush and Iraq. There is already a rich and angry literature on Mr Blair and the calamitous military invasion of Iraq. It includes some first-class journalistic history and two official reports – an absurd contribution by a former senior judge, Lord Hutton, and a subtle critique of the way Mr Blair conducts his government by former Cabinet Secretary Lord Butler. I do not intend to add much to these pickings, least of all to try to establish – like the author of a country house mystery – who did what to whom, where the bodies are buried, and whether there are any fingerprints on the weapon. My own starting point so far as the Iraq controversy is concerned is the ending of the first Gulf War.

In the last days of February 1991, the fighting was rapidly coming to an end. Iraqi forces were streaming back from Kuwait City to Basra along what was called the 'Highway of Death'. John Major had asked

me as Party Chairman to go and have dinner with him alone in his flat in Downing Street to discuss political tactics for the coming months and in particular whether we should listen to the advice to call an early election, taking advantage of his own political honeymoon (he had only been in office a few months) and of the successful prosecution of the war. To his credit, Major made absolutely clear that he had no intention of playing politics with a military triumph that had been supported in any event by the main opposition parties. I agreed with him that it would be a tacky thing to do, and almost certainly bad politics as well. We were sitting after supper on our own in his drawing room surrounded by cricketing memorabilia and copies of Trollope when the telephone rang. It was the duty clerk from his office downstairs to say that President Bush wanted to speak to him. The gist of the conversation was clear. On the advice of his military commanders, the President wanted to call off the fighting, which had now become a one-sided slaughter. The President and the Prime Minister went through all the main issues, with Major asking tough questions about the consequences of letting Saddam Hussein off the hook. They discussed the terms of the UN resolution that had launched the coalition, the prospect of the coalition fracturing, and the problems associated with pressing on to Baghdad. I recall the President's clinching argument: 'If we chase Saddam all the way to Baghdad, we'll own the place.' Which, it became clear, was the last thing he wanted to do.

The first President Bush spelled this point out in *A World Transformed*, the book that he wrote with his National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, in 1998:

> Trying to eliminate Saddam ... would have incurred incalculable human and political costs ... We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq ... There was no viable 'exit strategy' we could see, violating another of our principles. Furthermore, we had been self-consciously trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-Cold War world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish.

President Bush also saw the danger that the whole Arab world would be turned against America and that young American soldiers would

be condemned 'to fight in what would be an unwinnable urban guerrilla war'. Writing in the periodical *Foreign Affairs* in 1992, Colin Powell (the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the first Gulf War) noted that occupying Baghdad would involve 'an unpardonable expense in terms of money, lives lost and ruined regional relationships'. I may be unimaginative but I have never moved much beyond these arguments.

Part of the collateral damage of the fixation on Iraq was the failure to finish the job that was begun in Afghanistan with the unseating of the Taliban regime there. In order to build a new nation in that desperately poor country, it was essential first to provide the security on which political authority and development depend. That has never been achieved. The military commitment was kept to a minimum throughout 2002, presumably so as not to impinge on the build-up for an invasion of Iraq. European countries found it all too comfortable to shelter behind America's security assessment and keep their own military deployments in the region, principally in the international security force, to a minimum. We all kidded ourselves that we had bought the warlords, whereas it swiftly became apparent that we had only rented them. Poppy-growing and opium production mushroomed as the American and European troops were discouraged from interdicting the manufacture and trafficking of heroin. With up to 90 per cent of the heroin on the streets of Europe's capitals originating in Afghanistan, we created a particularly malign version of the Common Agricultural Policy. Demand exploded and no serious effort was made to control supply. The warlords profited hugely from the proceeds of a trade that brought together, as in Colombia, terrorism, organized criminality, and the sapping of the authority of the State. At the Tokyo Donors Conference, held in 2003 after the fall of Kabul, I pledged on behalf of the European Commission a minimum contribution to Afghanistan's development of one billion euros over five years. (We have actually been spending more than this – not just committing the money, but in a dangerous environment contracting and spending it as well.) I stretched the elastic of my political authority about as far as it would go in making a pledge from the community budget of this size, and had to withstand a good deal of tiresome criticism from the French delegation at the conference as a result. What became

increasingly frustrating through 2002–04 was to see development funds exceeded by the drugs income made by the warlords, and President Karzai's government inhibited from extending its authority and making the maximum use of development assistance because of the dangerous security situation. There were times when it seemed that his government's authority did not run very far outside battered Kabul. We could have started far more rapidly to build a modern nation in Afghanistan – poor but decent. We shall now have our work cut out to avoid the establishment of a narco-state, exporting terrorism as well as drugs.

Sir John Stanley, the former British Conservative defence minister, has observed that the Iraq invasion was the first time that a British government had gone to war 'specifically on the strength of intelligence assessments'. The dossier that collected those assessments together in September 2002 has turned out to be a turkey. As John Kampfner, author of *Blair's Wars*, has noted, none of the nine main conclusions in that report has been proven. Whether or not the Prime Minister connived at squeezing out of the intelligence services the answers he wanted, it is at the very least true that he overstated evidence, which he himself described as 'extensive, detailed and authoritative', and which Lord Butler much more accurately assessed as 'very thin'. It also seems clear that Mr Blair had concluded from the time when he met President Bush at Crawford, Texas, in the spring of 2002 that the Americans were not to be deflected from invading Iraq and that Britain could not leave them to act on their own. Britain went to war because America chose to go to war. Mr Blair told the Cabinet and Parliament, and perhaps convinced himself, that his reasons were other than this: to track down weapons of mass destruction; to prevent their proliferation or use; to strengthen the authority of the UN by insisting on compliance with Security Council resolutions; to get rid of a wicked tyrant and serial abuser of human rights on a massive scale. This is, I suspect, an example of what an unnamed American official called 'rolling rationalization [that] is one of the less attractive features of British foreign policy'. We are now led to believe that Mr Blair had always been preoccupied by the dangers represented by Saddam Hussein, though his interest in Iraq (like that of many American officials) does not seem to go back to the days when Western countries

were arming its dictator and looking the other way as he gassed, murdered and tortured Iraqis. In those days the infamous tyrant was on 'our' side: silly, really, that he failed to understand how we play the game of an ethical foreign policy – or perhaps he understood it for most of his career all too well.

I have never myself had to take decisions directly that send young men and women to face danger and perhaps death, though I shared in the collective decisions that the British Cabinet took in 1990 to join the coalition in the first Gulf War. I remember saying to John Major at the time that this sort of decision was particularly difficult for politicians of our generation – the first in Britain who had not had to fight in a war themselves. In that sense we are different from Americans of our age group, though a surprising number of those who are most enthusiastic these days about sending in the Black Hawks and the Humvees had, in Vice President Cheney's apposite phrase, 'other priorities' than military service during the Vietnam War. Awareness of the gravity of the decisions taken about life, death, maiming, war – particularly, I repeat, by those who have never themselves had to go through the fire of armed conflict – makes me reluctant to assign base motives or assume a frivolous lack of moral anxiety on the part of those who reach different conclusions to my own about the necessity of going to war. So what is it about Mr Blair, who is manifestly not a bad man, that enabled him to convince himself that what he was doing was right, and indeed that his real motives were those that he expressed with such power and eloquence?

There is no doubt about Mr Blair's political talents, which were on impressive display in July 2005 when within the same dramatic week he lobbied successfully in Singapore for London to be awarded the 2012 Olympics, chaired the G8 Summit at Gleneagles and coped with the aftermath of the terrorist bombings in London. But there is a heated debate about whether this very able politician has any convictions. 'He is,' Lord Jenkins noted, 'too Manichaean for my perhaps now jaded taste, seeing matters in stark terms of good and evil, black and white, and with a consequent belief that if evil is cut down, good will inevitably follow.' Lord Jenkins concluded that the

colour grey seemed to be missing from his political palette. On the other side, there are those who regard Mr Blair as a meretricious chancer, supremely gifted at what the Americans call 'triangulation' (touching all the political bases – yes, no, maybe – at the same time), squaring circles, finding the colour grey and painting it in a brighter hue. Such critics are likely to regard the 'third way', a nebulous all-things-to-all-men political style much associated with Mr Blair and other successful politicians of the centre left, as (in Tony Judt's felicitous description) 'opportunism with a human face'. Mr Blair regards his own early years as a CND anti-European as part of a necessary phase he had to go through in order to become a senior Labour figure able to change his party into a more electable and sensible political vehicle. Most political sophisticates buy this – an example of acceptable careerism justified by such a satisfactory outcome. Perhaps I am too romantic about politics, but I find myself sucking my teeth a bit at this. I warm much more to careers that have a more principled core, though I hesitate to exaggerate the point lest I drift into sanctimoniousness.

My own view is that Mr Blair, a usually likeable man, has convictions to which he holds strongly – while he holds them. His convictions change on issues as disparate as hunting, nuclear weapons, civil liberties, the constitution, the euro and the reasons for going to war, partly to reflect what he believes to be prevailing, convenient opinion. I do not for a moment deny that from time to time Mr Blair has had to show considerable courage in defending a policy he has decided to pursue. Iraq fell squarely into this category, though the Prime Minister and his advisers probably assumed with American officials that an early victory would turn opinion around and that the invasion would be seen as the liberation of a tyrannized people rather than the descent in 2003–04 into a bloody quagmire. But whatever his changing position, Mr Blair and his supporters insist that his actions should be seen to have the seamless and principled continuity that you would expect of 'a regular kind of guy'. This is where he is at his most dangerous. There can be no questioning his integrity. His veracity, decency and dedication to a higher good than vulgar pragmatism have to be explicitly conceded. He has to be accepted as a man of

unchallenged honour; it is heresy to suggest that, like most of us in politics, he may occasionally have been a bit of a charlatan. Mr Blair's integrity has to be defended at any cost.

The convictions that drive Mr Blair do not always seem well thought through. Let us take, for example, his Gladstonian instinct to root out wickedness and install good in its stead. I have considerable sympathy for the notion that foreign policy should not be devoid of ethical considerations, and reckon that there is frequently an overlap between expedience and morality. But I am unclear when exactly Mr Blair came to this conviction, and how clearly he has worked out some of its implications. When in 1997 Robin Cook produced his mission statement for the Foreign Office, arguing the case for an ethical foreign policy, I do not recall much echoing enthusiasm from Number 10 Downing Street. Mr Cook, with all his fussiness about arms sales and with his manifest concern for Palestinian human rights, was clearly regarded as rather tiresome. In foreign policy you also have to be a little careful about just how strongly you associate what you are doing with a higher morality. America and Britain have had to assemble a pretty eclectic group of partners to prosecute the cause of democracy and good governance in Afghanistan and Iraq. An embarrassingly large number of them have dubious human rights records, not admittedly as bad as Saddam Hussein's but certainly not up to the minimum standards that would come close to satisfying Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch. The mission, however virtuous, makes the coalition, but the coalition is not always very virtuous. I wonder, too, whether there is not an embarrassing disproportion between the rhetoric of Mr Gladstone and the power that Britain can actually deploy today, which is a fraction of what was available to our Victorian forebears. Even Mr Mugabe, a tinpot tyrant if ever there was one, can snap his fingers at Britain and tell us to go hang. Time was when he would have lasted as long as it took to send in the King's African Rifles.

Mr Blair also has an even stronger belief than most leaders in personal diplomacy and in his ability to shape other leaders' perceptions of their own national interest through the exercise of his considerable charm. I am very doubtful about this general approach, which too often sucks much of the intelligence and consistency out of

the conduct of foreign policy, a point that I shall argue later in relation to Mr Chirac and Mr Schröder. Before either of them had taken up with Mr Putin, Mr Blair was all over him; Putin was offered 'best friend' status, a central place in the fellowship of leaders that Mr Blair hopes he can orchestrate to Britain's advantage. Gladstone or no Gladstone, Chechnya and the destruction of Grozny do not seem to have featured much in the early Blair–Putin conversations. What started so propitiously turned sour as Mr Putin went his own way on Iraq, publicly humiliating Mr Blair in Moscow, and joining Mr Chirac and Mr Schröder (whom the Prime Minister also seems to have misread) in opposing the Iraq war. Sir Christopher Meyer, Britain's ambassador to Washington during the build-up to this war, has added his own gloss to an analysis of Mr Blair's personal diplomacy, arguing that the Prime Minister did not argue his case sufficiently strongly with President Bush and his entourage. I always doubted myself how much bad news he would be happy to impart to President Bush and the American political establishment once he had been given a hero's reception by Congress.

Before turning to some of the substantive consequences of the policies followed, and of the reasons for them, I want to mention one further question of governing style. Before he became Prime Minister, Mr Blair had never been in government. This seems to have exacerbated his contempt for the existing institutions of government, the traditional approach to decision-making and relations between politicians and civil servants. Power was concentrated in his private office and entourage, who rampaged across Whitehall. Part of the quite astonishing naïveté of the Hutton Report is the assumption that seems to underlie it that the evidence before the judge conveyed the workings of a normal government. It had certainly never been 'normal' before for the head of communications in Downing Street to get involved in the presentation of intelligence. The concentration of power in Number 10 Downing Street completed the destruction of the Cabinet Office as the official conductor and progress chaser of government, a process begun, alas, under Margaret Thatcher. This has reduced the competence of government in Britain, and played a major part in the dismantling of the barriers of discretion and seemliness between politicians and civil servants.

One of the government departments most affected by the accumulation of power in Number 10 has been the Foreign Office. The position of this department today recalls the letter written by Sir Thomas Sanderson, its permanent under-secretary, to Lord Salisbury (who was then Foreign Secretary but absent from the office) at a time when the Prime Minister Arthur Balfour was in temporary charge of it. 'I am now,' wrote Sanderson, 'a sort of standing dish at Arthur Balfour's breakfast. When his attention is divided, as it was this morning, between me and a fresh herring, there are alternately moments of distraction when he is concentrating on the herring, and moments of danger when he is concentrating on foreign affairs.' The appointment of a senior foreign policy adviser to the prime minister is not new; what has been novel is the number of such advisers at Mr Blair's right hand and their direct role in overseeing foreign policy on the key issues. They are not bad officials; indeed they have mostly been outstandingly good – in the case of Sir David Manning, and also Sir Stephen Wall, just about as good and decent as officials can get. This is to Tony Blair's credit; he chose them. But for a prime minister with no previous experience of foreign policy, and with an excessive regard for his own 'feel' for the subject, to take on so much himself is unwise and dangerous. Where is policy on the Middle East made today – in Number 10 or the Foreign Office? Who handles the most sophisticated traffic between London and Washington? There are questions about the role of the Foreign Secretary. Is he to regard himself as the Prime Minister's senior adviser and policy implementer on the big issues of the day? Or should he occupy himself with those issues that do not feature on the Prime Minister's radar screen? It cannot have been helpful in the build-up to the Iraq war and in its aftermath that the Prime Minister was divorced from the informed scepticism that the Foreign Office would have brought to a discussion of the available policy options. Certainly, making policy over the heads of the State Department and the Foreign Office has not been conspicuously successful.

Blair's principal aims in foreign and security policy are admirable. He wants a strong alliance with the United States, the only superpower, which he hopes Britain can influence in the way that it exercises its global leadership. He wishes to see a strengthened United Nations,

which can provide legitimacy for international intervention in the affairs of sovereign states in order to protect the human rights of their citizens and to deal with real threats to the security of our own. He would like Britain to take a leading role in the affairs of the European Union, and to lay to rest our ambivalence about membership of the Union. How has the Iraq war advanced these goals?

Mr Blair committed Britain and British soldiers to the American side in Iraq because he believed that it would be perilous for us, indeed for all America's allies, to leave our friend to fight alone. He also felt that we would be able to influence America in Iraq and elsewhere if we were prepared to fight alongside her. With Britain in the bag, America was able to build a 'coalition of the willing' (or 'billing' as one wag called it, pointing to the favours promised to the ragbag collection of allies in the adventure). Without Britain could America have definitely invaded? The answer is that she probably would have done so, but the enterprise would have been more politically hazardous and it is possible that British hesitation would have encouraged doubts in the American establishment. Even if this is an absurd speculation, would we have damaged our own interests or America's by warning the Bush administration exactly what was likely to happen, repeating the warnings of the President's father and his father's senior advisers? Choking off our own grave doubts, the sort that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw evidently put to Mr Blair at the eleventh hour, did Washington no favours. Moreover, did fighting alongside America deepen sentimental attachment to the transatlantic relationship or weaken it? Is it really the role of a good friend to suppress real anxieties rather than express them candidly? Supporting the Bush invasion of Iraq is probably the worst service we have paid America.

What influence did we buy for ourselves by going along with this ill-judged adventure? At the Crawford meeting in the spring of 2002, Mr Blair had given Bush and his senior advisers to understand that, whatever happened, if there was fighting we would be shoulder to shoulder with them. According to Peter Riddell (author of *Hug Them Close*), Lewis 'Scooter' Libby, Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff, asked a senior British official in the autumn why Mr Blair was so worked up about the UN since he 'is going to be with us anyway'. What influence did we ever exercise over substance as opposed to

process – over the prosecution of the war, or the government of Iraq when the war was formally over, with the 'mission accomplished' but the fatalities about to mount?

I visited Baghdad in September 2003 to discuss the assistance Europe could provide for the reconstruction of the country. After an exciting flight into the city, with our RAF plane diving and weaving into its approach like a Welsh wing three-quarter dashing down the touchline, and an equally thrilling helicopter ride to the safe-ish Green Zone via the bombed UN headquarters where my friend Sergio Vieira de Mello had died, we spent forty minutes with the cocky, clever, confident American Paul Bremer. He told us how much the security position was improving – a reassuring message, which was somewhat undermined by the fact that we had been refused permission to stay overnight in Baghdad for reasons that owed nothing to the shortage or expense of hotel accommodation. We then walked twenty yards down a long corridor in what had once been one of Saddam Hussein's palaces to talk to Bremer's deputy, the former British ambassador to the UN, Sir Jeremy Greenstock. He was painstakingly loyal to the official line while delivering it with more subtlety and less unqualified self-assurance. But what influence was this clever diplomat able to bring to the shaping of decisions by Mr Bremer and his bosses in the Pentagon? To what extent was he part of the governance of Iraq? It is revealing that whatever the disastrous mistakes made by the occupying power – the purging of Baathists, the employment of the sort of military overkill tactics used by the Israeli defence forces, the Grozny-ization of Fallujah and other towns – no one has ever pointed the finger of blame at the British. No one holds Britain to account because no one thinks for a nanosecond that Britain is implicated in the decisions. Britain is there as part of the feudal host, not as a serious decision-sharing partner.

We have also been assured that we have been influential in persuading Mr Bush and his colleagues to become more involved in pushing forwards the peace process in the Middle East. Conceivably one day this will be true. But in the years when I saw, close up, the process deliberately driven into a lay-by, Britain's principal role was to find excuses for American inaction, not reasons for prodding Washington into doing something. During the Danish presidency of the EU in

2002, we produced a European, not an American, initiative – the first part of the so-called Road Map (every plan in Europe these days is called a road map) aimed at rescuing Israel and Palestine from continuing bloody mayhem. America took some convincing of the merits of this plan, which departed from previous proposals by arguing for parallel actions by both sides rather than sequential progress. In the past, Israel had argued (and still does, in defiance of the central principle of the Road Map) that she would only move on political issues, such as settlements, once the Palestinians had delivered complete security on the ground. Now, in the imaginative Danish draft, we pressed for both sides to take steps at the same time. We discussed the plan in the Quartet – the United States, the UN, the Russian Federation and the EU – and, after a few perfectly reasonable tweaks from the American side, the State Department bought it. But what of the White House, where President Bush had just appointed a well-known Likud-supporting hawk, Elliott Abrams, as his principal Middle East adviser? We went along to see the President and Vice President in late 2002 to discuss the plan. President Bush assured us of his extremely welcome commitment to a Palestinian state, and to what he explicitly called 'a' road map. But he urged us against early publication. The Road Map was put away in the locker. We were eventually 'allowed' to publish it in 2003. Despite numerous meetings and much froth, nothing much happened about it. Some of our moderate Arab friends understandably began to refer to 'the Quartet, *sans trois*'. Moreover, the essential element of the Road Map's approach – the rejection of sequentialism – never seemed to become a part of American policy.

This must have been a grave disappointment to Mr Blair, who had promised in his party conference speech in 2002 that 'final status' talks on the Middle East would start by the end of that year. He presumably continued to nag away at Washington about the Middle East and got his reward when he visited Washington two days after Ariel Sharon in the spring of 2004 to be told that President Bush had bought the Israeli Prime Minister's plan for withdrawal from Gaza, the retention of settlements in the West Bank, and no right of return to Israel for Palestinian refugees. This sharp change in American policy brought no word of disapproval from Mr Blair. We were apparently

to welcome the policy shift as a step forwards along the road to peace, entirely consistent with the Road Map. Shortly after the Bush–Blair meeting, there was a weekend European foreign ministers' meeting under the then Irish presidency in the constituency of their Minister for Foreign Affairs Brian Cowen. The Irish had been consistently sensible about the Middle East, refusing to allow anyone to pretend that progress was being made when all that could be charted was continuing murderous failure. We were all a little surprised to hear Jack Straw, poor man, giving us the party line that nothing had really changed in Washington or, if it had, we should welcome it as a breakthrough. Such was the influence exercised through Britain's Very Special Relationship. Mr Blair's views, however forcefully they were expressed (and his forcefulness seems pretty meek), clearly counted for nothing against those of Karl Rove and Elliott Abrams. I often wondered how our British, and European, failure to speak out more eloquently on the Middle East and related issues must have undermined the position of Colin Powell and other sensible moderates in Washington.

Mr Powell, of course, had to contend in Washington with those whom James Naughtie (in his book *Accidental American*) tells us he described as the 'fucking crazies', a description one assumes of the neoconservatives and their assertive nationalist allies such as Vice President Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. In an interview with Mr Naughtie for his book, Mr Blair surprised the author by declaring, 'I never quite understand what people mean by this neocon thing.' If this really does represent Mr Blair's state of ignorance about the febrile political atmosphere in Washington, then perhaps he also failed to study *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, issued by the White House in 2002, which asserts, to quote the great American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 'the revolutionary idea of preventive war as the basis of US foreign policy'. The Iraq war was such an engagement. It did not pre-empt an imminent threat; it prevented a speculative threat. If Mr Blair has signed up to this world view, in which preventive wars are acceptable for America as the global superpower, though for no one else, and in which America can in practice follow its own rules and do whatever it likes, then he has done immeasurable damage to our historical relationship

with the United States, to the values on which it is based, and to our previously shared commitment to the international rule of law.

I will come back in later chapters to two other aims of Mr Blair's foreign policy – legitimizing intervention in other states, and securing our position as a leading member of the EU. At this point, for the sake of completeness, I will merely sketch out how the achievement of these hopes has been set back.

Mr Blair is right to argue, as others do, that the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 no longer provides an adequate basis for international law. That treaty, which brought to an end the Thirty Years War and inaugurated the modern European state system, also concluded that one state should only take up arms against another and intervene in its affairs if it were itself to be attacked by that state. That is plainly no longer sufficient as a central assumption in international law. How does a state deal with threats to it, or attacks on it, by a non-state actor (such as a terrorist group) which are supported by a state? How do states deal with a state whose institutions of government have broken down, with the resultant chaos threatening the stability and security of others? (Both these instances were relevant in the case of Afghanistan.) How do states prevent the manufacture, threatened use and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction? Do states have no obligation to intervene in a state that is abusing the human rights of its citizens? If there is not a right to intervene, is there not at least (as Gareth Evans, former Australian foreign minister, and others have argued) 'a responsibility to protect citizens of other states whose human rights are being abused'? How should we cope with Rwanda and Kosovo? Is it only states that have rights, and not their citizens?

Mr Blair feels strongly that there should be an international consensus, rooted in the practices and principles of the UN, which can legitimize armed intervention in the sorts of cases I have mentioned, where other efforts to prevent a crisis fail. Mr Blair's views on intervention were set out in a speech in Chicago in 1999 entitled 'Doctrine of the International Community', where he laid out five main considerations that could justify our intervention to prevent 'threats to international peace and security'. Were we sure of our case? Had we exhausted all diplomatic options? Were there military options that

would be undertaken prudently? Were we prepared to stick things out for the long term? Were our national interests involved? Did Mr Blair think that these tests were met in the case of Iraq? The problem about going to war in a democracy on the sorts of grounds to which the Blair doctrine refers, the attempt to pre-empt danger (for example, stopping a destabilizing flow of refugees that would result from attempted genocide), is that it depends crucially on trust. Electors are asked to give their leaders the benefit of the doubt. They are not faced with an armed intervention across their border, which they have to resist. The danger is less immediate than that. They have to trust the judgement of their democratic leaders. Has Iraq made it more or less likely that when the pre-emptive use of force is required in future, voters in Britain and other democracies will support it? Do voters feel they were told the truth about Iraq? Were they objectively told the truth? Were the judgements on which intervention was justified sensible? Have the invasion and occupation increased the dangers of terrorist attack on free and independent states, or has that danger been abated? One of the principal concerns about Mr Blair's policy on Iraq is that it has made it more difficult in future to put in place a policy of pre-emptive intervention with the backing of international law and of public opinion in democratic societies.

Mr Blair is clearly committed to Britain playing a strong role in Europe. He has worked hard with France (beginning in St Malo in 1988) to develop a more effective European defence capability, which has fluttered the dovecotes in Washington. While Americans want Europe to do more for itself in the field of security, they are reluctant to see the development of capacity leading to any decoupling from a chain of command that they themselves control. Mr Blair is right to worry that at the moment Europe dwells in the worst of all worlds: our pretensions worry the Americans without giving us much additional ability to work with them to make the world safer.

Unfortunately, Mr Blair's European ambitions have been thwarted in Iraq. Maybe he could have been more effective in bridging the Atlantic – representing Europe to America and America to Europe. But it would have taken a clearer and more outspoken determination to speak up for European doubts from time to time. Did Mr Blair ever speak out against populist American attacks on 'the cheese-eating

surrender monkeys of Europe' or their 'axis of weasel'? Did he try to explain the strength of public opinion in Europe – far more united in hostility to the Iraq adventure than governments ever were? Did he think twice before confirming Mr Rumsfeld's views about 'old' and 'new' Europe (expressed in an article he co-authored for the *Wall Street Journal*) with other European governments that supported America? Did he protest against the suggestion that the Spanish election result in the wake of the Madrid bombings was the result of cowardice in the face of terrorist atrocities? What did he believe would be the benefits for Britain's European policy of blaming France and its president for the failure to get a second Security Council resolution – an outcome that was never on the cards despite all Britain's efforts – during a week in New York that represented one of the most humiliating episodes in recent British diplomatic history? Is it unfair to single out the British Prime Minister in this way? Is it playing the man rather than the ball? The problem is that in this case the man and the ball were pretty well identical. Even members of his own party clearly doubt whether the British engagement in Iraq would have developed in the same way without him. Would a Brown-led government – whatever Mr Brown may have said loyally on the hustings in 2005 – have gone to war for the same reasons? Now we must hope and work for a peaceful democratic future for Iraq. We can at least support Mr Blair in that. But we cannot forget the journey that brought us here.

Mr Blair flew to Crawford and to Washington. He told Mr Bush that 'whither thou goest, I will go'. He went to Iraq. He drove France and Germany into each other's arms (the reverse of what should be Britain's abiding European strategy). He subordinated Britain's national interest to American interests and raised serious questions about the exercise of Britain's de facto and de jure sovereignty. Politically weakened by Iraq, he surrendered to populist media pressure for a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty. As the 2005 general election campaign showed, he sacrificed the public trust that would have been needed to win that referendum. He weakened his position as well in Europe so that at precisely the time when the referendum votes in France and the Netherlands, and the political problems of Mr Schröder and Mr Berlusconi, gave him the chance to seize and shape

the European agenda, he had less political authority to do so. A victim of his own interpretation of the Special Relationship, Mr Blair is all too likely to be judged by history as a leader who was braver in defending Mr Bush's agenda in Iraq than he was in standing up for his own, and Britain's, strategic objectives in Europe.

5

From Brussels to Istanbul

The Governor of She asked Confucius about government. The Master said, 'Make the local people happy and attract migrants from afar.'

The Analects, Confucius

Perfect, it is not.

So intense is the hostility to the European Union in Britain that there is a tendency for its champions to cover up its warts while advertising its winsome charms. Moreover, at least some of the odium results from the habit, prevalent in particular in parts of the Brussels establishment, of implying in the first place that the EU stands above criticism, that its genesis and its works exist in a world beyond politics, that those who carp and censor must be motivated by base designs. The European idea may not, unlike the fated Challenger space shuttle, have touched the face of God, but it is certainly deemed to have felt the breeze as the Dove of Peace flew past.

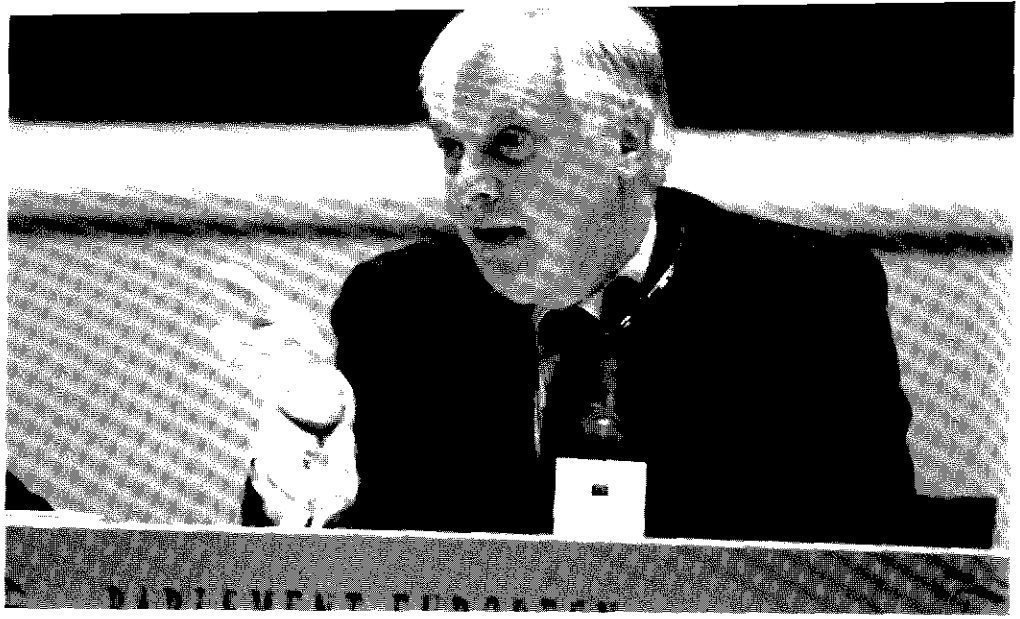
The chords of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' can animate a provocative light-headedness about the European project. I recall a colleague in the Commission returning to one of our meetings hotfoot from an intergovernmental conference of presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers to complain that there was no 'European feeling' in the corridors. No carpet, no chairs – that I could understand; but no European feeling? If this meant anything at all, I suppose it indicated exasperation that the democratically elected leaders of twenty-five nation states were disinclined to put what they perceived to be the

interest of their own countries second to some more amorphous caprice. What the idea – if it really is an idea at all – overlooks, is the fact that the original supranational ambition was embraced because it suited national interests, just as supranational agreements do to this day. This does not somehow detract from the value and significance of the agreements themselves.

What European feeling did I detect during years of attending European summits? At these meetings, we were all seated (about forty in my early years, sixty or so by the end) at a hollow square of tables, each bearing the name of the country we represented on inverted V-shaped cards that looked like the expensive chocolate bars at airport duty-free shops. Indeed, when we enlarged from fifteen to twenty-five, I half expected to spot the Prime Minister of Toblerone in a distant corner. In the centre of the tables there would usually be a half-hearted floral display, a few funereal ferns and the occasional dusty begonia. The Swedes once presented us with an exhibition that looked like a tropical rainforest (doubtless there had just been a meeting of environment ministers) and I recall another floral tableau that bore an uncanny resemblance to the topography inhabited by the Teletubbies, complete with big yellow daisies, mock toadstools and dinky green hillocks. Where was Laa-Laa? Where Po?

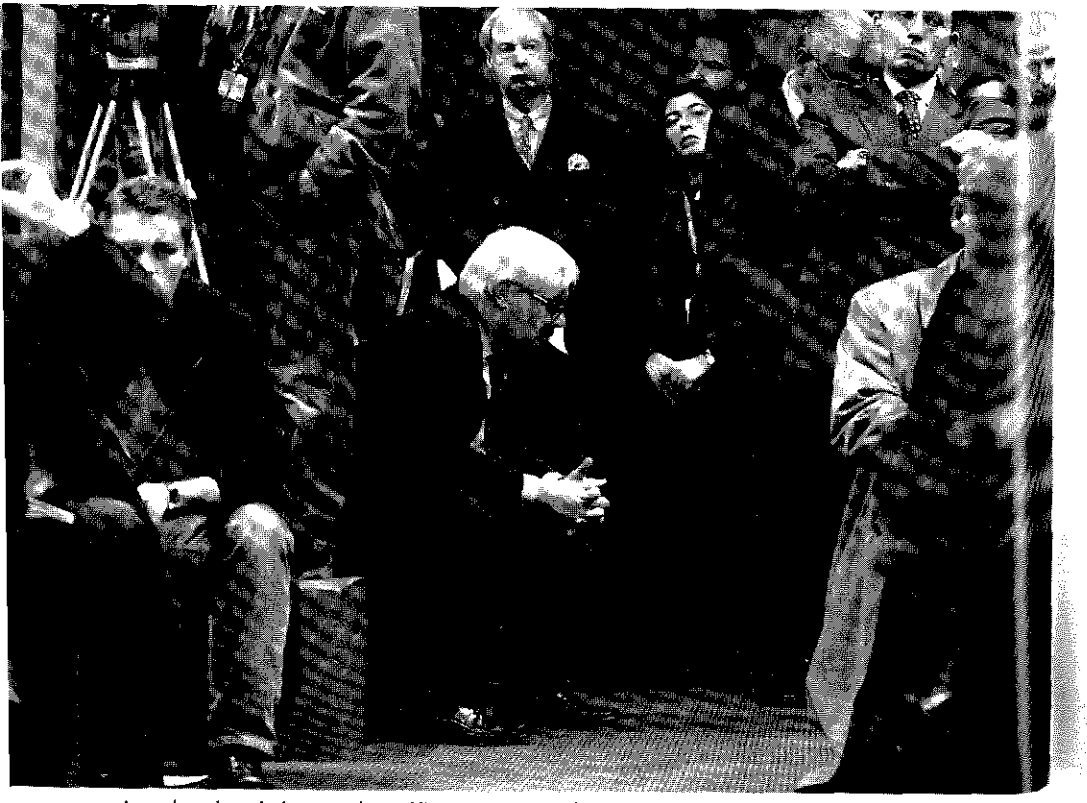
The behaviour of the distinguished participants distracted attention when interest flagged as, say, the Dutch Prime Minister Mr Balkenende, who really does look like Harry Potter, nagged away (doubtless in a European spirit) at some detailed textual amendment to a draft communiqué on the workings of the internal market, or when the rival merits of the possible sites for some new European agencies were canvassed (not much European feeling there) by their national champions. Observing President Chirac provided hours of innocent entertainment; he is to body language what Shakespeare is to the spoken word. Like President Mitterrand before him, he usually made a point of arriving late, surrounded by saturnine courtiers from the Elysée Palace, moulded from the best clay that the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) could provide. A uniformed aide-de-camp always hovered by his side carrying a large briefcase. Did it contain the key to the *Force de Frappe* in case the President was minded to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike against a hereditary foe or was it

1. Going home from Hong Kong in style – the taxi queue at Heathrow was still to come.



3. Democratic accountability – answering questions in the European Parliament. But where's the electorate?

5. Margaret Thatcher and her deputy, Willie Whitelaw, say Yes to Europe in 1975. 'No, No, No' came later.



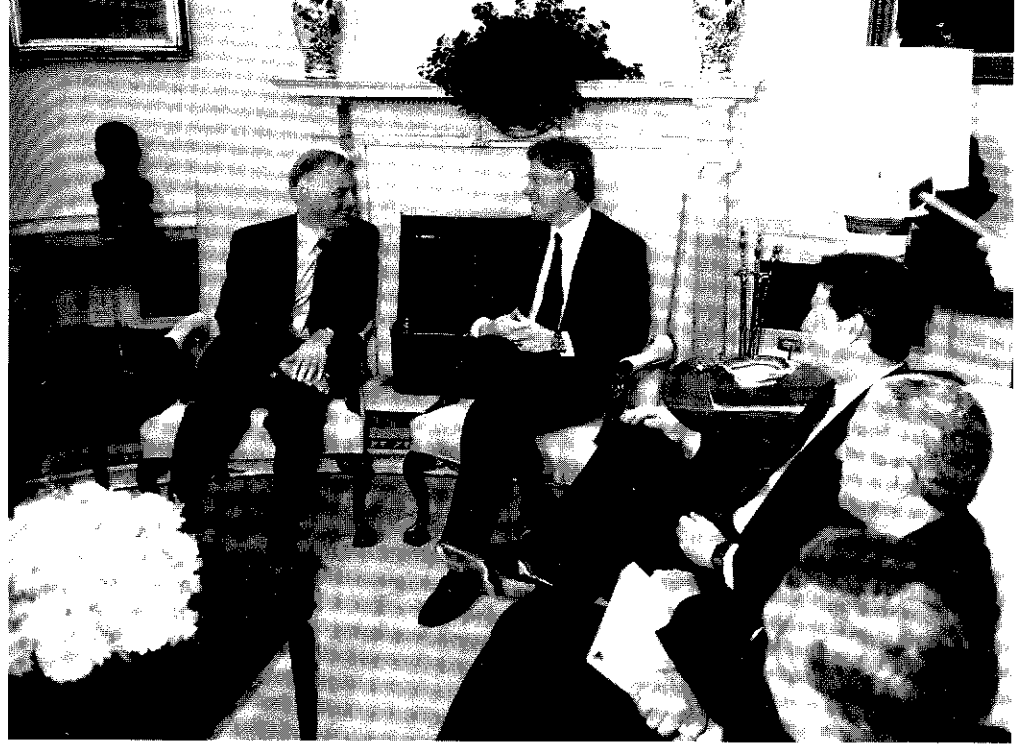
4. Another hard day at the office – waiting for the end of a press conference

6. Prime Minister Thatcher and President Reagan – a special relationship sprinkled with stardust and set to music.

7. Joined at the hip – Javier Solana and the author, speaking with one voice for Europe.

8. Wise, charismatic but beleaguered – the U.N.'s Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

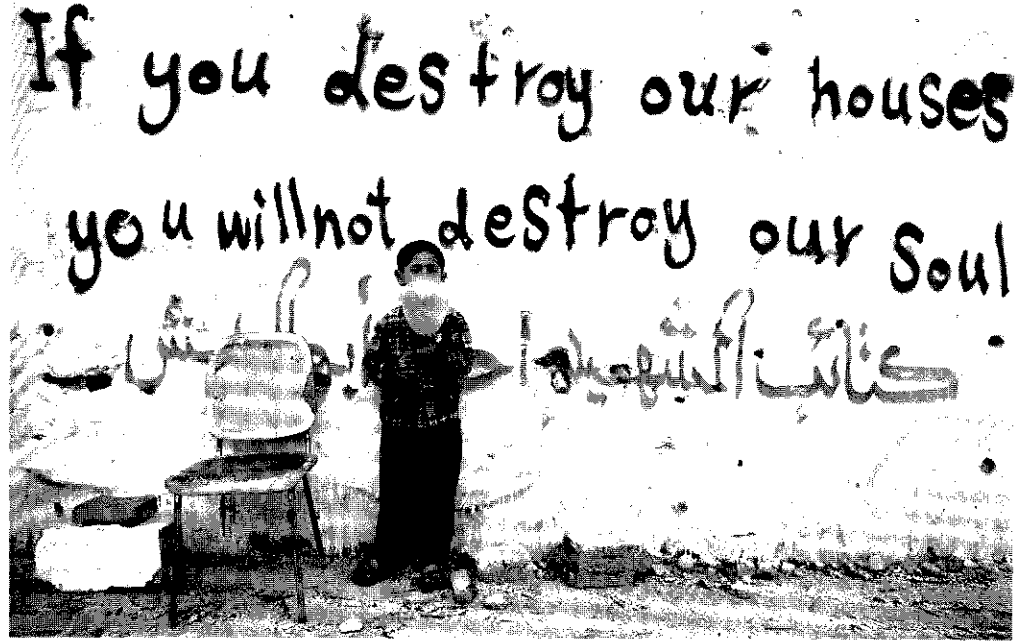
9. Colin Powell – Europe listened but did the White House?



10. Getting the Clinton treatment in the Oval Office.

11. Madeleine Albright – a good partner and friend in the Balkans and beyond.

12. The author with Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in 2001 – a good woman but not a good man.



14. The writing on the wall in Gaza.

13. Is it a wall? Is it a barrier? Is it a security fence? Whatever it is, it changed the facts on the ground in the Middle East.

15. Have you heard the one about British food? Old friends Putin, Schröder and Chirac share a joke. Do they share the same values?

merely carrying a little extra something for the President's lunch? Perhaps – though not, I reckoned, very probably – this was the man who like the slave in a Roman victor's chariot, muttered '*Memento, homo*' ('Do not forget, you are only mortal') in the capacious presidential ear. President Chirac, whose appetite is legendary, would sit invariably deep in contemplation of a pile of saleroom catalogues for Asian artefacts, his long fingers hovering like birds of prey over the jars of mints and trays of biscuits that were berthed between the bottles of mineral water and pots of coffee. Intervening in debates, the President was part emperor, part ham, carrying all before him – or at least conveying that impression even when his audience had plainly come to a conclusion that completely contradicted his own. In the early years, poor Mr Jospin was locked in cohabitation with him as his socialist prime minister. In the President's company Mr Jospin, a nice and courteous man, always looked as though he was wincing even when good manners dictated otherwise, and bore a look of stoic disapproval. I recall a working dinner in Stockholm when President Chirac, who usually made a clamorous point of drinking the local alcoholic brew, forced a bottle of aquavit on his reluctant prime minister. Mr Jospin passed me a note across the table: 'Have you seen your British film, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*?' he enquired, referring to a film that I recalled depicted another particularly stormy cohabitation. Chirac–Jospin was not a marriage made in heaven.

Kant once observed: 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.' That is as true of the EU as of every other institution I have come across during my political career. In politics, where aspiration is so exaggerated, the gilt never stays long on the gingerbread. Walking into the chamber of the House of Commons for the first time I was excited and a little misty-eyed; speaking for the first time there, I could smell my own fear, just like it said in the books. Joining the Cabinet, being sworn a member of the Privy Council, were emotional experiences. But it was not long before the romance wore off, and I could detect like others the weaknesses in our system of parliamentary democracy and the trumpery of much that is claimed these days for Cabinet government. The fact that I could see what I thought was wrong did not mean that I concluded that

we should throw parliamentary democracy and Cabinet government overboard. Nor does my criticism of the way the EU works mean that I think it is fundamentally flawed and that we should seek a rapid exit. Recognizing the blemishes, I remain convinced that it provides the best forum in which to pursue Britain's national interest and that of its other members. But it does need to change.

As I have noted before, the EU is our continent's response to the bloodiest century in our history. We believe in knocking down barriers to trade because we recall the results of dog-eat-dog protectionism in the interwar years – the slump, the unemployment, the misery, the revolutions. We seek to institutionalize reconciliation because we know that for all our self-puffery about European values we have in the recent past used our creativity to bring technology to the service of mass murder. We believe in accommodation, consensus, co-operation and international rules that apply equally to everyone, because without these things we have suffered and we have caused suffering. When the American polemicist Robert Kagan distinguished between the Mars of America and the Venus of Europe, he touched one or two partial truths. It is fair comment that in Europe these days, we are less comfortable with the use of force to support our view of how the world should be ordered than Americans are – and sometimes we are wrong to be so nervous about the need for armed might to sustain the international rule of law. It is also true that our European preference for non-violent options to the world's problems, and our enthusiasm for any analysis that sustains this sort of choice, is partly a result of our military weakness. If we packed a larger punch, we might well be more prepared to get into fights. But this is to a great extent explained by our past. After all, we once followed Mars and learned some hard lessons. I recall debating in the Presidential Palace in Prague with the leading American neoconservative, Richard Perle, who clearly rather enjoyed the sobriquet 'The Prince of Darkness' (which he had earned through a lifetime's attachment to military options in and out of both government and the better-compensated employment of Conrad Black). As I listened to Perle's sophisticated advocacy of aggression, I wondered how Americans would feel if similar views were being expressed nowadays by a German. Europeans

have learned to be deeply suspicious of the terrible romantic temptations of leather and bayonets.

Creating a peaceful and stable continent has never required the death of the nation state. I do not deny that there are some who have always taken a contrary view. For them the nation state is an outmoded concept, discredited by war. Now they view it as fading away under pressures of globalization from above and of multiculturalism and regional revivals from below. While global challenges and threats and the porous nature of frontiers require nation states to work together, to share their sovereignty, they do not dispose of the fact that nations are – despite the pressures on them – the largest units to which people will willingly accord emotional allegiance. That looks unlikely to change for the foreseeable future, which is no bad thing. It is, after all, the differences within Europe – our various histories, languages, traditions and patterns of thought – that give Europe its depth and fascination. The EU should not aspire to eliminate those differences; nor could it do so, even if it wished. What it should be seeking is a supranational settlement that can combine what is best about those differences, while overcoming what has been worst about them: extreme nationalism, xenophobia, mutually destructive trade and monetary policies, unstable balance of power politics, and above all war. The EU should seek, in short, to contain nationalism while retaining and indeed welcoming patriotism.

When you mention the nation states' central invigorating importance in Europe, you are invariably described as a Gaullist in or out of the closet. But most of us *are* in the strictest sense Gaullist. When the colonies in North America met in Philadelphia to agree a constitution they were sub-national communities trying to become one nation. In each of the treaties that provide the legal base for the EU, and in the latest discussions on the Constitutional Treaty, we have witnessed ancient nation states laying down the ground rules for sharing sovereignty. They were not creating another nation or another state. The proposed but now rejected Constitutional Treaty for Europe was what it said it was, with the heads of the participating nation states listed in its preamble putting their names to a treaty on constitutional issues between nation states, not to a constitution for a single state. The power that is transferred in Europe's laws and treaties flows

from the democratically elected parliaments and governments of the nation states to the institutions established to manage shared sovereignty; it does not flow down from *those* institutions to the nation states. 'What are the pillars on which Europe can be built?' asked General de Gaulle in 1960. He answered correctly, 'In truth they are the states, states that are certainly very different from one another, each having its soul, its history and its language, its glories and ambitions, but states that are the only entities with the right to give orders and the power to be obeyed.'

The political classes spend a great deal of time in Europe discussing the institutions of government and the relationships between them – the European Parliament, Council, Commission and so on. The institutions that we do not consider sufficiently, though they are the ones that matter the most in Europe, are the governments and the parliaments of the member states; that is where democratically mandated power really lies. They are, first, the institutions that do most to shape the EU. Its design has not come down on tablets of Carrara marble from the top of the mountain. It is largely the result of thousands of meetings between the representatives of the member states and tens of thousands of compromises, and those compromises are usually between the strongly held national viewpoints represented in the no longer smoke-filled meeting rooms of Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Second, it is the strength or weakness of the governments of the member states that determines the strength or weakness of Europe. Strong national leaders produce a strong sense of direction in Europe; the reverse is also true. Take the 1997 Stability and Growth Pact as an example. It sought to establish a fiscal framework for the Eurozone and to avoid the profligacy of some countries attempting a free ride in the financial markets, paid for by the hair-shirted prudence of their colleagues. The rules that were initially set were tough, reflecting traditional German concern to ensure a strong currency, and to prevent other weaker economies being carried on German coattails. In changed times with a different government, the Germans found the rules too tight for themselves and went along with French pressure to relax them. Let us be clear what happened. Two of the largest member states decided the rules were too tough. So the rules were changed. There was not much sign of a superstate here! It was

more a question of two nation states behaving badly, and riding roughshod over the smaller and more fiscally upright ones, a point that contributed to the Dutch No vote. There was little that the European Commission could do to stop it, try as we might to retain the credibility of the system. We had anxious discussions in Commission meetings. Pedro Solbes – the commissioner responsible, and the former and future Spanish finance minister – denounced the backsliding. But member states are the ultimate arbiters of how they run their own economies. There is no question that it would have been better for European economic performance if the Commission had been able to get its own way; democratic reality pointed in another direction.

This raises questions that de Gaulle's answer does not adequately meet. He had gone on in the same speech to say: 'To fancy one can build something effective in action and acceptable to the peoples, outside or above the States, is a chimera.' We have in fact done exactly that, creating institutions – principally the European Commission – to manage pretty effectively the sovereignty that we have agreed to share. But not in a way that is very 'acceptable to the peoples'.

We have shared sovereignty for reasons that are mundane as well as exalted. Of course the creators of the old European Coal and Steel Community wanted an end to war and to the ability of individual European nations to compete in building the instruments of death; they also had an eye to the industrial needs of Alsace-Lorraine and of the Ruhr. To persuade France to join the Common Market enthusiastically, she had to be offered a high external tariff, exchange controls, the association of her colonies and the subsidizing of her farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy. The CAP has eaten up (and still does so) a very large share of the EU's financial resources. It has been right to help poor farmers and rural development. But the policy created for primarily French reasons discriminates against the products of poor, developing countries, burdens European consumers, and causes rows between the member states. This complicated monstrosity squats at the heart of the EU, though reform is eroding its worst features, and its end in its present form is now more or less in sight. Like President Chirac, it will not – it is reasonable to assume – be with us forever. We came back again and again to CAP reform in our

Commission discussions and put forward on several occasions more liberal and far-ranging reforms than ministers (led by the French) were prepared to accept. One result was continuing unfairness to poor countries, a point that Mr Blair once put very courteously to the French President at a European Council meeting. I had a front-row seat for President Chirac's explosive finger-wagging reaction. It was a case of precision targeting of a very raw nerve. Until the French face up to the impact of their implacable support for an unreformed CAP on poor farmers in poor countries, much of their eloquent concern about development in Africa and elsewhere is heavily sauced with hypocrisy.

Sovereignty-sharing has, therefore, its costs as well as its benefits. How much of it do we want? How much is required by Europe's nation states? How much will their citizens bear? The original Treaty of Rome (1957) committed the member states to work for 'an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'. Is this a mandate for Brussels gobbling up everything; pushing back the bounds of national sovereignty as far as possible, as often as possible? Does it point the way eventually to a federal Europe, in which powers are transferred from 'we, the people' in the member states to a central political authority, which then passes back powers, as it sees fit, to the governing institutions of those same member states at national or regional level? This would, indeed, be a superstate, a 'United States of Europe' or the country 'Europe'. There are some people who argue for this, and there are some who give the impression that they would like such an outcome to creep up on us without much debate. For example, Jean-Claude Juncker, the long-serving, chain-smoking Prime Minister of Luxembourg, has said, according to *The Economist* magazine, 'We decide on something, leave it lying around, and wait and see what happens. If no one kicks up a fuss, because most people don't know what has been decided, we continue step by step until there is no turning back.' This is the sort of mission creep that has given Europe and democracy a bad name. It would doubtless be justified by some on the grounds that 'more Europe' must be 'better', even if most Europeans do not see things like that. But the 'better' is not often defined. A paradox about the countries that have usually argued the 'more must be better' line is that they are usually those with the worst

record of implementing the policies that have already been accepted as desirable at the European level. Northern European curmudgeons on the subject of mission creep are invariably the first in the queue in implementing European laws.

Bureaucratic momentum has also been at the service of role inflation. The European Commission (with staff about the size of a large British municipal authority) is the motor of the EU. Established as an independent initiator of policy and legislation, it has come to manage too much and has aspired to manage even more. I spent five on the whole happy and interesting years as a member of the Commission, described as a college (like that of Rome's cardinals) to convey both the sense of its independence and of the shared responsibility of its members for the decisions it makes. When we became members each of us took an oath to serve Europe's interests not our own country's, a reasonable requirement given that our countries believed that their individual interests were best served through an effective Union. On the whole, members were surprisingly restrained (or discreet) in defending national positions, with one or two exceptions whose flag-waving diligence usually backfired. Nor was there much ideological dissent, though on economic issues there was a discernible divide between those who took more, and those who took less liberal positions, with the distinctions often bearing only a confusing resemblance to the political labels worn by individual commissioners. Thanks to the friendly, avuncular style of the President of the Commission Romano Prodi, and to his willingness to delegate to colleagues, the Commission was a pretty happy team with little acrimonious bickering or bureaucratic turf warfare.

In terms of individual quality, I would place the Prodi Commission on a par with the British Cabinets in which I served (and with more recent Labour Cabinets), though it is true that we lacked anyone with the rough allure of John Prescott. But there were several commissioners who would have qualified for inclusion in a category I have often used to describe British politicians. Mario Monti (Competition), Frits Bolkestein (Internal Market), Pascal Lamy (Trade), Franz Fischler (Agriculture), Günter Verheugen (Enlargement), Pedro Solbes (Economic and Monetary Affairs), Margot Wallstrom (Environment), and António Vitorino (Justice and Home Affairs) were all 'big beasts

in the jungle'. The civil servants who worked for me were as good as those I had encountered as a British minister – some were outstanding. It was probably more difficult to move or sack the inadequate than it would have been in Britain, a consequence of having an international civil service with each member state prepared to fight over appointments to important jobs. Neil Kinnock fought hard to introduce fairer and more meritocratic procedures into personnel policy, against Union opposition and foot-dragging by some of the member states.

During and since my years as a commissioner, I have rarely been able to get into a London taxi without receiving an earful of advice about the European Commission, which seems to provide a cathartic safety valve for the frustrations that taxi drivers and others feel about life as a whole. No subject, save the whims and fancies of the London Mayor Ken Livingstone, so excites their interest. The Commission clearly fulfills the same sort of role in British public life as the United Nations does in America. Very often the 'taxi drivers' appear at dinner parties too. I recall one evening being told by a companion at dinner how corrupt the Commission was. 'I suppose I should remind you that I work for it,' I said. Rather lamely she struggled for a way out. 'How very brave of you,' she concluded. Writing about 'nooks and crannies' in relation to European legislation could, I suppose, slide effortlessly into 'crooks and nannies' when it comes to the Commission. The Commission is everyone's whipping boy. In so far as the facts are likely to change perceptions and prejudices – gentle Irish rain falling on flint, I fear – what do they tell us?

The Commission's overall management performance is not much different from that of the governments of the member states. Indeed, it is probably better than most. The EU's budget for 2004–05 was just over £70 billion, less than that for Britain's Department of Health and about a quarter of total central government spending in the UK. About 6 per cent is spent on administration. The European Commission, with its huge staff, is responsible for implementing the budget. However, 85 per cent of this budget is spent through member-state governments and regional and sub-regional bodies, and it is this part of the budget whose handling has been regularly criticized. The

Commission has to depend on the member states to ensure that the money is spent according to the rules.

Alas, we in Britain can no longer lecture others on issues of governance. The handling of mad cow disease and the foot and mouth epidemic, the design of the poll tax, the management of the social security system, the Child Support Agency, successive computerization initiatives in Whitehall, the administration of immigration and asylum policies, even the Treasury's inability to control (let alone know the costs of) the refurbishment of its own buildings – none of these reflect well on the current standards of public-sector management in Britain. How do the figures for fraud in Brussels and London compare? It is reckoned that 1 per cent (about £700 million) is obtained fraudulently from the EU, most of this in the parts of the budget spent through the member states. There are shortfalls in revenues from taxes, levies and duties and subsidies are paid for crops that are not being grown or for land that is not being cultivated. Much of this money is recovered. What happens in Britain? The Department for Work and Pensions loses 2 billion pounds a year through fraud and errors in payments. That is presumably why its accounts have been qualified by the National Audit Office (NAO) for each of the last thirteen years. The equivalent body in Brussels, the Court of Auditors, is often called in evidence to show how badly the Commission is run because it has failed to give a positive opinion on part of the EU budget for ten years; this largely covers the money distributed by the member states for agriculture and support in the poorer regions. In their 2004 report, the Court noted that 'the consolidated accounts of the European Communities faithfully reflect the revenues and expenditures and the financial situation of the Communities'. They tabled one reservation concerning the treatment of debtors. None of this gives much support to the notion that the Commission is run by the Mafia. But if I was a minister in the British Department for Work and Pensions, I would avoid taxis and dining out.

There *has* been mismanagement and fraud in Brussels. That is totally reprehensible. We should, however, be rather less prejudiced and a little more factual in discussing it. My colleague Neil Kinnock had the demanding job of trying to reform the Commission's management. Any fate that gives one man in his political lifetime the job of

reforming both the Labour Party and the European Commission cannot be described as kind. He laboured successfully – changing the accounting methods, for example, from a cash-based to an accruals system, and establishing (as I have noted) a modern promotion and personnel policy. And much thanks he got for it! I passed much of my own period in Brussels trying to turn around our performance in the management of foreign assistance programmes – both conventional development aid to the poor and support for more obviously political purposes like reconstruction in the Balkans. I wanted as much as possible of the aid to be managed out in the field. It was uphill work. After five years we were reckoned (by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and others) to have made significant improvements and were probably managing our funds about as well as the EU average. Not that anyone outside seemed in the event to care very much – in Brussels, more than anywhere else I have ever worked, unacknowledged success came first through the quiet avoidance of disaster.

There was one consequence that was a real downside of tackling mismanagement. Each new incident created new rules and regulations, which made it more difficult to run things competently and to take decisions quickly. The cat's cradle of controls with which we were obliged to cope would have made it impossible in Hong Kong (to take the most obvious example from my own experience) to move as rapidly as we did in implementing policy decisions, not least investments in infrastructure. I had been spoilt in Asia. Too many officials in Brussels, like those in many other bureaucracies, now have to spend too much of their time covering their own backs. But it does not save them from the scourge of the press, especially in Germany and Britain.

By its very nature, the Commission was bound to be greedy for more power unless it were to be deliberately steered in another direction. The founding treaty assigned to the Commission the guardianship of its legal provisions, and this conferred a sense of responsibility for the legacy of Monnet and Schuman. The Commission stands guard over that 'European feeling' rather as the six Vestal Virgins in Rome preserved and protected the sacred flame of Aeneas. The awareness of

this solemn duty sanctifies bureaucratic ambition. The Commission already has plenty to do – initiating policy; drafting and implementing legislation; administering vast tracts of Europe-wide programmes. It should pay more regard to Montesquieu's wise remark that unnecessary laws merely enfeeble necessary ones. Bureaucracies often talk about the need to do less; they are rarely as good as their word.

The concept that is supposed to determine what is done at which level of government is called subsidiarity. This is a word barely heard outside the debating chambers of the EU, except by those who study the 1931 papal encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, in which Pius XI sought to maintain Church authority against State encroachment, defining the appropriate roles for each. What it means in the EU is that decisions should be taken at the most appropriate level – Brussels, national government, or regional and local authority. For some, the most appropriate level always seems to be Brussels. I recall a discussion in the Commission on energy efficiency, during which we solemnly agreed to specify how often ten-year-old boilers should be inspected. The great European idea had come to this.

Yet there is a real problem for the Commission in deciding exactly what it should and should not do. The single market, for which (remember) Britain campaigned harder than any other country, is an engine for ever more regulation to iron out national differences that represent barriers to trade; to create the desired if sometimes mythical 'level playing field'. The Commission is endlessly being lent on, by (shall we say) the manufacturers of billiard cue tips. They complain about some example of outrageous national protectionism. By the very logic of its mission, the Commission feels duty-bound to respond. But one man's 'level playing field' is another man's 'nook and cranny' (I use the term the right way round this time) into which Europe infamously pokes its nose. It is genuinely difficult to know where to stop, and the boundary changes with the Zeitgeist. Subsidiarity can never be an exact science. The Commission's essential task is defined in ways that drive it forwards and it cannot easily be faulted for this. It cannot itself define the limits of its mission because logic would carry it all the way to a superstate. As Samuel Butler said: 'Extremes are alone logical, and they are always absurd; the mean is alone practicable and it is always illogical.'

The Commission's difficulty can only be dealt with by creating a countervailing institutional force on the side of leaving well alone and by specifying legal limits on the process of centralization. This is what the much-criticized Constitutional Treaty set out in part to do. It was the result of a novel experiment in European decision-making. The first draft was produced by a representative convention under the magisterial presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. He was assisted by a wily Scottish diplomat, John Kerr, a very clever and funny man who has not allowed the often necessary cynicism of his trade to destroy his remarkable creativity as a public official. He and Giscard, though similar in intellectual firepower, were otherwise about as alike as Puligny-Montrachet and malt whisky. These two brainy men helped to craft a well-balanced treaty (soon to become the punchbag of everyone in Europe with a grouse about anything at all), which drew all the lines in more or less the right and acceptable places. Their work then went to heads of government and foreign ministers in what is called an intergovernmental conference (IGC) for further manicuring. The draft survived Silvio Berlusconi's eccentric presidency of the EU, which he ended (thanks to the doctors) looking a lot younger than when he began. At the European Council meeting in December 2003 at which it had been hoped the treaty would be agreed, Berlusconi presided over rather desultory conversations. One session began with a long silence that was eventually broken by another of the Italian Prime Minister's flirtations with political incorrectness. 'Well,' he said, 'if no one has anything to say about the treaty, why don't we talk about football or women? You start, Gerhard,' he went on, gesturing to the German Chancellor. 'You know a lot about both.' There was an embarrassed silence. It is fair, I think, to say that there is a sort of Berlusconi line across Europe, south of which he evidently does well but north of which he would not stand much chance of getting elected. It runs pretty close to the Alps.

The Italian presidency was followed by the Irish in the first half of 2004, which brought that country's prime minister, or Taoiseach – to use his correct vernacular name – into the chair. The Irish steered the constitution through the IGC with great skill. Bertie Ahern, their prime minister, is a canny operator whose calculatedly unsophisticated style masks a clear mind, a mastery of detail and tactical

wizardry. As often happens when a smaller member state has the task of presiding over the EU's affairs, the Irish were not encumbered by a host of national preoccupations. There was no Dublin wish list that took priority over Europe's agenda. They also had outstanding officials both in their Brussels team and back home in Dublin. Perhaps one result of working in a smaller bureaucracy is that very good civil servants are more likely to be given their heads.

The Constitutional Treaty was widely regarded in the rest of Europe as a triumph for the predominately 'British' view of how the EU should work. I think it is fairer to say that the treaty recognized that we had gone about as far as we could or should in developing supranational policies and institutions. The real world of twenty-five nation states and national parliaments had intervened. The supranational bargains already struck were not to be disparaged, but enough was enough. The treaty made clear that member-state governments, for example, had ultimate control of their budgetary, employment and social security systems; the EU can neither tax nor borrow, which quashes the suggestion that Europe is intent on becoming a superstate. We shall need to be more rigorous in future in defining when value can really be added by running policy at the European level. The debate here has swung strongly against encroachment into what should be member-state domestic policy areas. Jacques Delors, once a leading proponent of a 'Social Europe' (counterbalancing economic integration with social protection in the single market) had come to a different conclusion by 2000: 'I believe that areas like education, health, employment and social security, in short everything that creates social cohesion, must remain within national competence.' There is a simple democratic reason why this is wise. If powers that should be exercised at national and local level are appropriated by the EU, voters are in effect disenfranchised. They are in a sense also disenfranchised, and certainly hoodwinked, if powers that can only effectively be exercised at the European level are retained by local and national politicians. (In Britain, successive national governments have of course been disenfranchising voters for years by destroying local government.)

The paradox of the Constitutional Treaty's rejection by French and Dutch voters – and others would have said No too if given the chance

– is this. The treaty sought rightly to draw a line in the sand so far as further integration is concerned. Yet much of the satisfaction at rejection is on the part of those who have sought precisely the same outcome as that contained in the treaty. There is another irony. The preparation of the treaty through the initial Convention was regarded as the most open attempt to involve the public in the reform of the EU's institutions that had yet been attempted. Yet voters gave it a Wagnerian raspberry partly because they dislike the feeling that Europe is made over their heads. The reasons for rejection in France and the Netherlands were very different, most seeming to have little to do with the treaty itself. However, in both countries and elsewhere in Europe there is clearly a sense that the European project has gone too far, too fast for many of Europe's citizens; there is a sense too that Europe's political leaders have allowed the institutions that they themselves have created to drift away from the citizens whose interests those same institutions are supposed to serve. There is no sufficiently convincing political narrative connecting the institutions to the voters – especially in the older member states where the workforce is encouraged by some populist politicians to take fright at the mythical threat of Polish plumbers, rather than the real competition from Asian workers. It is easy enough to see what we should stop doing: no overreach, no pushing for more power here, there and everywhere. We have to focus on what we need to do to improve the lives of our citizens in a world of competitive challenges and the sort of threats that individual countries cannot face on their own. But how do we make what we are doing more accountable? How do we improve the sense of democratic control in Europe when plainly voters in France and the Netherlands, and other democracies including Britain, do not feel they have much control over what is happening in their own countries let alone in the EU as a whole? We should of course give more powers (as was proposed in the Constitutional Treaty) to national parliaments in order to police European legislation and subsidiarity, though they will need to take the job more seriously than they have in the past. The majority of national parliaments have failed for years even to make the most of their existing powers, ducking the serious job of scrutiny, which they could have performed much better. But unless they discharge their scrutiny functions in

relation to European business more conscientiously, it will continue to be very difficult to bridge the gap between national electorates and European affairs. For the moment, alas, I do not see how much more accountability can be achieved through the democratic machinery we have created at the European level, namely its eponymous Parliament.

There are several reasons for this, only a few of which are the responsibility of the Parliament's members. They always seemed to me rather similar to national parliamentarians. Working in two extraordinary buildings in Brussels and Strasbourg – one resembling a great glass jukebox, the other a modish vacuum cleaner – they contain some very hard-working and knowledgeable politicians, and the usual small minority of idle, expense-collecting layabouts, probably unemployable in any other walk of life. This is just like every other parliament, and is customarily said to be justifiable on the grounds that in a democracy everyone deserves to be represented, including the bums. In my area – external relations – I worked with some real experts in the European Parliament, was subjected to far more scrutiny than would have been the case at Westminster, and was particularly impressed by the mechanisms established to secure budgetary accountability. Fighting for my budget each year gave me the same sort of headaches that would have been experienced by a member of an American administration in Congress. During my years, the Budget Committee was chaired by a wise and experienced Member of the European Parliament, the socialist Terry Wynn. It is no disrespect to him to say that he was probably largely unknown outside the European Parliament; within it, he was as skilful a parliamentarian as I have encountered.

So the Parliament largely does its best and it has real and growing powers. But it cannot avoid giving the impression that it is a virtual parliament, debating in the virtual languages of interpretation, representing a virtual electorate, organized in virtual ideological groups and disconnected from the political world at home. There are some things about which it can do very little. It cannot create a real European electorate; there is none. Europe's demos is fractured. Goods may know no boundaries in Europe, but politics are locked firmly into national cultures, stereotypes, histories and institutions. Attempts

to cross frontiers – right, left and centre groupings on a European scale – are pretty superficial. Nor can it probably do very much about the fact that it is an itinerant body, obliged to travel between Brussels and Strasbourg each month in order to meet the terms of a deal done long ago with France (at which Britain, to its eternal shame, connived during the Edinburgh European Council in 1992 in order to secure some assumed benefit elsewhere). Maybe parliamentarians should dig in their heels and make more of a fuss. 'Hell, no, we won't go.' As things stand, moving like a travelling circus every month – lock, stock and filing cabinet – is hardly conducive to the creation of a serious, well-run parliamentary body. If there is little they can do about these things, parliamentarians could at least reorganize their own procedures so that debates are not simply a procession of speakers in an ill-attended chamber. Members do like to pontificate, and like most parliamentarians are never happier than when expending hot air on subjects over which they have absolutely no control.

There should also be more of a political career structure within the Parliament. There is a rapid and large turnover of members, presumably reflecting in part the fact that MEPs do not cut much of a dash in their own countries. Who knows who they are? How many people vote for them? Many of the ambitious ones move to national politics as soon as they can. Even so, service and competence should be more obviously and often rewarded in internal election to important offices. Above all, European parliamentarians should reform their indefensible system of expenses for travel and office costs. This gives them the not undeserved reputation of riding a 'Béarnaise sauce train'. You cannot pose effectively as a guardian of the taxpayers' interest if you are suspected of bending the rules for your bank account's benefit.

I fear, however, that no matter how much the institution is reformed, it will be difficult for it to acquire for some time the democratic credentials needed to diminish popular alienation about Europe and to bridge the accountability gap. G. K. Chesterton once remarked that unity may be as simple as changing ten shillings into a ten-bob note or as absurd as trying to change ten terriers into a bulldog. As problems go, trying to turn twenty-five different political cultures into one parliament and one electorate is at present nearer the bulldog end of the scale than the ten-bob note.

Here is another reason why we need to draw breath before contemplating any further transfer of powers to the centre. There are now twenty-five member states. Other aspirant members hammer on the door. The scale of the enterprise should set limits on the ambitions of the centralizers. There used to be a rather simplistic suggestion that there was a choice between broadening the Union or deepening what it did. In practice we have broadened *and* deepened, but you cannot deepen everywhere. With twenty-five or thirty-five member states the centralizers cannot continue to draw everything to Brussels. Political reality as much as political will have changed the game.

It is about time. Unless we call a halt to the process of vacuuming powers to the centre, we will find people – not only in Britain – questioning their political obligation as well as voting No in referendums. If citizens in democracies (and in other societies) feel they have no say, that policy is being made over their heads and that the law is a scourge rather than a protection, they will eventually revolt. As Edmund Burke said, 'People crushed by law have no hopes but from power. If laws are their enemies, they will be enemies to laws.' Every time a referendum result goes wrong, every time a pro-European result gets home by a whisker, every time a pro-European proposal is rejected at the polling booths, every time turnouts in European elections fall to a new low, too many European politicians behave as though what has happened is an aberration or, worse still, as though the European electorate does not deserve the wise leaders it has. Prime Minister Juncker produced a plum example of this attitude in his response to the French and Dutch referendums. 'I do not believe,' he said, 'that the French and Dutch voters rejected the European constitution.' Moreover, he added, the results 'do not call into question citizens' attachments to the construction of Europe'. This brings to mind Bertold Brecht's observation in his poem 'The Solution':

> After the uprising of the 17th June
> The Secretary of the Writers Union
> Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
> Stating that the people
> Had forfeited the confidence of the government
> And could win it back only

By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?

If a cricketer asks why he should obey the umpire – by what right he is given out – you can answer by explaining the rules, and even the position of the governing body of the sport, the Marylebone Cricket Club. Beyond that there is nothing to be done but to say, 'You must return to the pavilion because this is a game of cricket.' That is the knock-down argument. You must obey because we are operating within an accepted set of procedures. The growing problem regarding perceptions of Europe in Britain and in several other parts of the Union (and if only cricket were played elsewhere beyond the Netherlands in Europe, the metaphor would be better understood) is that too many people are coming to think it is 'not cricket', in the sense that there is something unfair about what is going on. Cricket, they discover – all right, football if you must – has sprouted all sorts of new rules while they were not looking. They pine for the game they used to play and love, in which their own national political institutions stood proud and unchallenged at the centre of debate and decision-making. But that is like a conservative cosmologist during the Renaissance pining for the medieval model of the universe, which was comfortably geocentric; when the planets moved in perfect circles; and when there were no loose ends. The game has moved on. We are still building the new model, and we have to be a lot more careful about how we involve our citizens in the task. But there is no going back to the old one.

Europe's great test is not how it configures its governing institutions, but what those institutions do and what they achieve. What are the results? For thirty years after the Second World War, the results in western Europe were spectacular. Democracy rose from the ruins of fascism and authoritarianism, and with it came the freedoms that had been so often lauded in the nineteenth century but so often denied since. Helped by Marshall aid, by growing trade between states that opened their markets to one another, and by the migration of cheap

labour from the countryside and from former colonies, the European economy took off. Annual growth in western Europe during 1945–75 ran at 4.5 per cent and gross domestic product (GDP) per head rose at an only slightly lower rate. In 1979 a French economic planner, Jean Fourastié, wrote a book that began by describing two seemingly different villages – one backward, the other developed. They turned out to be the same village, transformed by what he described in the book's title – taking as his analogy the thirty glorious days of the July Revolution of 1830 – *Les Trente Glorieuses ou la Révolution Invisible*. The 'trente glorieuses' gave their name to the modern period.

In his excellent history of modern Europe, *The Struggle for Europe*, the young American historian William Hitchcock notes that 'in narrowly economic terms . . . the Marshall Plan did not save western Europe'. But what it did do was enable Europe to follow a path of industrial expansion and investment in heavy industry, 'while at the same time putting into place a costly but essential welfare state'. The $12.3 billion of Marshall aid between 1948 and 1951 helped give Europeans the chance to choose that mix of economic and social policies that proved to be mutually reinforcing. Economic growth paid for social policies, and the social policies helped to underpin the economic progress. The German economy was the engine and the Christian Democrat Ludwig Erhard gave the policy its philosophic raiment, 'the social market economy'. In the years immediately after the war's end, 100 million people in Europe were being fed at a level that seriously damaged their health; even Britain's ascetic Chancellor of the Exchequer Stafford Cripps, during the freezing winter of 1947, thought that things were so bad that 'the best place to be was in bed'. Thirty years later both the quality and the standard of living had been transformed for most citizens in western Europe; their standard of living roughly calculated in terms of GDP per head had risen exponentially and stood at 70 per cent of the American figures. Mae West once said that she used to be Snow White, but she drifted. This was Europe's Snow White period.

The drift began with the two oil shocks of the 1970s. Unemployment and inflation rose; growth rates faltered; public finances deteriorated. Stuttering recovery was set back at the end of the 1980s by a glorious event, the reunification of Germany. Glorious but costly:

transfers from Berlin to the eastern Länder have amounted to 1,250 billion euros since 1991. The 1990s were increasingly dominated by painful efforts to align the costs of the social policies that we had come to take for granted with a desultory economic performance. Preparation for the creation of the Eurozone applied a discipline to the member states concerned to clean up their public finances. While they kept inflation low, unemployment in several countries remained worryingly high, with social costs and rigid labour markets inhibiting job creation.

Europe's economic problems are often exaggerated, just as our economic vitality was in the past oversold by economists like Lester Thurow, who confidently predicted that by now we would be knocking the socks off our American competitors. Comparisons with America are most frequently used to try to demonstrate that Europe is clapped-out. It is true that the US economy has been growing more rapidly than Europe's, but that is largely the result of America's 1 per cent annual population growth. Figures for productivity growth and productivity per head tell a far more confused tale, partly because American statistical methods, in European eyes, overstate performance. In the last few years, GDP per head has arguably risen slightly faster in Europe, and if you measure GDP by the hours worked, Europe and America are level pegging. Moreover, America's far greater size gives it advantages that show up particularly in the wholesale and retail sectors, which can benefit from expansive physical layout and easier traffic flows. Some studies suggest that 60 per cent of the difference between US and European productivity in the last ten years is explained by the Wal-Mart or Home Depot factor – large shopping sheds on out-of-town greenfield sites. Many Europeans would also question whether America's saving rate – less than 2 per cent of household income – shows a fundamentally stronger economy (or society) than Europe's, which stands at six times that figure. All this said, it remains true that we have not continued to close the gap in the difference between American and European living standards, partly because Europeans take much of our productivity gains in more leisure and shorter working hours. We are more inclined in Europe to take holidays than risks. In addition, where flexible labour markets in America have meant that the impact of new technology has raised

levels of inequality while retaining high employment, inflexible markets in Europe have meant that we have lost jobs while not seeing a big inequality gap. Europe's jobless figures would be unacceptable in America; America's inequality figures would be politically intolerable in much of Europe. I shall come back to this point.

Measuring our performance against America is not the biggest economic challenge that Europe faces. We do need to improve our competitiveness in order to raise our growth rate; without that, it will be difficult to pay for the famous social model to which I alluded at the very beginning of this book. European governments in 2000 declared an ambitious objective of turning the EU into the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. Dream on. This betrays a characteristic European tendency to prize the enunciation of rights, freedoms and objectives (full employment, a cleaner environment and so on) over more solid but unspectacular achievements. But there are three powerful reasons why we really do need to raise our game economically.

The first is demographic. It seems to be a universal truth that prosperity, female education, and easy, cheap and acceptable access to reliable contraceptives lower fertility rates. That has happened dramatically in Europe. The fertility rate has fallen well below replacement levels in every European country except Albania, and is still falling. The countries with the lowest birth rates are those – like Italy – which have had the most traditional views of the role of women. Indeed, if you look at fertility rates in the larger Catholic countries – Italy, Spain, Poland – you cannot conclude that the teaching of the Catholic Church is having much impact on family life. So we have followed a baby boom with a baby bust. At the same time, people are living longer and there is no good reason to suppose that this trend is about to peter out for biological or health-care reasons. The result is a rapid change in the dependency ratio, with fewer people in work supporting more people out of work. In the past, as Adair Turner has argued, each generation has been larger than the one before. No longer. Europe's population is likely to fall by almost a fifth by mid-century, while the number in retirement compared with those of working age is predicted to double from 24 per cent to almost 50 per cent over the same period. Unless we act urgently, Europe's shrinking

population, and particularly the fall in the working-age population, will result in lower growth rates. We would then find ourselves with slowing economies, higher social costs, and of course a declining share of world output. The policy choices we have to make are pretty clear: more of us need to work; we will have to postpone our retirement; and we will have to accept more flexible working conditions. We will also have to pay more for the social provision we take for granted – health care and pensions, for example. None of this should be impossible, but it will require social disruption in some countries and bold political leadership. It will also provide greater opportunities for many people (to be better educated and trained), above all for women. Surveys in well-off developed countries seem to show that women would like to have more children but are deterred by the difficulty of combining motherhood and a career. Removing these barriers should help women to meet both their maternal and their social and economic aspirations.

The second big challenge that Europe faces – even France – is globalization, and this can be expressed very simply. According to the economic historian Angus Maddison, between 1500 and 1800 the combined economies of China and India accounted for 50 per cent of the world's GDP. As the Industrial Revolution lifted economic performances elsewhere – in Britain, Germany, the US, Japan and so on – India's and China's combined GDP declined by 1950 to about 8.7 per cent of the world figures. Between 1820 and the early 1950s, the Chinese economy was only growing by about 0.2 per cent a year compared with 3.8 per cent in America, and 1.7 per cent in Europe and Japan. The two decades after the middle of the last century saw continuing stagnation in both countries, but since then China and India have been transformed by rapid economic growth. By the century's end, they represented between 15 and 20 per cent of world GDP. With growth rates almost in double figures, and with a combined population of well over two billion, they will rapidly become powerful economic players. Their wealth per head still lags far behind American and European figures, so that while their overall economic size will increase exponentially their citizens will remain poorer than those in western countries. They also face significant challenges that could throw them off course. But if they manage to sustain anything

like their present performance, by 2050 the EU could have a GDP just under half that of China and three quarters that of India.

The rise of India and China, and of other Asian economies, is not necessarily a threat to Europe's prosperity. American and Japanese economic success has not taken place at the expense of Europe. On the contrary, it has certainly benefited us. Similarly, Indian and Chinese growth means new clients and new markets for European firms. In recent years, about a third of the increase in the volume of world imports has been accounted for by China. There are, however, two things that we need to bear in mind. First, even today, some of the competition from China and India is in areas where we have assumed that we have a technological advantage. In Hong Kong, the economy was transformed from a low value-added manufacturing base – cheap textiles, toys, plastic flowers – to a sophisticated high value-added competitor in much less than one industrial manager's lifetime. With technology speeding up change, we shall find that competition from India and China affects not only our cheaper service and manufacturing sectors. The growth in the number of Indian and Chinese engineering and information technology students (proportionately a far bigger figure than in America or Europe) also points towards more intense competition for us in the future in areas where we may have assumed we had an unshakeable lead for some time to come. Second, at the very least the EU, with its falling population, and with a share of world output that may almost halve over the first fifty years of this century, is unlikely to maintain the same clout in economic or political matters that it has today. But at least if they work together, European countries will have more influence than if they were to try to manage on their own in glorious isolation.

The third big challenge is that enlargement of the EU also demands an improved economic performance. This would both meet the immediate difficulties of incorporating ten new member states and, in a way, highlight the principal conundrum we have to resolve: how do we cope with the consequences of our attractiveness to our neighbours? The enlargement in May 2004 increased the EU's population by 20 per cent, but only added 5 per cent to our GDP. It led to a drop in output per head of 12.5 per cent. The arrival of new member states in the past – for example, Greece, Spain and Portugal – has brought

a sharp pick-up in their growth rates, and a positive impact on the Union-wide economy. The same thing should happen again, and indeed the growth of output and productivity has quickened in all the new member states, whose performance over the last five years has outstripped that of the US as well as the rest of the EU. But the gap in the standard of living between the old and new members will require substantial shifts in resources if we are to establish a real sense of community from the Polish border to the Atlantic. The difference in wealth between east and west Europe is not simply the product of Soviet colonialism, though that greatly exacerbated it. Ever since the eighteenth-century partition of Poland by Austria, Prussia and Russia, central and eastern Europe has been a victim of Great Power politics, and that has carried an economic cost. Per capita incomes in the west were twice the figure of central and eastern Europe as long ago as 1870. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 is part of a sad pattern of behaviour, which also ignored the sacrifices of central and eastern Europe in the two European wars, overlooked their contributions to European civilization and downplayed their aspirations for national independence during years of Soviet occupation. Central and eastern Europeans were far more likely to regard the United States as their faithful friend during the dark decades of Communism than any western European country (although Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s greatly earned their respect). Now we have welcomed central and eastern Europe home and we must not be too niggardly about the benefits they should enjoy as members of Europe's club.

The relative poverty of the new members should not be regarded by those who live in greater comfort as an outrageous advantage. I am sure that most Slovakian or Estonian workers would happily exchange their own weekly payslip for a German, French or British one. Low pay and low corporate taxes in central and eastern Europe will inevitably attract investment from the old member states, and some movement of jobs. The former French Finance Minister Nicolas Sarkozy (recently reincarnated as the Interior Minister), and other western Europeans, have attacked this as unfair, and have called for less financial support for those countries that do not raise their tax rates to the levels that prevail in some western European countries. Cutting tax is described as tax dumping. The same attacks were made

in the past on Ireland, which took no notice and grew into the Celtic Tiger as a result. The answer, if a country is worried about the impact of tax cuts elsewhere, is to cut taxes on its own businesses. High tax deters investment and job creation and we should not criticize the new members for discovering and acting on this ancient verity. A better economic performance across the board in Europe would reduce the pressure that produces these sorts of argument. It is not central and eastern European workers who threaten the standard of living of western Europe's workers, but western European politicians who obstruct reform and deny its necessity.

Managing the present phase of enlargement will increase enthusiasm among our neighbours to be part of further phases. The countries of south-east Europe are already either on the train, or at least waiting on the station platform, with Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia negotiating membership, and with the countries of the West Balkans cherishing what the bureaucrats call 'a membership perspective'. What is happening in the Balkans is a reminder that the most potent instrument in European foreign policy – our most effective instrument of soft power – is the offer of membership of the EU. It is driving reform in that war-torn region; they all want to join the EU. In earlier times it helped to consolidate democracy in Spain, Portugal and Greece when they shook off authoritarian regimes, and it cemented the process of democratization and economic reform in the countries of central and eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet empire. The EU has proved itself to be an outstanding agent and sustainer of regime change, rather more effective than America for all its flamboyant attachment to the notion. So we have stabilized our neighbourhood and exported democracy and markets. But when does this process reach its limit? Jacques Delors believed that there was something that was not quite membership, which could be offered to countries like Finland, Sweden and Austria. He thought then that every further increase in EU membership would dissipate the political and economic coherence of the EU. But the ambitions of those countries were not to be satisfied by a table in Europe's anteroom. They were not prepared to be bound by rules over which their citizens were denied a say. The democratic logic for their membership was inexorable.

The most worrying aspect of the No votes in the French and Dutch referendums was the evidence of opposition to the recent enlargement of the EU, and of even greater antipathy to any future enlargement. We have a lot of explaining to do if we are to carry public opinion with us on this issue. We cannot simply ride roughshod over public sentiments. But nor can we throw in the towel. The issue is far too important. In the western Balkans, delivering on the promises we have made – to Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo, that if they reform, if they meet our standards, they will be welcome to join the European Union – could ultimately make the difference between war and peace in that region. And this is not a matter of soft-headed do-gooding; it's as much a matter of hard-headed security. Conflict in the Balkans – or elsewhere on our periphery – means refugees on the streets of our cities, and it is likely to result in the need for costly and risky military intervention. Political leadership at its strongest in democracies seeks to mobilize opinion behind policies that voters may initially regard with suspicion or downright hostility. So, if we can persuade our citizens that enlargement should continue, where do we tell them that it should stop? Do we simply continue adding rings of friends and neighbours until we get to the Caspian Sea or the Pacific? What do we say when Israel, Iraq or Azerbaijan come knocking on the door?

Plainly there has to be an end to the process somewhere, and we have tried to put it firmly in place with a so-called Neighbourhood Policy. This seeks to establish a series of neighbourhood agreements with the countries around the southern and eastern littoral of the Mediterranean and the countries to the east of Europe – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia stands out on its own – too big and grand to negotiate such a deal, though erratically enthusiastic about some sort of special relationship with the EU. These agreements offer the countries that are parties to them a share in our market and in some of our policies (research, the environment and so on) in return for implementing democratic and economic reforms. But membership of the EU is not on the table. Our partners are welcome to set up their stall in the marketplace, but not to set foot in the town hall.

It is an imaginative try, but two events will make it difficult to

hold the line, demonstrating that politics is as much an arbiter of decisions on this issue as principle: first, the agreement in 2004 that Turkey can begin to negotiate membership of the EU; and second, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. At my first ever meeting with a foreign minister from Ukraine in 1999, he asked me – doubtless knowing my support even then for Turkey's membership – why I regarded Turkey as a European country but not Ukraine. What, he asked, was so special about Turkey's European vocation and so deficient about Ukraine's? I stumbled through an unconvincing answer, one that convinced me even less in retrospect when I discovered that two of my officials present at the meeting had parents who had been born and worked in what is now Ukraine, but which then had different borders.

The question of the further enlargement of the EU arrives at the most important question of Europe's identity, of what Europe is to become, of what Europe is to represent in the world. Certainly, we cannot enlarge forever. But I do not believe we can stop yet. It has often been said of the EU that managing it is rather like riding a bicycle; you have to go on adding to its tasks, peddling like fury, otherwise the bicycle will come to a halt and you will fall off. As metaphors go, it is far from perfect. After all, you *can* stop a bicycle without falling off. People do it every day. On my new snazzy two-wheeled roadster in Oxford, complete with basket and bell, I even manage it myself. Moreover, as I have said, the aggregation of power in Brussels has necessarily come to a halt. But I believe we have to make progress in another sense, and that it is administratively possible to do so. The narrative of the EU – its *raison d'être* – was to end war in Europe. We have done that on the whole (though we have been shamed by recent ethnic cleansing in the Balkans). We have also ended Europe's divisions; the barbed wire, the barricades and the bunkers have had their day. No one of my daughters' age – from their mid twenties to early thirties – can be blamed for taking all that for granted. 'That's great, Dad. We haven't had a world war for sixty years. So what's next?' There has to be a 'next' – a difficult 'next', which will define our Europe, secure its stability and confirm our place in the world as a post-Christian society with Christian roots, a secular society that takes its values for granted. The 'next' task will

do more than anything else we could attempt to prevent that 'clash of civilizations' predicted by Samuel Huntington and devoutly hoped for by extremists, especially (but not solely) Islamic ones. The reconciliation of France and Germany was the necessary and admirable European accomplishment of the twentieth century; reconciling the West and the Islamic world, with Europe acting as a hinge between the two, is a major task for the twenty-first.

The Turkish application for membership of the EU rouses deep passions and turns up the heat under some of the most sensitive issues in European politics – for example, immigration and the need to build tolerant multi-religious communities in our cities. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing argues that the entry of Turkey would mean the end of Europe. But which Europe does he mean? He is far too intelligent and cultivated to believe that Europe can be properly depicted only as a Christian club, barring the advance of Islam into what the Polish historian Oscar Halecki called 'nothing but a peninsula of Asia', just like the besieged citizens of Vienna in 1683. What is this Europe that Pope Benedict XVI, when a cardinal, identified almost exclusively with the Christian faith? The doctor in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was learned in the works of scientists from Greece, Rome and the medieval Islamic world. Mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and scientific experimentations were some of the things that Christian Europe brought back from its raids on Islamic civilization and that Moslem occupation seeded in Spain and elsewhere. Our identity as Europeans absorbed the heritage and influence of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, and of Islam too. The beginnings of Christianity were rooted in Asia and Africa as well as Europe. Byzantium was as lineal a descendant of the Roman Empire as western Europe. How should we seek to explain to the Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchs of the Armenian Orthodox Church that they are outside the Christian Club? Do we write the Orthodox Churches out of Europe's history alongside the Moslems, and how do we pass over the extraordinary Jewish contribution – out of all proportion to their beleaguered, often vilified numbers – to what we call European civilization? The proposition that Europe can be defined by religion is not only false but dangerous. In many ways, the EU is a reaction against the idea that we can define

ourselves by ethnicity or religion, and thus define others as beyond consideration.

Whether or not Turkey should be a member of the EU surely depends on three things. First, is Turkey European? If we were simply to allow aspiration to be our guide, the answer would have to be a resounding Yes. Turkey has resolutely steered a European course ever since Atatürk decreed the end of the Ottoman Sultanate in 1922. The feeling runs deep and has been promoted with unrelenting vigour by successive Turkish governments. The legacy of Atatürk, born in Thessaloniki and convinced – despite the condescension of the European powers of the day – that his country's future lay to the west, is ever present. And his presence is sometimes more than historical – any meeting in any Turkish government office takes place under the cool gaze of the Ghazi, immaculate in determinedly Western suit and tie. Does Turkey respect our principles – of democracy, liberty, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and so on? This is where substantial doubts have properly been raised in the past by the treatment of minorities and by the role of the military in politics. Those questions were very much more pertinent in 1963 when the then President of the European Commission signed the Ankara Association Agreement with Turkey, declaring, 'Turkey is part of Europe. This is the deepest possible meaning of this operation which brings, in the most appropriate way conceivable in our time, the confirmation of a geographical reality as well as a historical truism that has been valid for several centuries.' Many Turkish observers would be astonished if that was deemed to be less true now, under a government that has carried on and even redoubled a programme of constitutional reform designed to entrench democracy, promote the protection of minorities and limit the area of the military in government. This helps make them as reluctant as were Austrians, Finns and Swedes to accept some status that denies them full membership of the Union. In their eyes, Turkey has grappled with its existential question, against a background of economic uncertainty and terrorist activity, and has unequivocally chosen the European course. How, they ask, can some Europeans fail to recognize that?

America does not always make it easy to convince European doubters about Turkey's embrace of democratic values. It is aggravating

that American presidents regularly offer Turkey EU membership, as though it was for them to bestow this gift, and that the diplomatic pressure from Washington – both in public and in private – on Turkey's behalf is so relentless. But the real damage is done when it seems as though America's only interest is not democracy in Turkey, or the enhancement of the EU's role, but Washington's own security agenda. When, for example, Turkey's parliament in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq refused to accede to America's request to launch operations from southern Turkey, the then American Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was dispatched to Ankara, where he scolded Turkey's military command for not taking a tougher line with their democratic leaders. Mr Wolfowitz is too clever a fellow to think that this is the way democracies behave, and he presumably does not believe that the EU could welcome as a member a country where the generals told the elected government what to do. Democracy should be respected, even when it is inconvenient for the Pentagon. It was a particular surprise that Mr Wolfowitz should have undertaken this mission, since he is one of those neoconservatives associated with the argument that the Iraq war was the foundation stone of a broader strategy to spread democracy throughout the region.

The second issue to consider is that Turkey lies on the cusp between the current EU and the Islamic world. Throughout its history, Istanbul – Constantinople as it was – has been a bridge between worlds. At one time, and particularly when western Europe itself was a more savage place, Turks and Turkey were admittedly the very incarnation of the threatening outsider. But that was when 'Europe' and 'Christendom' were (however imperfect and inaccurately) synonymous. Are we to return to that exclusive and warped idea of who and what we are? Today, there is a simple geopolitical question to answer. Can we afford to ignore the continuing importance of Turkey as a bridge between worlds? What message do we send out to the world beyond the bridge if we now shun a neighbour who has demonstrated the falsity of the case that Islam and democracy do not mix? Turkey has done pretty well all that we ask of the Islamic world on our borders (much of which has been done already by our Islamic friends in southern and south-eastern Asia). What are the consequences for those countries around the Mediterranean, what effects will there be

on the moderate activists for democracy and reform, if we make it clear that regardless of our promises since 1963, and regardless of its own efforts – if they succeed – to become a pluralist democracy under the rule of law, Turkey is not welcome in our club because it is Islamic? We should make no mistake. However we were to couch the message of rejection, that is how it would look – and if we are honest, that is how it would in reality be.

Third, there is the question of Islam within our own borders. There are probably around 12 million Muslims living in western Europe: approaching 4 million in France, 2.5 million in Germany, and 1.75 million in the UK. Their religion is the fastest growing in the world. In some of our countries, Islamic religious observance outstrips that in the traditional Christian Churches. I doubt whether this number is likely to be massively increased by immigration, and if Turkey were to join the EU their terms of membership in ten or twenty years would doubtless include some constraints on the speed with which they could exercise complete freedom of movement within our borders. Immigration to Europe raises questions about how much assistance we give our neighbours to grow and prosper, but above all it calls attention to what we can and are doing to encourage better community relations. I have no trouble with the argument that we should have tight border controls. Europe is far smaller than the United States and the pressure on available space is more intense, as anyone who lives in south-east England will attest. (The population density of the five most densely populated north-eastern states in the USA is 40 per cent of England's.) We should encourage immigration for particular labour market requirements, but we should not kid ourselves that immigration could solve our demographic problems. The number of migrants required to improve significantly the age dependency ratios in Europe would be so large as to be unmanageable in political, environmental, social and economic terms. But a firm hand on future immigration, and a generous approach to the economic requirements of our southern neighbours, is entirely consistent with our imaginative support for what Soheib Bencheikh El Hocine, Grand Mufti of Marseilles, has called 'active cohabitation, not just a juxtaposition of closed communities'.

Fear of the Islamic communities within the EU has been exacerbated

by September 11th and the events following it – for example, the discovery of 'sleeper cells' of al Qaeda in cities like Hamburg and the bombings in London. In the Netherlands and France, and to some extent Britain too, we have also seen assaults, not on the Christian nature of our European societies, but on something that has not always been synonymous with Christianity – the tolerance that we prize above almost all else. It is the same tolerance that welcomes different ethnic, religious and cultural groups to Europe and allows them to practise their own rites and customs provided they do not assault the broader tolerance we prize and incorporate in our rule of law. This tolerance helps delineate our pluralism. But to convince doubters, to win the argument on the streets, in the homes and in the mosques, we not only have to make the right economic and social policy choices in deprived areas, we also have to show that the standards we cherish, and on whose acceptance we insist, inform our relations with those outside as well as inside our frontiers. We will not win the battle for tolerance in Amsterdam or Paris or Manchester, if we show signs of double standards in the way we deal with Islamic neighbours. There is a tendency for some American commentators, when they witness tensions between the majority and minority Islamic communities in Europe – rows about headscarves, or freedom of speech, for example – to react with a sort of 'told you so' reproach. Now, they suggest, you see what we Americans are trying to do in the Middle East. But, damn it, this is our neighbourhood that is being talked about; our neighbourhood in which we have been painstakingly pursuing a reform agenda for years (as I will argue in a later chapter). What is geo-strategically important for the US is rather more simply and directly our own backyard. Throw petrol around there (excuse the appropriateness of the metaphor) and we in Europe are the first to get caught in the flames.

My plea then is for Europe to define itself as a symbol of tolerance – democratic, prosperous and free – able to bridge civilizations, to prevent division (geographical and cultural) between the West and the Near East, and to demonstrate the way in which what we stand for can transform societies with very different histories and cultures. Turkish accession should be seized as an opportunity to give the EU a new dynamism and purpose.

We know that globalization destroys boundaries, and in the process raises fears – fears about the loss of our cultural anchors and identity. With the blurring of the geographical boundaries of nation states, what else can continue to bind us together as citizens at ease with the identity of the community in which we live? Can we turn the tolerance of diversity in an open society into a bond far tighter than cultural introversion and the exclusion of difference? Can we make tolerance the element that defines our European community, our 'European feeling'? This is Europe's challenge in the next few years, bigger, more important and far, far more difficult than spelling out competences and delineating institutional boundaries in a constitutional treaty. We can haggle and barter in Brussels, but it may be that it is in Istanbul that we shall write the next chapter in our European story.

6

Strong Nouns, Weak Verbs

And on the issue of their charm depended
A land laid waste, with all its young men slain,
Its women weeping, and its towns in terror.

'Embassy' in *Sonnets from China*,
W. H. Auden

Travelling home to Worcestershire on the train in the 1930s, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's study of *The Times* was interrupted by a question from a fellow traveller. 'Weren't you at Harrow in the eighties?' he was asked. 'Yes,' replied Baldwin. 'Thought so. So was I,' said his Harrovian contemporary. 'So what have you been doing with yourself since then?' It is a story with which I identify. When I returned to London from over five years of incessantly circumnavigating the globe as Europe's Commissioner for External Relations, I found that my years of service in the cause of 'CFSP' were not uppermost in many people's recollections: 'The C-What?' 'Didn't you used to be Chris Patten?' was admittedly only said to me once, but it did catch the flavour of the moment. For most people, I had been last seen departing from Hong Kong. Since then, there was hardly anywhere from which I had not departed – from Moscow to Montevideo – and sometimes my departure followed all too rapidly my arrival. I recall a crazy visit to Rio de Janeiro for a morning meeting to negotiate (unsuccessfully as it turned out) a deal with four Latin American foreign ministers. One night there, south; the next night, north. No wonder I have a bad back. One year my diary princess – a young

Welsh woman whose calm and boundless competence included a creative mastery of the world's air routes – calculated that I had got on and off over one hundred and eighty aeroplanes. 'Cabin crew – cross check, doors to manual' were the words I had heard far more frequently for five years than 'Welcome home'!

For what purpose and to what end were these Odyssean travels made? Was Europe or the world better off? What did the acronym, for which I had consumed so many airline cashew nuts, mean – and what impact might it have had on the lives of British or European citizens?

By the mid-1990s, European governments had concluded that Europe had to aspire to a status greater than that of a glorified and successful customs union. That hope had in fact long been in the script. As one of the two most powerful economic and trade blocs in the world, European leaders had begun in the 1980s to discuss more honestly and seriously the gulf between the European Union's economic and political strength. We described ourselves in the self-lacerating cliché of the time as an economic giant but a political pigmy. This was not wholly true. Individual member states still counted for something in the world. Four of them, after all, were members of the G7/G8 and two – France and Britain – had nuclear weapons and were permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Several were major aid donors and regular contributors of their armed forces to UN peacekeeping efforts. Most were members of NATO, whose battle-free triumph over Soviet imperialism was imminent. In different corners of the world, the clout of individual members mattered – Spain in Latin America, Belgium in central Africa and so on. But there was no distinctive EU voice or presence at the world's conference tables, nor specifically European contributions to crisis prevention and the resolution of conflicts. If European countries were able to act together, the argument went, we would be able to do more than individual countries acting on their own; we could draw on our varied resources, and our different experiences and histories, to promote solutions to global problems.

British politicians, including those on the right like Margaret Thatcher and Michael Portillo, urged Europeans to do more to share America's security burdens, and it had always been an American hope

that an integrated Europe would help it to discharge its global role. Throughout the 1980s, ambitions were stirred but nothing much was achieved. The name for the wannabe European foreign policy was 'European Political Cooperation'. EPC meant that no major subject on the international political agenda could avoid discussion by Europe's foreign ministers and their diplomats. There was no hiding place from Brussels' attention. Europe had an opinion on everything, though life being what it is, clever textual compromises between the different positions of sovereign states sometimes rendered these opinions bland and even feeble. Europe's policies were declared in the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council that brought foreign ministers together each month. Looking through these conclusions today, one is struck by the contrast between the strong adjectives and nouns, and the weak verbs. Europe talked a passable game, but no one got their shorts muddy. We did not do too much harm (except in the Balkans), and we did not do much good.

Aspiration was transformed into action of a sort by a number of events – world-changing, conscience-arousing, bloody and embarrassing. First, there was the collapse of Russia's Communist empire in Europe and the immediate consequences of that historic event. Europe could no longer define itself as freedom's vanguard against Marxist tyranny. All the old certainties provided by the barbarians at the gate melted away. We now had to cope with the results of the ending of Europe's division. We found a policy to support the emergence of open markets and democracy in central and eastern Europe – the enlargement of the EU. This has been the most successful foreign policy pursued by Europe.

It was not only the swift collapse of Communism that pushed Europe into going beyond a foreign policy composed of communiqués. In one outpost of the Communist world, though not a Soviet colony, the 1990s brought the sort of chaos that Europe believed had been laid to rest in our history books. Yugoslavia after Tito and Marxism reverted to that state recalled by Rebecca West as inseparable from her earliest memories of liberalism. Leafing through piles of dusty Liberal pamphlets in second-hand bookshops, the subject of the Balkans would regularly recur. 'Violence', she wrote in 1941, in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, was 'all I knew of the Balkans'. 'Balkan', she

went on to note, was a term of abuse in France, suggesting a type of barbarism. The descent in the 1990s into bloody war – primitive brutality, siege, ethnic cleansing, burning families from their homes and inside their homes – suggested that the French slang was all too accurate. All this was happening on the EU's doorstep, in a country to which Europeans could drive in a matter of hours. Dubrovnik under siege, bombarded from the heights above by Serbian mortars and artillery, was where Europeans had browned themselves in the sun not long before. The massacres were not kept under wraps, only to be discovered well after the event by intrepid journalists. They were shown nightly on our televisions.

The hatreds that consumed Yugoslavia were cousins of the xenophobic nationalism that the EU had in part come into existence to prevent. Here was a chance for Europe to exert itself, to show what it had become, to export and if necessary impose its values on another European country where their overthrow was so hideously destructive. We should not have needed America to give a lead, and anyway for Washington this was a faraway country of which it knew little and wanted to know even less. Secretary of State James Baker did not believe America had 'a dog in this fight' and his successor, Lawrence Eagleburger, opined in 1992, that 'until the Bosnians, Serbs and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it'. So we were on our own and rather gloried in it. This was Europe's hour, as one foreign minister memorably observed: Europe's hour and Europe's humiliation.

What should we Europeans have done in the Balkans? Should we have tried to prevent the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, or sought to guide that process without conflict? Should we, we wondered, get involved or turn our backs, lest intervention suck us into military commitments, casualties and expense? Should we work to resolve this latest posing of the Eastern Question by another Congress of Berlin, negotiating new internal borders – a proposal made by the Dutch in 1991, but not taken up? We sent emissaries. They made recommendations. We ignored them. We rained communiqués down on the heads of Milosevic and Tudjman and the war criminals who marauded across the country. We placed those of our forces who were deployed to protect civilians in the intolerable moral position of being silent

witnesses to rape and murder. In Bosnia alone perhaps 220,000 people died. The concentration camp made a return visit to the continent that had invented it, or at least had borrowed the idea in a horribly big way from Britain's Boer War experience.

Because our foreign policy was solely declaratory – like the Pope, we had no divisions – even sensible proposals had no traction. The fact that the US was sitting on its hands was more important in the region than the EU's puny efforts. US inactivity was decisive; EU activity was irrelevant. And ironically, the most damning critics of EU incapacity were the strongest opponents of European integration. Out of this debacle came one thing at least: the determination that Europe should not find itself in the same position again, a determination so far only tested at the margins and certainly not yet proven.

The meetings of European leaders in Maastricht in 1991 and Amsterdam in 1997 agreed to establish a Common Foreign and Security Policy (the aforementioned CFSP). By the second of these meetings the Balkans was much in everyone's mind, as were the horrors of Rwanda and Somalia where, again, we had stood aside with others while crises turned predictably and savagely into disasters. The Amsterdam Council made the CFSP more actionable, with the decision to appoint a High Representative for the policy, together with his own secretariat.

The fact that the policy to be pursued should be common, and not (like the currency) single, and that the Council of Foreign Ministers should be in the driving seat, said something fundamental about the nature both of foreign policy and of the EU. Foreign and security policy goes right to the heart of what it means to be a nation state. It raises different issues from, say, trade policy. If foreign policy goes wrong, it may lead to decisions about the use of force. Diplomacy can be the only alternative to death, as was pointed out by W. H. Auden in the poem quoted at the head of this chapter. It should be inscribed over the door of every foreign ministry. In Auden's poem, diplomats in 'a conversation of the highly trained' seek to avert crisis:

> Far off, no matter what good they intended,
> The armies waited for a verbal error
> With all the instruments for causing pain . . .

When it comes to using those instruments, the governments of Europe's nation states make the key decisions and stand over the consequences. Trade policy, monetary policy, even (controversial though it is) the issue of a country's banknotes, do not touch on the core of a nation's sense of community in the same way as a policy that can lead to men and women being asked to risk their lives. Parents would not be happy to allow their sons or daughters to risk injury or death on the say-so of a commissioner in Brussels. Europe is not a country.

On the other hand, countries in Europe may conclude that their national interests are best served by acting together; that way, they have more influence, make more impact, achieve more. So they aim to work in common. To have a single policy, not a common one, would imply either a denial of the bonds that create a national sense of community or the fraying of those bonds and their replacement by a wider sense of loyalty and attachment. This may be a nice idea but there is not much sign of it happening yet. For the foreseeable future, Europe will have twenty-five foreign ministers and twenty-five foreign ministries committed to trying to work together, but not trying to do themselves out of a job.

Two officials were responsible for implementing the common foreign policy: the EU High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana (former Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister and NATO Secretary General) and myself, the Commissioner for External Relations. Solana was the representative of all the foreign ministers; I had charge of the Commission's external services – development and cooperation programmes, and the coordination of all the activities that had a major bearing on other countries. As far as I was concerned, Solana occupied the front office and I was in charge of the back office of European foreign policy. Some of my staff did not like this analogy. They would have preferred me to have made a grab for foreign policy, trying to bring as much of it as possible into the orbit of the Commission. This always seemed to me to be wrong in principle and likely to be counterproductive in practice. Foreign policy should not in my view, as I have just argued, be treated on a par with the single market. It is inherently different. To attempt to grab foreign policy for the

Commission would have courted humiliating rebuffs from ministers in the Council. If they were obliged to choose between backing Javier Solana or me, there was only one possible outcome. In any event, playing entirely within the rules, the Commission was in an extremely strong position. We were 'associated' with the conduct and formation of the common policy, and we managed many of the instruments that sustained it and gave it teeth. The more sensibly and competently we did these jobs, the more influence we would have in making policy: we were responsible for trade and economic cooperation and for environment policy; we managed large development programmes both for the poorest countries and those where Europe had big political interests, for instance in the Balkans and the Middle East. Increasingly, the EU was trying to act jointly to deter organized crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration; we managed complex relationships with other countries covering regulatory convergence, transport, customs cooperation, research and education agreements, health and consumer safety rules. All these matters represent the detailed and sometimes prosaic, but important, business that makes up external relations today. It was not always very sexy. But at least in the back office, the levers were connected to machinery; pull them and something normally happened, if sometimes too slowly.

Moreover, the back office often provided most of the content of a policy – or, at least, most of the content that worked. For years, since the mid-1990s, Europe had been attempting through what was called the Barcelona Process to create a free market around the Mediterranean, and to promote political and economic reform in the region. The policy was based on a network of partnership agreements between the EU and individual countries, from the Maghreb to the Mashraq. We spent over three billion euros a year on this policy in the form of grants and loans (for economic and social development, training, infrastructure and the promotion of good governance). The policy was led and managed by the Commission. It supported the policy positions taken by member states in our relations with the Arab League. What else were we doing that mattered as much in the region as this? In Palestine, we drove the process of reform in the Palestinian Authority. Without our help the Authority would probably have collapsed, and would certainly have retained all the corrupt practices

associated with President Arafat and his court of cronies. We talked a lot about the Middle East. We attended meetings. We flew hither and yon. I am not sure that in five years we could count many achievements for all that effort, beyond the fact that the makings of a government for a Palestinian state still existed. But without the EU's assistance, anarchy in the West Bank and Gaza would have had no rival. (I will return to this subject in the next chapter.) The back office also provided the bones of our strategy in the Balkans – the so-called Stabilization and Association Process (clearly not a name invented by an advertising agency copywriter) that sought to buttress the commitment to reform in the region with the prospect of membership of the EU for those who lasted the course of this policy. In short, the Commission had and has plenty to do, and should not feel sidelined in foreign policy.

There were inevitably tensions between the institutions that served front and back offices. The secretariats that worked for the Council of Ministers and its High Representative for the CFSP resented the Commission's access to useful things like money. Some of its members would have liked to take over bits of the Commission's responsibilities whenever it suited them – money here, the negotiation of an agreement there – and move on as the world's headlines changed, leaving bureaucratic confusion and policy discontinuity in their wake. Early in my time as a commissioner, I produced a note for my colleagues in the Commission on the difficulties we had playing our part in foreign and security policy. The note was distinguished by the elegant and witty clarity of my *chef de cabinet*'s prose style. Elegance, wit and clarity were not usually the hallmarks of Commission documents. The result was foreseeable. The document was leaked and gave offence for correctly noting, among other things, that foreign policy was about more than photo opportunities, and that the Commission was always likely to be treated like a maid, expected to serve the meal and then clear up the dirty dishes when the guests had departed.

The institutional architecture for the CFSP was plainly, to use Brussels language, suboptimal. To make it work required the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations to get on well together. Javier Solana and I are not totally lacking in *amour propre* though I suspect that the fires of political ambition in both our

breasts had burned low by the time we were thrown together. We genuinely liked each other – Spanish Socialist and British Tory – and simply made things work, despite the advice and attentions of some of the institutional warriors in both camps. In over five years, and thousands of media reports, no one was able to point to a single occasion when one of us had contradicted the other – a tribute, I believe, to our common sense. It did sometimes require saintly behaviour by both of us, for which I hope that our reward will one day come, if not in this world then perhaps in the CFSP-free next. Solana is ubiquitous and charming, an intelligent and well-read networker of prodigious energy.

The EU Constitutional Treaty proposed dealing with the institutional disjuncture by merging the jobs of High Representative and Commissioner for External Relations. This is called double-hatting; to sound a little theological, it is proposed that two functions should reside in one person. The High Representative would also be the Vice-President of the Commission. He would chair the Council, overseeing foreign and security policy and would at the same time take responsibility for coordinating the Commission's services that bolster Europe's external role. He would stand at the confluence of two streams of activity: the first, political and security, which would remain in the hands of the member states; the second, those functions which the member states have already assigned to the Commission. This Even Higher Representative would be extremely busy, though presumably he would be provided with deputies covering both sorts of function. It is not a perfect piece of institutional engineering, an uneasy compromise between the minority in the convention that drew up the draft treaty and some member states (who wanted to go further in giving foreign policy a distinctively European personality and management) and the majority keen to preserve the previous division in responsibilities. Despite the dumping of the draft treaty, some arrangement like this is likely one day to emerge.

How would a double-hatted foreign policy chief – the word bipetasic has not yet been used, but it can only be a matter of time – relate to and deal with foreign ministers? This is the most problematic area of all. He or, since there are now so many women foreign ministers, sooner or later she, would preside over the Council that makes policy.

I am not sure this is wise; to be responsible both for chairing meetings and for providing their main input would create some scratchiness. Looking around the table at twenty-five other foreign ministers, would the High Representative be their boss – or just their representative? What would they think the answer is in the Quai d'Orsay or in Britain's Foreign Office? Many years ago Henry Kissinger asked his famous question: 'If I want to find out what Europe thinks, whose telephone number do I call?' Ironically, there have been plenty of times in recent years when Europeans could have asked the same question about America. Should we telephone the State Department, the Pentagon, or the National Security Council in the White House? And when we got through, would anyone know the answer? During the first Bush administration, for example, Kremlinology had been replaced by Washingtonology. Who owned this or that piece of policy turf? But so far as Europe is concerned, is the number to ring in future going to be the High Representative's? What will the German, British or French foreign ministers think of that? Take the recent European negotiations with Iran over constraining any nuclear ambitions it might have. The earliest European overtures to Iran were made by Solana, myself and successive foreign ministers in the presidency of the Council. We visited Tehran to have Machiavelli quoted approvingly at us by President Khatami and to be asked by Foreign Minister Kharrazi whether we would like to conduct meetings with him and his colleagues in English or French. When the issue got bigger and more significant in 2003, the 'Big Three' foreign ministers took over – 'the three tenors' we called them – not even bothering to take Solana or a representative of the country in the presidency of the Council with them to Tehran (though Solana is now fully involved in the policy). Will this instinctive reaction in London, Paris and Berlin change if double-hatting occurs? An American Secretary of State will continue to have to make several telephone calls. What matters most is not whether there are several telephone numbers but whether there is a similar response or message from whoever is on the line.

The dominance of the Big Three goes to the heart of the question of the effectiveness of European efforts to make foreign and security policy. I mean no disrespect to the twenty-two other member states,

but there is no European policy on a big issue unless France, Germany and Britain are on side. Unless *they* work together, nothing else will work. It is as clear and simple as that. Of course, others can make important contributions, and the addition of new members constantly adds to the insights that can be offered about parts of the world with which the other member states may be unfamiliar. But without the 'big three', there is no policy.

That was most evident over Iraq, which also exposed some of the weaknesses of the present system of trying to make European foreign policy. The subject of Iraq was scarcely debated in the Council: as the arguments hotted up elsewhere – at the UN in New York, on the telephone lines between London, Paris and Berlin – we pretended in Brussels that there was nothing amiss. The great Iraqi elephant sat in the corner of the room, and we edged nervously past it pretending it was not there. 'Elephant? What elephant?' There was a sort of code that was usually observed, which dictated that no foreign minister should say anything too direct or blunt that might embarrass a colleague. To their credit, one or two ministers (for example, Finland's and Ireland's) occasionally broke the unwritten rule and raised a contentious issue. It was a little like committing some physical indecorum in a great aunt's drawing room – maybe excusable but not very nice. All this made for a very friendly atmosphere, but meetings were not always as useful as they should have been. Sometimes they happened principally because it was that time of the month. Maybe making foreign policy is always like this, with the cut and thrust of debate confined to smoothly clever diplomats and kept away from ministers. Maybe (and this much is certainly true) it is early days. After all, the EU was in a sense created as an alternative to foreign policy. Our policy for years had been to biff our neighbours; now, we were in bed with them all. And maybe – the biggest 'maybe' of all – making foreign policy with fifteen or twenty-five is such a public activity that it is bound to involve more genteel play-acting than real-life, kitchen-sink drama.

Meetings of the Council were certainly large. The ministers accompanied by a senior adviser sat at the table; the ranks of Tuscany milled behind, not raising a cheer but conducting their own diplomatic activities directly with one another – amending a text here, negotiating

a compromise there – or by mobile telephone. (Some telephones had distinctive calls; Joschka Fischer, for instance, was summoned by an American cookhouse bugler, presumably not a paid-up member of the Green Party.) Gradually over the years, the number present was cut down so that instead of having, say, 150 or more in the room, there were only 50 or 60. It was an improvement, and conducive to doing rather more serious business. The size of the gathering meant that the most sensitive business was usually done at lunch, at which only the ministers themselves were present. Their diplomatic advisers hung about in the corridor outside, hoping that their minister would keep a good note of what was going on. I was very bad at this myself. My own officials usually had to make do with the official record, and my occasional anecdotes. I often recalled a colleague from the 1980s whose manuscript note of such a meeting simply read 'Mr X spoke well for Britain'.

Restricted meetings, at which only ministers are supposed to be present, can lead to bizarre ruses. At the Maastricht meeting, with a session at which only presidents and prime ministers were in the room, John Kerr (then Britain's ambassador to the EU) managed to position himself at one crucial moment under John Major's table. The nearest thing I saw to this occurred at a meeting between European and Asian ministers. On that occasion, ministers were dining at an inner table, with one official per delegation seated behind. At one point, the Japanese minister – a feisty woman – began reading from a script that bore no relationship to the subject under discussion. Her official crept across the carpet from his place to hers, holding the appropriate brief (not, admittedly, Labrador-like in his teeth) and, having arrived under his minister's table, placed the relevant speaking note on top of the one she was reading before reversing on all fours to his seat.

One result of so much of the sensitive and interesting business at Council meetings being done at lunch was that some ministers were barely present for any other part of the proceedings. They would arrive in the late morning and depart in early afternoon. This meant in effect that foreign ministers, perhaps inadvertently, gave up control of the overall coordination of the European agenda. In the 1980s, foreign ministers had been given the responsibility for resolving single-market blockages in other Councils because only they had the clout

to do it. By the 2000s they had lost that clout, and had even lost the primitive urge to fight for it. This reflects the extent to which traditional, high 'foreign policy' has been sucked into the offices of presidents and prime ministers, while European policy is no longer regarded as 'foreign'.

Consistency and continuity in foreign policy are difficult when a new calamity can always knock you off course; another day's headline can impose short-term decisions that threaten long-term objectives. The imminence of high-level meetings can also drive decision-making in a manner that is unhelpful or precipitate. As a manifestation of its arrival on the world stage, the EU had put in place a calendar of summits and bilateral meetings at senior level. We had summits with America, Canada, China, India, Russia, Japan – sometimes twice a year. There were regular meetings with our Mediterranean Arab and Israeli friends, Latin Americans, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union, Australia, New Zealand, the lot. The more senior the level of the meeting, the greater the pressure that we should take some gift to the table to confirm the pretence that we were having a good and useful meeting. Russia was particularly adept at understanding how to play this game against our own interests.

Summits, meetings, visits – much of the routine for foreign policy practitioners involves a stately progress from one airport VIP lounge to another. The issues covered by a minister's brief can be fascinating, and when you get the occasional opportunity to do a real negotiation it pumps up the adrenalin. But too often, the interesting business has been done before the arrival of the so-called principals. Officials have conjured 'deliverables' from the mush of unresolved business between the parties – something for you, something for me – to advertise success and a further 'thickening up' of the relationship. There will probably also have been days and nights of haggling over a communiqué, so that nothing contentious has to be resolved when ministers arrive with their entourages of advisers, secretaries and spokesmen. The infinitives are already split; the qualifying clauses appended; the clichés added to taste. Meetings can easily degenerate into the reading of speaking notes to people who are not listening, with occasional allegedly informal exchanges of view that turn too easily into *café du commerce*, a slightly superior cab driver's world

view – '. . . and another thing'. But travelling the world, albeit at a frenetic pace, seeing at least something of other places from the window of a speeding car, is a more inherently interesting and privileged activity for a politician (though not necessarily more valuable) than trying to manage social security or immigration policy. And you find yourself sitting on the sofa with more celebrities, famous and infamous, than can be claimed by even the usual run of chat-show hosts. My first experience of this came when I was Britain's Minister for Overseas Development, on my initial visit to Islamabad. Pakistan's then military dictator, General Zia, gave me an hour of his time a couple of years before his aeroplane was mysteriously blown out of the sky in 1988. The General, whose moustache and gap-toothed smile bore an uncanny resemblance to the British actor Terry-Thomas, was seeking to make a point to me about Pakistani politics. He began his comment, 'As I said to the late Mr Bhutto.' With a chill down the back of my neck, I recalled that the General had not long before hanged Prime Minister Bhutto, whom he had overthrown. Fascinating as many one-to-one meetings have been, nothing since has given me the same frisson as that first outing.

How do you get any consistency when policy is made by twenty-five ministers all busy flying around the world? I tried to approach the question crab-wise by encouraging them to discuss our budget – the resources that we had to support our policy – and to check whether our spending priorities matched our political ones. Robin Cook was keen on the idea but otherwise I did not make much progress; foreign ministers are not very interested in budgets, which is one reason why they get pushed around so much by finance ministers who see foreign ministry resources as an easy target for cost-cutting. This has led in Britain to the development of an obsession in the Foreign Office with management, in order presumably to demonstrate to the Treasury that every penny is well spent. This is pretty pointless. The Treasury is a bad manager of its own resources, as the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts would attest. Moreover, no manifestations of spreadsheet culture will ever convince the Treasury that diplomats do anything more useful than nibble canapés and drink one another's Sancerre. It is sad to see experienced diplomats, trained to draft brief and lucid telegrams about the latest political development

in Serbia or Suriname, terrorized into filling in questionnaires from management consultants by the yard. In the days of the Heath Government, *Private Eye* used to run a strip cartoon called 'Heath-Co', satirizing the Prime Minister's alleged obsession with management mumbo-jumbo; there were long discussions about the operation of the automatic beaker disposal unit. It is sad to see the Foreign Office going the same way. Its best minds are required these days to pursue change management for a changing world, narrowly avoiding as they do so cascading objectives (how painful if you get hit by one of those), and seeking to find their way through their strategic resource accounting matrix. To make it all worse, diplomats are expected, under Orwellian pressure, to evince enthusiasm for this work. It brings to mind Wellington's letter, while he was trying to drive Napoleon out of Spain, in which he admitted to 'hideous confusion' about how to deal with raspberry jam in his accounts. Ambassadors should stand and fight, but I fear all may be lost already. I was recently invited to a Foreign Office 'breakout session'; I had previously thought it was the Home Office's Prisons Department that did breakouts.

We were consistent about one thing at least in Brussels. When we did not have a policy, we would go on a visit, or send Javier Solana, or both him and me, or the so-called Troika. Troikas had, not surprisingly, usually come in threes. They had consisted of the foreign minister currently presiding (for six months) over the Council, his predecessor and his successor. They came to mean the presiding foreign minister, Solana and myself – with perhaps one or two others thrown in. I once spent an interesting week flying around the Congo and its neighbouring states with the Belgian and Spanish foreign ministers, the EU's Special Representative for the African Great Lakes and Javier Solana. So the number was flexible, but the purpose usually the same. An active presence on the ground was too often an alternative to having anything very useful to say or do once we had got there. This is what I had meant by foreign policy as photo opportunity. If we succeeded in getting as far as the conference table, the European interest was apparently served.

Despite all these problems, the positive aspects of our attempts to launch a European policy far outweighed the negative, especially when one considered the complexity of the whole business. We were trying

to make policy with, and for, fifteen and then twenty-five member states. What is surprising is not how much we did not achieve, but how much we did – though in my judgement there was one big failure, Israel and Palestine, and one less justifiable missed opportunity, Russia. The overall balance sheet is positive, an outcome that was not inevitable and owed much to a growing sense that Europe did have a distinctive contribution to make in international affairs.

The EU's contribution to international affairs has been especially evident in the part of Europe that saw our terrible humiliation in the 1990s, the Balkans. By the end of the decade, we had developed a clear strategy for the region and by and large we managed to stick to it. Taking as our model the way we had related to the newly liberated countries of central and eastern Europe a few years before, we offered the countries of the former Yugoslavia, plus Albania, the prospect of becoming members of the Union. If they started to put their countries in order, politically and economically, we would enter into agreements with them, similar to the Europe Agreements that had performed the same function when our ten new member states were candidate countries. The successful conclusion of these agreements would unlock the door to the commencement of negotiations for membership of the EU. We would assist their post-conflict stabilization through associating them with us, and the more closely their governance and economy resembled our own, the faster we would move to bring them into the EU.

We embarked on this policy in the wake of the death of the nationalist leader in Croatia, Franjo Tudjman – even with Milosevic still presiding over his gang of criminals and hard-line generals in Belgrade. The Kosovo war had just ended and our first task, partly in order to show that the campaign had been justified, was to begin the task of reconstruction there, working with and through the UN mission that was charged with administering the territory.

My first visit to the capital, Pristina, in the autumn of 1999, revealed the scale of the task. Kosovo had been badly knocked about by the fighting; everywhere there were burned-out houses and farm buildings, bombed churches and mosques, wrecked military vehicles. On top of the war damage, there was overwhelming evidence of years of

neglect and underinvestment. Kosovo might have been regarded by the Serbs as the Albanian jewel in their crown, but clearly they had not cared very much about how well it was governed and cared for. One of our earliest tasks was to attempt to provide a few hours of electricity every day. I have toured all too many power stations during my career, from Khartoum to central India. Most of them appear much the same to a history graduate: but not Kosovo's two plants. They looked as though they had been assembled using the larger bits from a car boot sale. The blackened boilers grunted and squealed in grimy cavernous halls. We were shown around by a regiment of electricity workers, plainly a recently recruited cash nexus of Albanians replacing Serbs on a welfare payroll. Outside the power stations' main buildings, in between piles of junk, a few end of season Iceberg roses struggled to remind us that there were nicer and better things in the world than clapped-out power plants. (A couple of years later, I saw a similar contrast in the shadow of the grim nuclear plants at Chernobyl in the Ukraine. A wild bitch played with nine beautiful puppies in the brambles and scrub surrounding that dreadful, murderous place.)

We were the main donors in Kosovo, and faced an early problem. How could we spend our assistance rapidly and reasonably well? Not a week passed without Madeleine Albright (then American Secretary of State) or her Balkans frontman, Jim Dobbins, telephoning to find out how we were translating promises into contracts, plans and real-time spending. Our past performance did not give them much confidence. This was the first big test of our ability to run things competently, and we passed it – speeding up delivery by cutting corners where we could, setting up the European Agency for Reconstruction, and giving the excellent officials sent out to manage it delegated authority and political cover. We did about as much as we could to restore infrastructure, rebuild homes and provide a skeleton government. But the unresolved question of Kosovo's long-term status – the tensions between the majority Albanian and minority Serbian communities, and the hold of organized criminals over much of what there was of commercial life – deterred the inward investment that the territory still needs if it is to have any chance of picking itself up.

Kosovo provided a paradigm of the problems we were to face elsewhere, and will continue to face, in trying to rebuild a failed state after conflict or after internal breakdown. First, how do you turn donors' pledges of support into real and useful investment? The end of a war these days (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq) or the launch of a peace process (Palestine, Sri Lanka) is followed by a donors' conference at which well-wishers flap cheque books at one another in rival displays of generosity. Unpicking the offers is the first problem – grants are mixed up with loans, old money with new, multi-year promises with single year. The objective of these conferences is never to get an accurate figure for real donor commitments but to tot up the largest figure possible. Then comes the task of turning that figure into spending on the ground. In the time lag between pledge, contract and expenditure, history packs its bags and moves on to the next political disaster and the next donors' conference. The UN – particularly through its Development Programme (UNDP) – should keep a close, public tally on what is promised and when it is actually spent. Those who regularly promise but do not spend should be identified.

When this first wall of spending hits a decrepit economy, it can have a hugely distorting effect, not least as local employees are recruited to work for well-meaning, incoming agencies at external salaries. Schoolteachers suddenly discover that it pays better to drive the car for an aid official than to teach children. This problem is exacerbated by the swarm of new non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that arrive in the wake of conflict to join those brave ones already on the scene. I have always been a great supporter of NGOs; when I was a development minister, I switched part of Britain's aid budget into their programmes. They can be brave groundbreakers and represent part of the core of civil society. But they are not beyond criticism (some of their lobbying can be extremely damaging, as Sebastian Mallaby has pointed out in his recent book on the World Bank). Given the numbers that pour into post-conflict zones they can be a menace as much as a benefit. They need to regulate their own affairs with greater self-discipline, and also to work with the UN to demarcate more clearly the humanitarian space between NGO activity and civil/military work. As military planners have come to appreciate more clearly the relationship between security and reconstruction, they have

fudged the distinction between the work of soldiers and the work of NGOs. This puts aid workers at risk.

Successful reconstruction in a place like Kosovo requires security, and we are not yet at all good at managing the transition from decisive military intervention to heavy-duty policing. As we have seen more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is much easier to put military personnel into the field than paramilitary or regular police officers, judges, prosecutors and prison warders. We are trying to remedy this deficiency; it is uphill work. You do not require a degree in criminology to know what is required to clean up places like Kosovo. First, you need to be able to identify and catch criminals; then to hold them securely; then to protect witnesses; then to organize a proper trial; then to have an honest judge, paid enough or independent enough to hand down a correct verdict; then to be able to hold the guilty in secure prisons. Putting in place the various stages in this chain is very difficult, as Paddy Ashdown has found in his heroic efforts to forge one in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Kosovo also showed the importance of building up governing institutions at the local level; democracy takes root there better than at the top. Functioning and responsible local democracy (alongside security and job prospects) is crucial to dealing with one particular problem throughout former Yugoslavia – the return of refugees. The international community established a right of return in the Balkans that Britain would never have attempted in Northern Ireland. There, a Protestant family hounded out of a house in Catholic West Belfast would have been resettled in a Protestant community. In the Balkans, from Croatia to Macedonia, we have insisted that Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs, Moslem Albanians or Bosnians, should be able to return to homes from which they were driven. It is an admirable policy, showing our opposition to ethnic cleansing and ethnic clearance, but putting it into practice is tough work. Governments in Balkan countries will promise their support for the policy at the centre; it only works satisfactorily if local communities are committed to it as well. It is gratifying that, though the task of returning refugees to their homes has not been completed by any means, so many refugees have already gone back to houses and villages from which they fled in fear not long ago.

My saddest experience in Kosovo was returning in the spring of 2004, just after Albanian Kosovo gangs had turned on their Serbian neighbours in a brief orgy of burning and killing. There was a nasty Balkan symmetry to this violence. We had intervened in Kosovo to protect Albanians from Serbs, and now Serbs were being persecuted in their turn. It was not only apologists for the Albanians who said that the violence was the result of frustration at the failure to resolve the question of Kosovo's final status and to confirm that Kosovo was liberated from any prospect of return to rule from Belgrade. The violence certainly cast doubt on our previous policy of insisting that Kosovo would have to show that it lived up to civilized standards before we could consider its status. We cannot walk away from our insistence that decent standards should be observed there – above all, the protection of minority rights – but we shall need to deal with the status question at the same time as we insist on higher standards, not afterwards. Whatever happens, we cannot allow Kosovo to turn into a barbarous bandits' haven on the edge of the EU.

The fall of Milosevic gave the people of Serbia the chance to escape their history, an opportunity that they have had some difficulty seizing in recent years. I like to think the EU contributed to the dramatic events that toppled him. We gave financial support to NGOs in Serbia and, more important, to the independent media. We arranged exemptions to the oil regime in force against Milosevic's government and also ran oil into the democratically controlled municipalities in Serbia, to which Milosevic had denied oil supplies for homes and public buildings. This project – named Energy for Democracy – strained our rules of financial accountability, but we managed somehow to stay within them and got the fuel to the parts of Serbia that comprised the heartland of opposition to the old regime. It was a bold but imaginative policy, the brainchild of the current Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Labus and his group of opposition economists. Milosevic tried to stop the deliveries but they got through, to the delight of people in Nis and other opposition cities, and helped the opposition – literally – to keep the home fires burning through a harsh Balkan winter. The following autumn in 2000, Milosevic was overthrown.

No policy in the Balkans will be entirely successful unless we can

persuade Serbia to embrace wholeheartedly the need for political and economic change. It is the largest piece in the old Yugoslavian jigsaw, previously the centre of economic life there. The assassination of the post-Milosevic Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, a complicated, clever, sinuous young man, showed that the tentacles of organized crime were still wrapped around some of the institutions of the state. There were plenty of good, competent political managers in Serbia – the economic ministries were usually in professional hands – but progress was held back by a refusal to shake off the past. The main nationalist leader Vojislav Kostunica, a decent enough man, exemplifies the problem, resisting a policy of full cooperation with the Yugoslav war-crimes tribunal in The Hague (although in 2005 a number of high-profile indictees have at last been sent to the tribunal) and giving sustenance to wholly unrealistic aspirations to take back Kosovo, or at least play the main part in determining its destiny. The cause of reform in Serbia may well have been retarded as well by our insistence that Serbia and her sister republic, Montenegro, should try to make a success of their existence as two parts of the same federal state. Montenegro is a small country that runs down from the mountains (the site of its capital Podgorica, a monument to the worst of 1960s brutalist socialist architecture) to a beautiful coastline. In the closing years of Milosevic, we gave Montenegro support as an outpost of opposition to his regime. Montenegro has one industry – an aluminium plant bought by the Russians – and another rather more lucrative activity: smuggling (mostly duty-free cigarettes). Alarmingly, Russian investors have started to show an interest in Montenegro. I doubt whether they are the sort of investors who would get a seal of approval from Transparency International.

We insisted on the Serbia–Montenegro marriage for defensible reasons, worrying that without it Kosovo's status might be raised prematurely, and that other territorial boundaries in the region would come under scrutiny. I now doubt whether allowing Montenegro to go its own way would have much effect elsewhere. It would free Serbian politicians to concentrate on the reform agenda that really matters for their European destiny, and would also enable us to focus rather more energy on pushing reforms in Montenegro, whose future should consist of more than boosting European morbidity figures

by lowering the price of smoking to the continent's nicotine addicts.

The organized crime that has corrupted political life in Serbia is probably – apart from the need to escape from history – the greatest problem facing the whole region. The Balkan countries pretend to us that they are tackling it energetically; and we sometimes pretend that we believe them. We don't. The problem is particularly bad in Albania, where criminal gangs seem to have evolved naturally out of the old clan system. The years of Stone Age Communist isolation have been followed by an explosion of entrepreneurial activity: international crime. Albanian gangs are the most feared in Europe and, now, in America. They run the drugs, illegal immigration and prostitution rackets in a number of European countries. Albanian gangs have taken over the crime in several American cities. They are a threat to the stability as well as the prosperity of their own country and of some of its neighbours. Our efforts to build the capacity in Albania to fight crime have had only partial success. I recall a dinner with one Albanian prime minister in Tirana, at which he tried to persuade me that he and his government were doing everything they could to crack down on crime, a point that I found difficult to accept given that every time good and conscientious officials were appointed in Albania to senior positions (for example, the head of the customs service) they were, soon afterwards, removed. While we were having dinner together in a private room in our hotel, one of my officials was in the hotel's bar observing the prime minister's bodyguard negotiating his gambling debts with a bunch of heavies in dark glasses from Greece.

The fallacy that distorts much diplomatic discussion about the Balkans holds that, if only we could change a few of the national boundaries in the region, all would be well – swap the area north of Mitrovica in Kosovo for the area in the south of the Presevo Valley in Serbia, tinker with the northern reaches of Macedonia around Tetovo, carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina again, and so on. I said earlier that before Yugoslavia was dismembered by force, it might have been possible to arrive at a neat solution – straight out of nineteenth-century Great Power diplomacy – to the Eastern Question. But it would have been a long shot. Today, it is difficult to see how boundary tinkering could lead to anything except calamity.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the best example of the sort of trouble

that would be likely to explode. This country, whose geographical and political identity was carefully crafted under hands-on American tutelage at Dayton in 1995, is an uneasy amalgam of Bosnians, Croats and Serbs. If it were to break apart, the fall-out for the whole region would be catastrophic. Bosnia and Herzegovina was the stage for the worst atrocities of the Balkan wars – above all, the massacre at Srebrenica, where some 8,000 Bosnians were slaughtered by Serb forces. Sarajevo itself, scene of the assassination by a Bosnian Serb of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his beloved wife Sophie on St Vitus's Day in June 1914, still bears the many scars of its siege and bombardment by later Serb killers. We are committed to making Bosnia and Herzegovina work as a country, even while its two highly autonomous entities shy away from the creation of the national institutions (in policing or defence, for example, or the tax system and customs service) that are required. The slowness of the progress is only bearable when one recalls the bloody pit out of which the journey began. Paddy Ashdown now presides over Europe's and the international community's efforts to nudge and shove the country in the right direction. He is a natural for such a task. It is a pity that we do not still have an empire for someone with his decent instincts and extraordinary, youthful energy to help run. There is a paradox when someone with this sort of flair takes on such a job. It is desirable to develop local political talent with the courageous determination to take and own the most awkward political decisions. Ashdown inevitably fills most of the available political space. Which local leaders will come after him? Nevertheless, under his overlordship Bosnia and Herzegovina has made real progress, not least in seeing the return of refugees to their original communities and the establishment of a working system of law and order, a major achievement. The EU has mounted its first major military operation there, which may be a model for future European security activities outside NATO.

We came closest to a return to ethnic conflict in Macedonia, or – as we had to call it to massage Greek sensitivities – the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM for short. Tensions between the majority community and the Albanian minority boiled over in 2000–01 as the government went half-heartedly through the motions of addressing minority grievances. There was fighting in and

around the main Albanian town in Macedonia, Tetovo, and the government (led by a politician devious even by Balkan standards) began buying weapons it could not afford from Ukraine, which of course assured us that it was not selling them. The Secretary General of NATO George Robertson, Javier Solana and I flew backwards and forwards to Skopje nagging, coaxing, bullying those political leaders prepared to listen into calming the atmosphere, accepting a small NATO security presence, and reaching a wide-ranging framework agreement named after Lake Ohrid where it was signed, which dealt with Albanian grievances over issues such as language, public sector employment and university education. We were helped by a decent president with a lot of courage, if little political power. President Trajkovski was, rather improbably, a Macedonian Methodist and frequent attendee of prayer breakfasts worldwide. He was a great bear of a man, much given to hugging and tears. I remember one particularly stressful night with Javier Solana and I encouraging him to act as boldly as his instincts told him was required, while a mob of extremists bayed outside the small presidential palace for our blood. Occasional sounds of gunfire were not terribly good for morale. I suppose that if we had been shot we would have made an inside page of a few broadsheets. President Trajkovski, alas, died in an aircraft accident after the crisis was over, in great part thanks to his own courage. The coordination between NATO and the various arms of the EU was exemplary, and resulted for once in a successful act of conflict prevention. NATO's muscle and Europe's political influence and money averted disaster. Macedonia (FYROM in Athens) has now lodged its own application to join the EU, though its journey will be quite a long one.

That should not be the case in Croatia, in many ways the star pupil of the region. Part of that expression would not find favour with the Croatians themselves: they do not like to think of themselves as Balkan at all, and when you read their history, visit Zagreb or Dubrovnik, or look at their gross domestic product per head figures, you do understand their point. The Croats played their own, often discreditable, part in the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, and though a Catholic I cannot say that I much admired the role of the Church both in Croatia itself and in the surrounding countries. It became a focus for and

protector of intransigent nationalism, cultural identity and irredentism. In Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the shelling of whose fifteenth-century Turkish bridge by Croat forces became for many a symbol of the communal animosities that launched the Balkan wars, the divisions between Catholic and Moslem citizens are advertised by the huge crucifix raised on the Catholic side of the city, looming in a show of less than Christian triumphalism over the ruined streets below. I wonder whether the bishop and his local clergy have ever asked themselves what Jesus would have thought of the raising up of this giant representation of His torture and death. He died for the salvation of *all* mankind, including Bosnian Moslems. After Tudjman's death, the Croats moved fast to install an open democracy. They have held fair elections at which power has been transferred from one party to another. They have a good and professional civil service, which has implemented the reforms pressed on them by the EU rapidly and well. Successive governments have faced down extremist opponents. But the government still has to demonstrate its unremitting commitment to the work of the Yugoslav war-crimes tribunal in The Hague, and the pace of refugee returns, though much improved, has been slower than was desirable. But Croatia works as a country. It is determined to gain EU membership. As soon as it complies fully with The Hague tribunal, it can begin negotiations. They should not take too long.

In the Balkans our 'push-me-pull-you' policy that impelled countries along the path to reform, with a lot of financial support and the prospect of one day joining the EU, worked pretty well. I will deal in the next chapter with the two areas where I think our policies were less successful. As for other countries and continents, it would be wearisome to tour the world, describing visits here, there and everywhere, recounting small victories and whitewashing small defeats. When I was a speechwriter, there was a particular sort of speech that I always tried to avoid drafting – the *tour d'horizon* of domestic or international policy. Any paragraph that began 'And now I turn to agriculture . . .' or 'Moving on to the Ivory Coast . . .' was plainly part of a speech that no one should want to deliver, and no one would want to hear. Denis Healey had his own phrase for orations like this, a 'tour de gloss'. I will therefore avoid trying to spin a rambling tale

that would seek to incorporate Singapore, Wellington, São Paulo and a cross-section of all the other places to which I travelled and which deserved my attention during five years globetrotting.

However, there was one bizarre visit in May 2001 to Pyongyang to see the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, which reminded me that the EU should not get too big for its boots. Europe is not a significant political player on the Korean peninsular, though we have delivered in less than a decade more than 500 million euros in humanitarian assistance and in support for the development of alternative power supplies to their nuclear plants. We went to North Korea largely as a political favour to President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea. He had made a visit to Washington in the early days of the Bush administration to confirm that it would continue to support his Sunshine Policy of reconciliation with the North. Despite reassuring noises from Colin Powell and the State Department, he was cold-shouldered at the White House. His policy seemed to be in ruins and he turned to Europe for a gesture of support. The Swedish government (then in the EU presidency) were rightly happy to see if there was anything we could do to give some more encouragement to the reconciliation policy. It was agreed that Prime Minister Persson, Javier Solana and I should fly to Pyongyang to try to persuade Kim Jong-il to resume the dialogue and contacts he had begun to make with Seoul.

We flew into Pyongyang to the airport with the longest and largest number of runways that I have ever seen, presumably because their principal purpose was other than civil, and were greeted by a crowd in traditional costumes waving what looked like gaudily coloured feather dusters. We were driven to the despot-sized state guesthouse (it had the largest bedrooms and the smallest bars of soap I have ever seen), where we awaited the 'Dear Leader'. Over two days we saw him for more than six hours. Each meeting was a surprise. We would get a sudden order to be on parade in a salon or corridor, and Kim would appear through a door or from behind a wall-hanging like a character in pantomime or a Feydeau farce: now you see him, now you don't. I half expected him to appear at any moment through a trapdoor in the floor, and perhaps that is what he was doing. He looks extraordinary – a bouffant hairstyle all his own in which each hair seems to have been individually seeded in his scalp, built-up Cuban

heels and shiny gabardine boiler suits. He would usually see us with just an interpreter and one other official. He struck us all as highly intelligent and spoke frequently without any briefing notes. Kim's tyranny is unfathomable to the outsider, and presumably to most insiders as well. Pyongyang itself looked like a gloomy stage set; it was impossible to know what went on behind the façade of the buildings that we passed in our motorcade. Unlike every other city I have ever visited, there was no sign of any commercial activity whatsoever. We banqueted with Kim and a group of grumpy old men, with faces like Christmas walnuts, in heavily bemedalled uniforms. We were served much better Burgundy than we would have drunk in Brussels. Outside, the people starved.

Since then, the nuclear crisis in North Korea has turned into a front-page story. Others may be able to help solve it, especially the Chinese, South Koreans and Japanese. But it is only really the Americans who matter, a point which we rapidly came to understand on our own visit. There we were, visiting peacemakers from Europe, and all that this tiny tyrant wanted to talk about was . . . America. Why did policy seem to have changed from Clinton to Bush? Why were the Americans so rude about him, calling him awful names? Why were the Americans able to manipulate the South Koreans? Who did they think they were, threatening his poor country? Why did they have so many weapons threatening him from the South? Apart from that, all he wished to raise was whether he might be able to make an official visit to Sweden, a point on which Mr Persson ducked and weaved with consummate political skill. Anyway, there it was. We went as European peace emissaries, accomplished nothing despite our best efforts and intentions, and we spent all our time discussing what American policy might be.

America is a superpower, partly because it is the only country whose will and intentions matter everywhere, and are everywhere decisive to the settlement of the world's biggest problems. Europe can help to solve those problems, but there are only some parts of the world – like the Balkans – where our role (while not necessarily crucial) is as important as, or more important than, that of China in the case of North Korea. I turn at the beginning of the next chapter to one of the places on our doorstep where that is true.

7

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbours, everybody needs good neighbours,
But here's a friendly word of warning,
Just be careful what you say . . .
Neighbours, you pick your friends but not your neighbours,
Just a slight misunderstanding
And the mayhem never ends.
Neighbours, interfering with each other,
Be sure that that's where the friendship ends.

Words sung to the theme tune for the
TV soap 'Neighbours'

All politics, we are told, is local; diplomacy too starts close to home. Priority is sensibly given by foreign ministers to securing a stable neighbourhood for their countries. In the case of Europe, we have seen how this bolstered the case for offering the liberated countries of the Soviet empire in central and eastern Europe membership of the European Union. What better way could there have been of treating a neighbour than inviting him into our home? Since, as I remarked previously, that process cannot go on indefinitely, and since not every neighbour will want to become an EU member state, other policies are required. Framing them is not easy, especially given that our neighbourhood poses large and different problems.

To the east, the Russian Federation gripes about its loss of empire and watches suspiciously as its one-time colonies join the EU and NATO, or aspire to do so. Putting its faith, as before in its history,

in a strong man rather than strong institutions, it resiles from any serious commitment to establishing pluralist democracy. Europe should clearly work for a comprehensive partnership with Russia, but at the moment it is nonsense to suggest that this will be based on shared values. Later in this chapter, I will come back to our difficulties in putting together a consistent and coherent policy on Russia, and to some of the results of this failure.

To the south, beyond Shelley's 'blue Mediterranean', lie the troubled lands of some of the Arab League states from the Maghreb to the Mashraq, countries that share the southern littoral of the sea that has both brought Europe and the Islamic world together, and kept us apart. Here, crowded together, are some of the most intractable problems facing the world today: poverty, protectionism, political alienation, religious extremism, authoritarianism, abuse of human rights, gender discrimination and violence. In some countries, democracy begins to stir: in all of them, the remnants of ancient cultures remind us of better and happier days. Across the whole region, the dispute between Israel and Palestine poisons politics, aborts progress and nurtures conspiracies and suicide bombings.

These are countries with which most European countries have ties of history, culture, politics and commerce. We have colonized them; killed their inhabitants and been killed by them; stolen their wealth; bought their products; borrowed from their civilizations; suppressed their aspirations; corrupted their systems of government; and recently and fitfully tried to show them better ways of governing themselves. We know one another well, and now many of their former citizens dwell in our own countries. Many more will do so – the majority perhaps illegally, if we mishandle our relationship with them in the future. This is part of the intimacy of our relationship. For America these countries comprise an immensely important geo-strategic relationship, given a particular depth by America's emotional ties to Israel and its concerns about energy supply. For Europe, it is rather different; these are our next-door neighbours.

Nothing matters more to Europe than the way we handle our relationship with this sharp edge of the Islamic world. Get it wrong, politically and economically, and our borders will be subjected to unmanageable migratory pressures; the tensions in Arab countries

will spill over into our own societies; and our tolerance will be tested to breaking point. We are seeing this already, as civil liberties in some European countries are curbed because of fears about the violent problems we may import. As I shall argue, I do not believe that there is a war on terrorism in any conventional sense, nor that we can realistically look forward to a day when the threat of terrorism has been totally eliminated. But I do think that a successful partnership with the Arab world could go far to limit terrorism's threat.

The relationship between the Arab lands and Europe will either bring closer the future predicted by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington, or else consign it to the university library shelves. His essay in *Foreign Affairs* in the summer of 1993, subsequently lengthened into a book, foresaw a 'clash of civilizations' that we sometimes seem in recent years to have been sedulously promoting. Some of the global problems that we shall face in this century – for example, whether China can make a smooth accommodation between economic licence and political authority – are probably matters for the consideration of a circumscribed few, in this case a small cadre of bureaucratic politicians in Beijing. Others – for example, environmental disasters – have already been set in train by greed and ecological pillage, and we (particularly America) appear reluctant to try to mitigate the consequences. But a clash between the world that likes to think of itself as being primarily made in the mould of the New Testament, and the Islamic world of the Koran raises issues for all of us. Yet we could still avoid such a clash, though there is a real danger that we will trigger catastrophe through acts both of omission and commission. How can things have come to this?

Let us for a moment revisit Samuel Huntington's thesis. Hot on the heels of liberalism's triumph in the 1980s and 90s – the breaching of the Berlin Wall; the fall of Europe's last empire; the opening of markets by technology and international agreement – Huntington warns against the easy assumption that we can now relax, the Cold War having been won without the use of any of those engines of death stockpiled in silos from Utah to the Ukraine. Conflict is not, after all, a subject for the history books. 'The most important conflicts of the future,' he writes, 'will occur along cultural fault lines separating civilizations from each other.' The differences between civilizations

are more fundamental than those between political ideologies, and the more the world shrinks through the use of technology, the more we become aware of them. Globalization has weakened local and national identities, and the gap has been filled by religion, with non-Western civilizations returning to their roots – re-Islamizing, for example, the Middle East. Moreover, cultural – or as Huntington largely argues it, religious – characteristics are less likely to change than those that are political or economic. 'Conflict,' he notes, 'along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1300 years . . .' He also comments that on both sides 'the interaction between Islam and the West is seen as a clash of civilizations'. Popular in some academic circles in the West, his theories are also extensively quoted on jihadist websites in the Arab world.

There are other civilization clashes as well to which Huntington draws attention. But his arguments have never convinced me. I spent a good deal of time during my years in Hong Kong pointing out that there was not some cultural divide between the West and the so-called Confucian world ('so-called' usually by those who have never read Confucius and tend to confuse him with Lee Kuan Yew), which strips Asians of their civil liberties and denies them democracy. Sun Yat-sen had apparently never existed. Many of us argued that human rights were universally valid, and that democracy under the rule of law was the best system of government everywhere. And with the Asian financial crash and the discrediting of the Asian model of crony capitalism and authoritarian politics, the controversy seemed over. The clash of civilizations could have been regarded as the stuff of provocative academic seminars. Then the planes slammed into the Twin Towers, and the world changed.

Well, of course, it was not quite that simple. The pretexts, the causes, the narrative of atrocity began much earlier than 2001. And we had scholarly guides to point us down the right exploratory tracks. Oh, to have been the publisher of Professor Bernard Lewis, sage of Princeton and scholar-almost-in-residence to Vice President Cheney and his Washington tough guys. I admit to a personal debt to Professor Lewis's scholarship. I have enjoyed, and I hope learned from, a number of his books. But I started to worry as I moved on from reading *What Went Wrong?* to *The Crisis of Islam* that I was being carefully pointed

in a particular direction, lined up before the fingerprints, the cosh, the swag bag and the rest of the evidence. 'Most Muslims,' Lewis tells us in *The Crisis of Islam*, 'are not fundamentalists, and most fundamentalists are not terrorists, but most present-day terrorists are Muslims and proudly identify themselves as such.' Well, yes – and it's a sentence that resonates (as I have suggested) in parts of the policy-making community in Washington. But what if I had tried a similar formulation on some of these same policy makers back in 1983, just after the IRA bombed Harrods in London? 'Most Catholics are not extremist Irish Republicans, and most extremist Irish Republicans are not terrorists, but most terrorists in Britain today are Catholic and proudly identify themselves as such.' I suspect that it is not a sentence that would have increased my circle of admirers in America – not because it is wrong, but because it is so loaded with an agenda. Anyway, what we have been taught is that there is a rage in the Islamic world – in part, the result of history and humiliation – which fuels hostility to America and to Europe too, home of past crusaders and present infidel feudatories of the Great Satan. Clash go the civilizations.

However we address the Islamic world, it is important to avoid sounding like Silvio Berlusconi and those other politicians and church leaders who suggest that we dwell on a higher moral plane in Europe, custodians of a superior set of moral values and attitudes – conveniently managing to file and forget gas chambers, gulags, and our Christian heritage of flagrant or more discreet anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Our prejudices may be rock solid but our pulpits are made of straw. What of this Islamic world that allegedly confronts our own civilization? Sometimes we forget that three quarters of its 1.2 billion citizens live beyond the countries of the Arab League, in, for example, the democracies of Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and India. Asian Moslem societies have their share of problems, not least dealing with pockets of extremism, but it makes no sense to generalize about an Islamic anger allegedly engulfing countries from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific shores.

If we focus on a narrower range of Arab countries – North Africa, Egypt, the Levant, the Gulf, the countries in the cockpit of current struggle and dissent – what do we find? In 2002, the Arab Thought Foundation commissioned a survey by Zogby International of

attitudes in eight countries: Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Their survey confirmed other similar, if not identical, surveys (for example, by the Pew Research Center). From the results it is clear that, like Americans or Europeans, Arabs are most concerned about matters of personal security, fulfilment and satisfaction. Perhaps it is a surprise that they do not appear to hate our Western values and their cultural emanations: democracy freedom, education, movies, television. Sad to say, the favourite programme on Arab television is 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' Other survey evidence underlines this point about the most significant values. The second Arab Human Development Report, published in 2003 by the United Nations Development Programme, quotes from the World Values Survey, which shows that Arabs top the world in believing that democracy is the best form of government. They are way ahead of Europeans and Americans, and three times as likely to hold this view as East Asians.

There is not much sign of a clash of values here. The problem seems to be rather simpler. The Arab world does not mind what began as American and European values, but it cannot stand American policies and, by extension, the same policies when embraced or tolerated by Europeans. As the American Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte said explicitly, in hearings in the Senate in early 2005, 'Our policies in the Middle East feed Islamic resentment.' So the Arab world holds very negative opinions of the United States and the United Kingdom (even while holding, according to the World Values Survey, positive views about American freedom and democracy). Why is the UK in this pit of unpopularity alongside the USA? Partly, I suppose, because of what we are seen to do, and partly because of what we are silent about. Who knows how widely St Thomas More is read in Arab lands? But his tag '*qui tacet consentire videtur*' ('silence is seen as agreement') is true everywhere. Perhaps it cheers us in Britain to discover that France comes out best in these surveys, scoring very positive ratings, as do Japan, Germany and Canada.

What sort of policies feed Islamic resentment, and particularly the hostility in Arab countries? The invasion of Iraq obviously features high on the list. But in 2002 the issue that stood out from the Zogby

survey was, hardly surprisingly, the absence of peace in the Middle East. The survey's authors write that 'after more than three generations of conflicts, and the betrayal and denial of Palestinian rights, this issue appears to have become a defining one of general Arab concern. It is not a foreign policy issue . . . rather . . . the situation of the Palestinians appears to have become a personal matter'. As the recent work of, for example, Richard Perle and David Frum has shown, this apparently incontestable point is, for a particular school of American thought, a deliberate and alarming blind spot.

Terrorism has given a savage twist to the debates about values in the Middle East and about the best way to abate hostility to America and to some European countries. American attitudes to terrorism were inevitably shaped by the terrible events of 11 September 2001. Initially, the atrocities drew Europe and America more closely together. For example, I flew straight away to America with Javier Solana and the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs Louis Michel (who was in the EU presidency) to discuss immediate assistance for America in the counterterrorism campaign. Among the issues we discussed with Colin Powell was the provision of support for Pakistan to encourage it to fight terrorism, and within days we visited Islamabad. But as the months passed, and the war on Iraq was advocated and planned, we drew apart, with Europe not always fully appreciating the extent of America's trauma – the sense of violation, and the shock at discovering that to be invincible was not the same as to be invulnerable. The subsequent 'war on terrorism' has been understood in Europe as a metaphor: a phrase to describe the myriad responses required of the civilized world to address problems that do not admit of definitive solutions, let alone of military ones. America, by contrast, has really felt itself to be at war; it is a war that ratchets up patriotic sentiments to an unparalleled potency. The election in November 2004 was won by a president at war – Kabul and Baghdad under his belt, and with more citadels to storm, more heights to seize.

Terrorism is abhorred in Europe. We have every reason to hate it, from Spain to Ireland, from the United Kingdom to Italy, from Germany to Greece. The Spanish, for example, have shown extraordinary resolve in standing up to ETA's Basque activists, and it was deplorable to characterize their voting behaviour after the Madrid

bombings as a sign of national cowardice. I have already noted my own resentment at the past indulgence shown by some Americans towards the champions of Irish terrorism and its paymasters on the other side of the Atlantic. So, we all hate terrorism. But we in Europe are also uncomfortable with the one-dimensional nature of the debate in some American quarters; the unwillingness to accept that terrorists might on occasion use abhorrent means to pursue ends that we may or may not agree with, but which are susceptible to reason and whose causes can be addressed without going to war. It is as if any discussion of the causes of alienation and hatred was evidence of appeasement. The idea of a world divided between good and evil – between us and them – sits uncomfortably with most Europeans. Throughout recorded time, asymmetric threats have been the weapon of the weak against the strong. We find them sanctioned by history when the cause is just, the means proportionate and the outcome good. The morality is not always very clear. History, after all, is written by, or largely about, the victors, including England's national hero of the fifteenth century, Henry V, who murdered his prisoners before the victory at Agincourt. As Sir John Harington wrote in the early seventeenth century:

> Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason?
> For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

Our history, from Kenya to Israel to Ireland to South Africa, is peppered with examples of terrorism, which events have elided into politics.

Terrorism sometimes has precise political causes and objectives – the Mau Mau, the Stern Gang, the Irish Republican Army, the African National Congress. Sometimes it has had less focused aims – for example, Errico Malatesta's '*propaganda dei fatti*' ('propaganda by the deed'), which tried to draw attention to injustice and destroy the nerve of ruling elites by murdering presidents and princes, tsars and kings. Today's terrorism by Islamic groups, able through the advance of technology to shatter civilized order through terrible acts of destruction, seems closer to the anarchists than to the gun-toting politicians such as the Irish ones I myself know best (who were notorious for their ability to carry both a ballot

box and an ArmaLite). The ideas that sustain Osama Bin Laden and those who think like him, not all of them the members of a spectacularly sophisticated network of evil but nonetheless fellow believers in a loose confederation of dark prejudices, can hardly be dignified with the description of a polished political manifesto. They do not travel far beyond the old graffiti 'Yankee, Go Home'. But they do represent a form of political, social and cultural alienation, which we should seek to comprehend. Joseph Conrad investigated these dark corners in *The Secret Agent*. He described one of his fictional terrorists like this:

> He was no man of action; he was not even an orator of torrential eloquence, sweeping the masses along in the rushing noise and foam of a great enthusiasm. With a more subtle intention, he took the part of an insolent and venomous evoker of sinister impulses which lurk in the blind envy and . . . misery of poverty, in all the hopeful and noble illusions of righteous anger, pity, and revolt.

Conrad knew that 'The way of even the most justifiable revolutions is prepared by personal impulses disguised into creeds.' It is not normal for men and women to want to get up in the morning and strap bombs to themselves or to their children and set out to kill and maim. How does a sense of injustice, which so often inspires surrender to religious simplicity, come to trigger evil? Why does our own notion of the spread of freedom, capitalism, and democracy, look to some others like licentiousness, greed and a new colonialism? We should surely try to fathom the answers to these questions, and understand that we can make it either easier or more difficult to solve the problems they pose. Is it really a surrender to organized evil to assert that there are some policies that would demobilize the recruiting sergeants of terrorism? No one should seek to excuse or explain away the outrages of 11 September 2001. The cause was horribly unjust; the means abominable. But the reasons for what happened cannot be placed beyond rational discussion. Nor, in my view, can terrorism ever be eradicated from the face of the earth. Complete elimination of the threat could only be achieved in a global Orwellian police state that denied freedom to everyone. That would negate the values for which America and Europe stand. Paradoxically, it would also demand of

good men the sort of just resistance – and potentially violent resistance – that we are seeking to stamp out.

Americans and Europeans are now agreed on a positive agenda (as well as a fist of security options) for combating terrorism and its causes. Americans have come rather late to the issue, albeit with muscular enthusiasm. But their credentials are suspect and their application of principles is prone to a pretty blatant display of double standards. Europeans have been labouring in the vineyards for a decade but with too little conviction, energy and tough-mindedness. Indeed, so low-key have been our efforts that most Americans (including many otherwise well-informed policy makers, academics and journalists) had no idea what we were doing. What is this 'hit the jackpot' issue? Simple, really. Or at least, simple to describe: the promotion of democracy, good governance and open markets throughout the Arab world. If there was only one area of policy where we really should try to make the Atlantic Alliance work more successfully, this would be it. We have the ideas, the money and the need. There will be no excuse if we turn these ideas into a shambles.

In 2002, the UNDP produced its first report (the predecessor to the one I mentioned earlier) on the Arab League countries. *Time* magazine called it the most important publication of the year. It unleashed a tidal wave of debate across Arab countries about the reasons for the region's comparative backwardness and inadequate performance. Well over a million copies of the report were downloaded from the Internet, many in Arab countries. Why did a scholarly survey have such an impact?

The first reason is that its authorship caused surprise and endowed credibility. It was written by Arab scholars and policy makers, not well-meaning outsiders. Second, its analysis was captivatingly honest and politically bold: too bold for some. When I raised it with a group of Arab League foreign ministers, there was a lot of averting of eyes and shuffling of papers. They were anxious to move on to to the next agenda item. How could it be that in terms of economic performance in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the only region that did worse than the Arab countries was sub-Saharan Africa? Why had personal incomes stagnated through these years? Why had wealth per

head in this region fallen from a fifth to a seventh of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average? Why were productivity, investment efficiency and foreign direct investment so low? How could the combined gross domestic product of all Arab countries be lower than that of a single European country, Spain?

The answer came in the prescription summarized by the UNDP's Arab regional director. Arab countries needed to embark on rebuilding their societies on the basis of:

1. full respect for human rights and human freedoms as the cornerstones of good governance, leading to human development;
2. the complete empowerment of Arab women, taking advantage of all opportunities to build their capabilities and to enable them to exercise those capabilities to the full;
3. the consolidation of knowledge acquisition and its effective utilization.

Governance, gender, education – this is the Arab world's own formula for improvement and modernization, and a formula too that European partners on the other side of the Mediterranean have been trying gently, too gently, to promote through the Barcelona Process for almost a decade. We have been attempting to establish a free trade area around our shared sea (the aim is to complete it by 2010); to encourage more trade between Arab countries; and to assist those (like Morocco and Jordan) who are themselves committed to modernization, democratic reform and the nurturing of a more lively civil society. The more I worked on this policy with its ambitious objective, the more I began to fear that Europe was more concerned about a free trade *area* than about free *trade*, at least in the sort of agricultural products grown in southern European countries.

There is a strong link between better government and better economic performance, and between the accomplishment of both those objectives and greater stability. Authoritarian governments are less likely to be good economic managers; they shelter corruption and suppress the sorts of pluralism – a free press, for example – which bring transparency to economic governance. The result of authoritarianism in the region is twofold. First, lower economic growth fails to create the jobs that demographic pressures constantly demand in

the Arab world. Young men without jobs, without the dignity of work, and without cash in their pockets, are easily attracted to other causes than the relatively innocent occupation of making money. Second, the denial of civil liberties itself causes resentment, driving debate off the streets and out of the coffee shops into the cellars. Bad economic performance, especially when associated with large wealth and income differences, combines with the suppression of dissent to breed trouble – big trouble.

How should the West, how should the Arab world's European neighbours, support a process of modernization that is so greatly in our own interest – lowering the pressures from illegal immigration; opening new and expanding markets; exporting stability to our near neighbourhood? I do not for a moment accept that it is none of our business, since successful and stable neighbours are very much in our own interest. Nor do I buy the argument that encouraging democracy in the Arab world only creates trouble, with the risk that we will replace more or less compliant authoritarian friends with rabid fundamentalist regimes, established on the basis of 'one man, one vote, once'. I have never been convinced by the argument that free politics is inherently more unstable than command politics. Is Saudi Arabia more stable because it knows only the first fragile green shoots of democracy? Has it in the past inadvertently exported young terrorists, and not so inadvertently financed extremist activity, because it is too free? Which offers the best prospect of stability in Egypt – continuing the past policies of President Mubarak or allowing the political openings cautiously advocated by his son? Does oil wealth across the region bring democracy-lite stability, or simply postpone a violent democratic shock? We would already have done much more to promote modernization, better economic management and improved government if we had been more committed to reducing our dependence on environmentally deadly fossil fuels. Cash-rich oil producers have been able to buy off the need for reform. Every gas-guzzling sports utility vehicle, lumbering through urban traffic on the school run, is a symbol of some of the worst environmental and economic practices sustaining some of the worst political ones.

There are some clear ground rules that outside well-wishers should follow. We are talking about other people's lives and countries, not

our own. 'Better,' as T. E. Lawrence argued, 'to let them do it imperfectly than to do it perfectly yourself, for it is their country, their way, and your time is short.' It is imperative that the agenda of modernization – in education, in the rule of law, in participatory government, in opportunities for women, in nourishing civil society – should be owned by Arab countries themselves. Recognition that this will all take time, and that you need to prepare for the long haul, is not code for procrastination. Developing democracy is not like making instant coffee. Arab ownership of both the process of democratization and the end result requires Arab commitment and energy. It is not enough, for example, for Arab intellectuals to say what they want and then hunt for excuses to do no more about it. Authoritarian governments in the Middle East have been adept at using the Israel–Palestine issue to legitimate their rule and to provide an excuse for avoiding reform. Too many Arab modernizers have gone along with this, burying the democratic cause in the wider issue of a struggle for Arab dignity.

We also have to be careful in supporting better government and democracy, not to preach nor to offer – as we have in such grotesque profusion – evidence of double standards. We should expect the same of everyone, regardless of how pliable some authoritarian countries may be when our transient strategic interests throw up new short-term imperatives. If democratic modernization looks like a Western tactic for securing our own interests, we risk discrediting the ideas in which we believe and turning our Arab friends who share the same ideas into seeming stooges. Above all, as we have very painfully discovered, it is difficult to impose a free society through invasion and military might, spreading democracy through the region in the tracks, as it were, of Jeffersonian tanks. Some suggest that the elections in Iraq administered a sharp democratic jolt to the region. This may in part be true, and the bravery and determination of those who voted in Iraq were certainly impressive. But the jolt came at a very high cost, for the Iraqis themselves and for the reputation of America and its allies.

The argument for democracy in the region began, as we have seen, well before the Iraq invasion. Moreover, the invasion was not justified on the grounds that, after thousands of innocent casualties, we would be able to hold an election and thereby demonstrate to others in the

region the benefits of democracy. The allies stumbled on the case for democracy when their other justifications for the war crumbled in their hands. That we now have to make the best of what has happened (forgetting the costs and focusing on the exit of Saddam and his murderous cronies), while abundantly true, is not the same as saying that the war – its pretexts, conduct and aftermath – was warranted all along. The invasion certainly emboldened and recruited terrorists, and may well have caused some of the modernizers in Iraq's neighbours, for example Iran, to question whether the price paid for democracy in terms of death, injury, instability and societal breakdown was too high. For conservatives in those countries the sight of democracy being, as it were, imposed by force may have confirmed their view that it is an assault, a secular Western abomination. In addition, you cannot make war on another country every time you want to give democracy a boost. So, we want to see democracy in Syria next: does the Pentagon have the battle plan ready yet? Whatever else we may have learned in Iraq, the lesson spelled out by Winston Churchill in *My Early Life* comes bleakly to mind:

> Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth or easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.

There are better ways than war of spreading democracy and the rule of law. The strategy that Europe has pursued, though with insufficient ardour, is our Euro-Mediterranean partnership. It is based on a series of trade and cooperation agreements between the EU and individual countries in the Euro-Mediterranean basin. They have taken a long time to negotiate and almost as long, on the European side, to ratify. It was sometimes difficult to explain to our Arab co-negotiators how it was that agreements, to which we allegedly gave so much priority, spent years rambling up and down the legislative corridors of Europe's parliamentary democracy. When I became a commissioner, the EU had negotiated agreements with Tunisia, Morocco, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. During my tenure, we completed negotiations with Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. We opened our markets a bit

to our southern neighbours – with the promise of more progress on sensitive agricultural products and services – and they opened their markets a bit to us. We committed about 1 billion euros a year in grants to support Arab development, and about twice that in loans from the European Investment Bank.

The agreements were supposed to encourage economic and political liberalization, so that the creation of a free market would be accompanied by a growing approximation of systems of governance, laws and regulations. We also wished to promote greater cooperation in areas like policing and immigration control. Any ambitions to promote security cooperation were thwarted by the Israel–Palestine strife. The performance of our partners varied enormously. Jordan and Morocco won most of our gold stars, combining some political modernization with sensible economic management. The Tunisians were good economic performers and were progressive on gender issues but had a human rights record that was the source of frequent angry debate in the European Parliament. The Egyptians were subtle, charming and difficult to help, with one or two ministerial holdovers from the days of Nasserite socialism slowing down our development programmes. (It is instructive that Egyptians seem to be so successful entrepreneurially everywhere else except in Egypt.) The most difficult of our partners were the Syrians. Dealing with them made the task of Sisyphus with his boulder seem straightforward. No one can visit Damascus without seeing what a formidable country Syria could be, both culturally and intellectually. (I remember a passionate discussion on Margaret Atwood's novels with the president's and foreign minister's hard-line female interpreter and adviser.) But Syria is caged by history, corruption and authoritarianism, with its young president unable to move the country out of the shadow of his late father and of his father's brutal cronies. At my first meeting with Bashar Assad – a young ophthalmologist who had studied in London – I thought him a charming, open, rather geeky young man. He said most of the right things. Unhappily, delivery proved more difficult. Syria has been bogged down, until forced to quit, in its colonial adventure in luckless Lebanon and ensnared in a not wholly paranoid fear of Israel. Our economic negotiations threatened the cartels operated by the military and Baathist lackeys, and it was clear that the successful conclusion

of this part of our talks represented a hard-won success for the president and his young advisers. With its security services almost certainly out of control, Syria will need tough but constructive handling.

Late in the day in the Syrian talks, we were obliged to insert into the text of the proposed agreement a clause on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in addition to a clause on terrorism. Importing other policy objectives into the drafting of agreements has become a feature of EU diplomacy that hobbles our negotiating and reduces our flexibility. The process had begun with the attachment of human rights clauses to all our agreements, not only in this region. This would be laudable if the agreements were then policed fairly rigorously. They are not. In one of the more unsavoury twists of Western diplomacy, we Europeans were concluding negotiations covering human rights with countries to whom our American allies were shipping terrorist suspects to be tortured as part of the process known as 'extraordinary rendition'. This took outsourcing to unimagined lengths. A human rights clause was one of the more difficult nuts to crack in our trade negotiations with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. I remember a long night's discussion in Brussels on human rights with a group of Gulf foreign ministers, after which I felt that all of us on the European side of the table might be expected to show that we understood the error of our ways by driving down to the Grand' Place to search out a few adulteresses to stone.

There are two better options that are both honest and practical. First, any conditions applied to an agreement should be made positive not negative (a point that I will shortly describe); you should reward good behaviour not threaten to penalize bad. Second, if you think that an issue is sufficiently important – terrorism, proliferation – you should not even start to negotiate an agreement with a country that is not equally serious about the matter. It devalues the currency to draft clauses with painstaking solicitude that you know are likely to be honoured mainly in the breach. Winking at electrodes, as it were, makes for wretched diplomacy. Few authoritarian governments go weak at the knees at the prospect of a European *démarche*.

Europe is now trying to turn the existing Mediterranean agreements into a tighter and more generous neighbourhood policy, and this will obviously be the main vehicle for our contribution to the drive for

reform and modernization in the region. There are three problems. First, the offers we make to our partners are insufficiently generous. We are still far too cautious about agricultural liberalization. The southern European countries that are most insistent on the political importance of the Mediterranean are usually the most resistant to concessions on importing products from Arab countries – olives, tomatoes, fish, cut flowers, soft fruit and so on. There is a simple trade-off. If we do not take their tomatoes, we will be on the receiving end of shiploads of their illegal migrants. Moreover, we will reduce employment prospects for the young, making it all the more likely that some of them will become radicalized. We also need to speed up the harmonization of standards – of good safety, public health and so on – to deal with one of the main non-tariff barriers to trade.

Second, we should offer more development assistance, in addition to greater generosity on trade, but this is where my argument about positive discrimination bites. If we want to help drive reform, we should set aside a larger share of our budget to support those who commit themselves to it. We were starting to try this at the margins with the programmes run by the European Commission; I hope these efforts will survive. In my experience it is very unusual for European governments to agree to cut back programmes because of, say, a bad human rights performance in a particular country. There will always be a European president or a prime minister, with a particular client or friend in the region, prepared to intervene on the client's behalf even when that partner's government has been reneging on its promises of economic reform, or hanging dissidents up from the rafters by their thumbs. President Chirac, for example, had a soft spot for the Tunisian regime. So a more effective European contribution to better governance in the region should combine greater generosity with more toughmindedness about its recipients.

Third, we need to be much more active in promoting trade and investment within the region. The countries of the southern Mediterranean want to trade more with Europe and America, but they hardly trade with one another. Perhaps 5 per cent of their trade is with their Arab neighbours. In too many countries there is still an autarchic reflex – a belief in economic self-sufficiency. But they are too backward and usually too socialist to manage on their own. They lose out on

all the economies of scale, all the opportunities for shared investment and manufacturing that regional integration would provide. Outsiders put their money elsewhere, further afield. With all the arguments about outsourcing in Europe, and all the debate about offshore manufacturing, no one ever points a finger of blame at the Arab world. The money stays away; it goes to Asia; so the unemployment grows. There have been belated efforts by some Arab countries – Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt – to create something closer to a common market; it is called the Agadir Process. When it was finally launched after years of discussion, one of the foreign ministers responsible for it said to me, 'We have saddled the camel.' Maybe, but it plods rather slowly up the first dune. America and Europe should increase their efforts to promote free trade around the Mediterranean, and between the Mediterranean countries and those Arab countries to the east, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Iran, Iraq and Yemen. Trade, investment, growth, jobs: these are a large part of the answer to the growth of extremism and the spawning of terrorism.

In Europe, we did not spend very much time discussing these issues, on which we could make a considerable difference, preferring instead to wring our hands and rend our garments over Palestine and Israel. It was a tribute to the resilience of the Barcelona Process that it survived with Israel, rightly, a full participating member. It provided the only forum where Israelis and Arabs regularly met, debating political as well as economic issues. But so long as the bloody dispute over the future of a Palestinian state persists, it will be impossible to incorporate regional security into the partnership.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that European foreign ministers discussed Palestine and Israel virtually every month (usually at the lunches I have already described) and at larger occasional informal meetings as well. Sometimes a minister had just been to the region and had something to report back, which from time to time could even be interesting. Sometimes someone was sent to do the usual round of visits. Sometimes there was about to be, or had just been, a formal meeting with the Quartet – the US, the UN, Russia and the EU – or with our partners in the Barcelona Process. Nothing ever changed very much, certainly not for the better. After the first relatively hopeful period in 2000–01 with talks at Camp David and then later at Taba, everything went downhill – faster and more disastrously than anyone had anticipated – from Ariel Sharon's walk on Holy Mount, to Ehud Barak's political destruction and then Yasser Arafat's at best ambiguous attitude to the employment of the most horrendous violence against Israeli targets. The massacres of the innocent, the reprisals, the house demolitions, the blockades, the building of the security barrier, clocked up ever more dreadful statistics of hopeless horror.

We all meant well and worked hard. Javier Solana in particular worked himself into the ground. But what did we achieve? Maybe we could never have achieved anything on our own. What was certain was that a Pavlovian rejection of any course of action that might distance us from the Americans was the main determinant of our political behaviour. It was in a way absurd. We had, at least in theory, the same objectives as the Americans. But declaring those aims too strongly, along with proposals for trying to achieve them, risked opening up some clear water between us and Washington. While we were prepared to do this from time to time, for example over the Israeli fence, on the whole we preferred to delude ourselves that Washington was as committed to an end to settlements, and to an agreement based on the 1967 borders, as we were ourselves. It may be that with the 2004 presidential election safely in the bag, Washington's policy and Europe's will coalesce. What is clear is that unless we make better progress in resolving the conflict, it will continue to embitter the West's relations with the whole Islamic world. Washington's engagement is certainly essential to a solution, but Europe could legitimately be more independent in setting out its own views. This would raise the political cost of America hanging back from active engagement. Meanwhile, we have spent five years talking, visiting and drafting communiqués, while the two communities of Israel and Palestine were locked into a downward spiral of death and destruction, each seemingly intent on causing pain to the other, with one side plotting revenge and the other exacting a terrible retribution against the last ghoulish act of vengeance.

I should stand back for a moment and offer a confession that will attract criticism by the bucketload. I believe that, in the Middle East,

there are two legitimate howls of rage, two storylines not one. I also share with Israel's former Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, a wise and intelligent man, the view that, in his words: 'The Holocaust . . . should not give the Jews and Israel any moral immunity from criticism, nor is it proper for Israelis to conveniently dismiss all and every attack against their reproachable policies as anti-Semitism.' I regard the anti-Semitism that was part and parcel of Christianity for centuries as a dark stain on my religion. The behaviour of the leadership of my own Catholic Church in the terrible Holocaust years was deplorable. Anti-Semitism is a malevolent sentiment that I find difficult to comprehend. I hope some at least will understand how much deep offence they cause when they ascribe to anti-Semitism any criticism of Mr Sharon or the policies of the Likud Party. Of course, hostility to Mr Sharon's policies and the practices of the Israeli defence forces *can* drift into anti-Semitism. But it is unfair always to conflate the two.

On one of my early visits to Washington as a commissioner, a senator said to me, 'You'd better understand. We are all members of the Likud Party now.' Well, I was not. The people I most admired were those like Yossi Beilin and the other leaders of the Israeli peace movement, whose activities demonstrated that however great the security problems in Israel, it remained a free society. There was far more debate in its media about Israel's strengths and weaknesses, about the successes and failures of policy, than is evident in the way the American press and television cover these issues. B'Tselem and other human rights organizations point out the human and civil liberties costs of the occupation of Palestinian lands. Judges rule against the government, insisting that even in dealing with security issues there is a price that a free society has to pay to retain its moral core. Israel is a plural, free society, and it should not be treated like an illegitimate pariah.

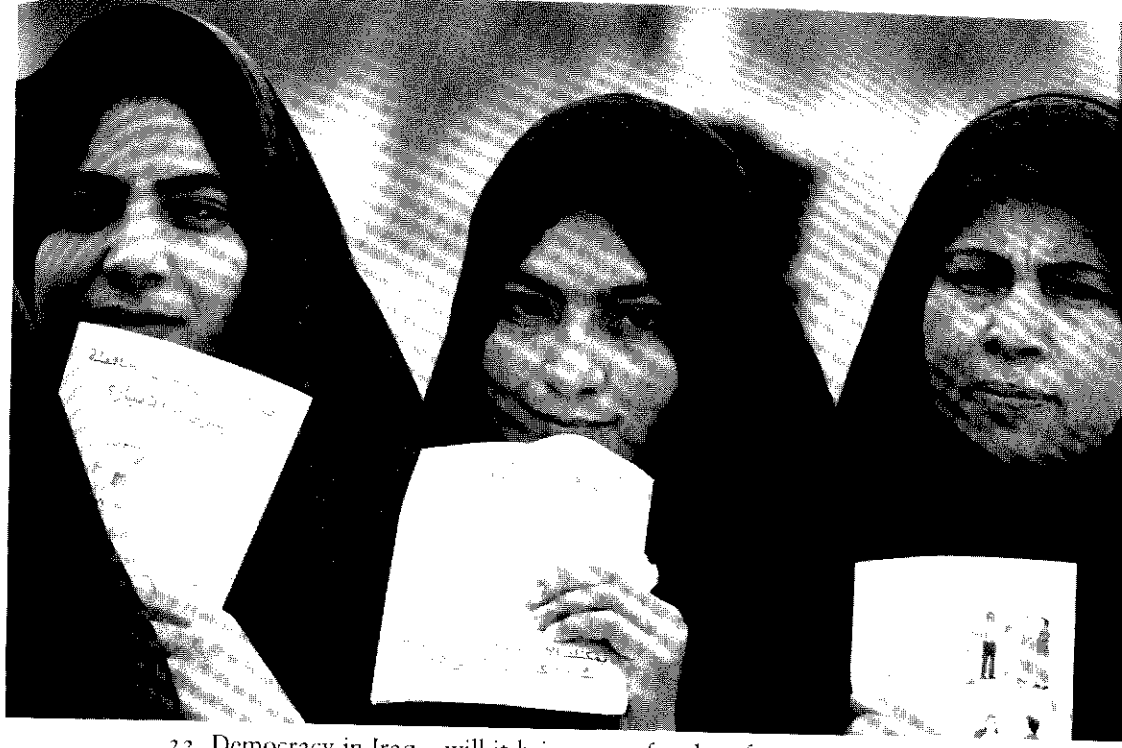
Ending the bloodshed does not await the discovery of a hitherto secret diplomatic formula. The ingredients of a peace settlement are well known. They were at the heart of the discussions at Camp David and Taba in 2000 and 2001. The Mitchell Commission Report covered them in 2001. The Quartet's Road Map gave the international community's endorsement to a political gazetteer for putting them in place in 2002. The Geneva Initiative in 2003 demonstrated that there

17. The human cost of ethnic conflict and political failure in the Balkans, 1999. Today we're doing better.

18. Supporting Turkey in the European Parliament. The future of Europe may lie in Istanbul.

19. Entente Cordiale – the then French Foreign Minister (now Prime Minister) Dominique de Villepin in cahoots with Jack Straw, Britain's Foreign Secretary.

20. A hot reception in Colombo in 2003 for the author's attempts at peace making in Sri Lanka.



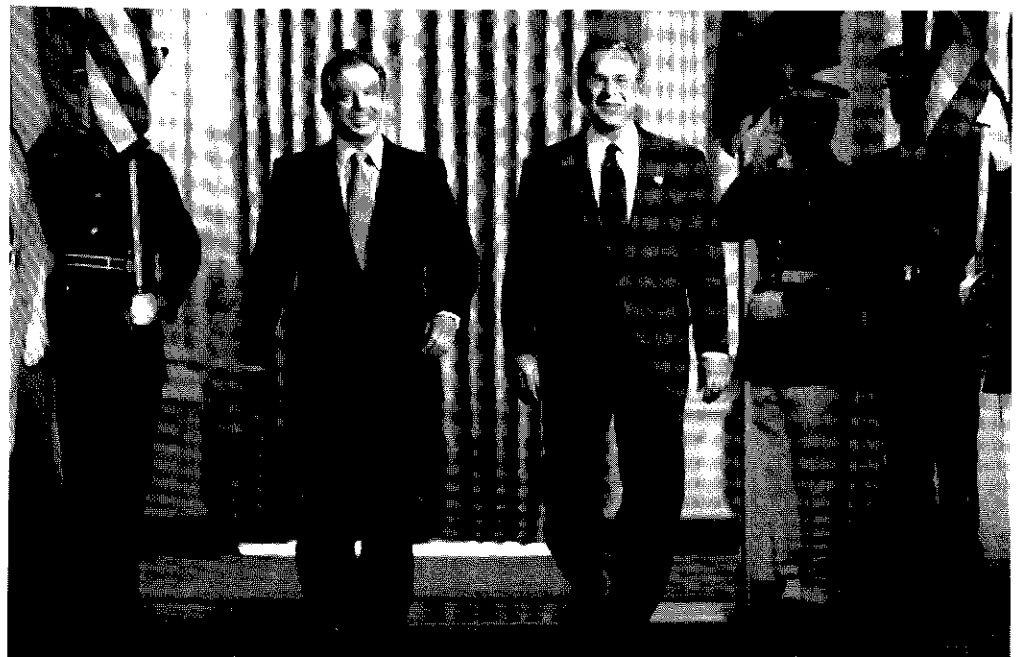
22. Democracy in Iraq – will it bring more freedom for women and more stability for all Iraqis?

21. Another Pakistani President from the officers' mess – General Musharraf, ally of the West in Afghanistan.

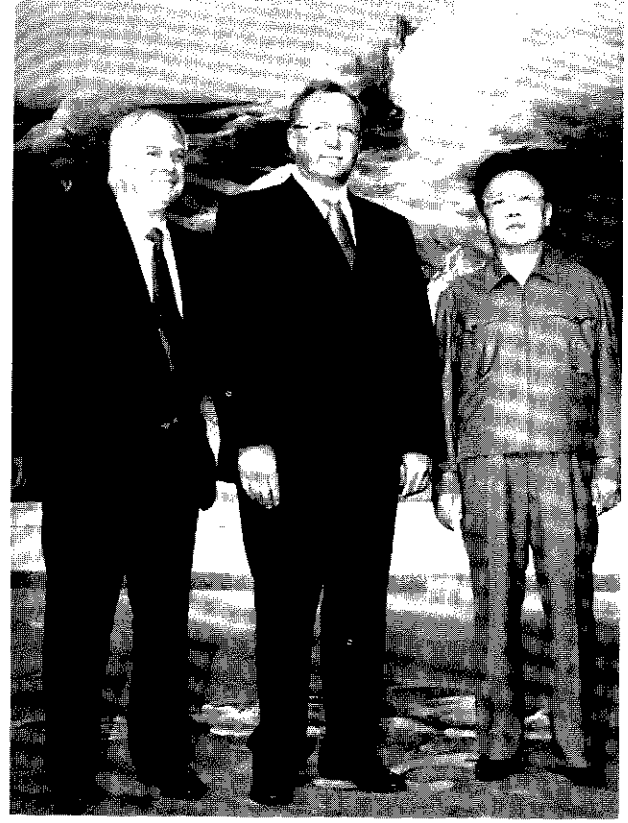
23. Welcome to the twenty-first century – the mass murderer as hero.

24. Guantanamo – a legal and every other sort of black hole.

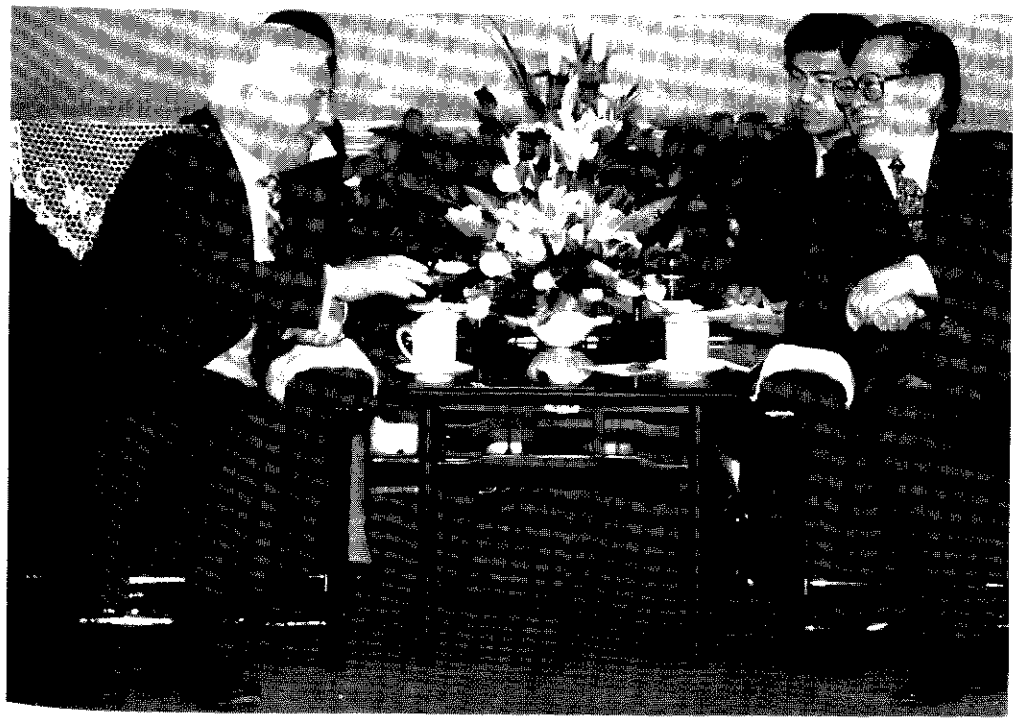
26. The Quartet – all six of us – discuss the Middle East with President Bush, Vice-President Cheney and the White House Press Corps.



28. Another crackpot tyrant who has ruined his country.



30. The author with Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson and North Korea's bouffant-haired 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong-il – 'Why don't the Americans like me?'



32. China's growing might – more missiles, more economic muscle, and much more demand for energy.

were still courageous men and women in Israel and Palestine who could find the path to peace and to a way in which the two states could live harmoniously side by side in what, with shame if not irony, we still call the Holy Land. We know that a two-state solution will require cast-iron guarantees to Israel about its security; the normalization of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours; borders between the two states based on those that existed in 1967 with negotiated territorial swaps; the sharing of Jerusalem as the capital of the two states; the end of Jewish settlement activity; and an agreed curtailment of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to what is now Israel. We know how the violence should end, but will it?

The international community's policy in the last few years has been based on three propositions. First, that Mr Sharon and his government genuinely believe in the creation of a viable Palestinian state. Second, that the Palestinian political leaders will be able, and have the will, to convince their community that that goal will only be achieved if they give up violence, even against what they see as an illegal and aggressive occupation of their own land. Third, that Mr Sharon and his government will take action (for example, on the dismantling of settlements), which will help the Palestinian leaders to accomplish the leadership tasks assigned to them. It has taken gymnastic leaps of faith to believe over the last few years that these propositions remain true. Now we face the real test, in circumstances made more propitious by the arrival in 2004 of 'time's wingèd chariot', and its departure with Mr Arafat on board.

Throughout the first Bush administration, we were told in Europe that Arafat himself was 'the' problem. I heard Dr Rice say it over and over again. She would brook no disagreement. Most of us found no difficulty in recognizing that he was 'a' problem, and a very big, bad one indeed. But 'the' problem? Whether with a definite or an indefinite article, the problem is in any case no longer there, so progress should be a lot easier, and in a second Bush term there will presumably be fewer political constraints on heavier involvement in the region. If, that is, there were any at all before. Mr Sharon's decision to quit Gaza is welcome, provided it is a step on the road towards creating a viable Palestinian state – not a collection of different scraps of territory, divided by concrete, soldiers and barbed wire. No state that resembles

a Swiss cheese can be regarded as viable. No sustainable solution can be found in establishing a mixed bag of Palestinian Bantustans with the symbols of sovereign statehood, but the reality of fragmented and impoverished dependence. Should we have any doubts at all about the outcome that Mr Sharon and those in Washington who support unquestioningly this 'man of peace' would like to see? If the building and expansion of settlements is a guide, scepticism is, alas, justified. While the Oslo Peace Process rolled on, building confidence it was said, Israelis continued to build settlements around Jerusalem and on the hillsides of the West Bank. Settlement activity – creating new facts on the ground – continues to this day. Settlements housing a few are closed down in Gaza; settlements housing many are constructed on the West Bank. Tear down here, build up there. When Mr Sharon's senior adviser Dov Weisglass said in late 2004 that the plan to disengage from Gaza in effect froze the peace process (that it was so much 'formaldehyde'), and that the Americans agreed to Israel retaining large settlements on the West Bank with many being dismantled only when 'the Palestinians turn into Finns', his remarks had a pretty authentic ring.

Europeans should be tough with the Palestinians over security, much tougher than we were able to be when Arafat still survived in the rubble of his office, his baleful influence far greater than his governing authority. We should press for far tighter monitoring of Palestinian security activities. The help we give the Palestinian authority should continue to be dependent on Palestinian fulfilment of strict conditions. (The institutional arrangements in Palestine that everyone now accepts as a suitable channel for assisting the would-be state are largely the result of the pressure we in Europe exerted in recent years.) However, we will not secure the long-term changes necessary in Palestine unless there is clear evidence of an equivalent Israeli response, and the dismantling of settlements is the best measure of Israel's commitment to a sustainable solution.

A peace settlement between Israel and Palestine would help transform the prospects for the relationship between the West and the Arab Near East, and indeed between the West and the whole of the Islamic world. It would be absurd to suggest that Islamic terrorism has been driven above all by compassion for the Palestinian people, whose

condition does indeed deserve the greatest sympathy. But the terrorists exploit the Palestinian issue: and it fertilizes terrorism's breeding grounds. Television footage of Israeli helicopter gunships rocketing Palestinian refugee camps alongside similar pictures of American assaults on Iraqi Sunni heartlands inevitably result in more or less complete identification in Arab minds of the Israeli and American causes. This does not help America, or Europe, or the moderates and reformers in the Arab world. Nothing matters more in President Bush's second term than peace between Israel and Palestine.

Mr Sharon has exploited very cleverly the American fear of terrorism, and the understandable determination of the American people and administration to root it out, in his handling of the Palestinian intifada. Similarly, President Putin has sought to identify his own war in Chechnya with the global campaign against terrorism. This is not a wholly unreasonable point. The Chechen rebels are wicked and brutal. If one were, however, to take the comparison entirely on the Russian president's terms, the conclusions would be pretty depressing. The Chechnya war grinds horribly on, contaminating the northern and southern Caucasus, an indictment of Russian incompetence and corruption. If the overall effort to contain and reduce terrorism goes as badly elsewhere, then we all face a miserable and very dangerous future.

It is easy to understand how we in Europe could find it so difficult to put together an effective and coherent position on the Middle East and on Iraq. But it is more puzzling to fathom why we had so much of a problem in managing sensibly our relations with Russia. It should be an important aim of European policy to promote the growth of prosperity, stability and freedom in Russia as in our other neighbouring countries. Indeed, the task in Russia should be given priority because Russia is so large, with a history of superpower status, a hugely influential cultural heritage, and energy supplies that Europe needs. You do not have to warm to the angst-ridden Russian soul or enthuse about all those dripping birch forests to recognize how much western Europe owes culturally to our great Slavic neighbour; how much we created problems for ourselves by cutting Lenin's Russia off from the rest of Europe (which, admittedly, it wanted to consume in

the flames of revolution); and how much the resistance to the post-war threat of nuclear-armed Communist tyranny helped to define the nature of west European democracy. We should sympathize with Russia's efforts to recover from the crude early effort to embrace democracy and capitalism without property rights, the enforcement of contracts and the rule of law. This produced chaos, robbery, inequality and lawlessness. We should also be understanding about the bruised sensitivities caused by loss of empire. Many of us have experienced that. But sympathy and understanding can only stretch so far. When I hear some Russian spokesmen on this theme, I wonder how much Britain's partners would have commiserated with us in the 1940s and 50s if our world view had sounded like the self-pitying rant of a member of the League of Empire Loyalists.

After seventy years of isolation, the Russian economy remains small – perhaps 1 per cent of world output – with low investment, a decaying infrastructure, large and distorting subsidies to housing and electricity, little by way of a small-business sector, and doubts about private property rights. The economy floats on the success of the energy sector – oil and gas – and has benefited from cautious management in the last five years as well as institutional and legal reforms, some of which have even been properly implemented. Yet when Russia becomes a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), I doubt whether we should expect the profile of Russian exports to Europe and the rest of the world to change much. Energy and commodities predominate; it will be a long time before 'Made in Russia' is a label that attracts customers. Russia receives little foreign direct investment given its size, and the Yukos affair – the looting of a private company whose owner's political ambitions riled President Putin – will reduce the flow even further. Capital flight from Russia and the laundering of cash through Cyprus and other offshore banking centres suggest that many members of the Russian entrepreneurial class (both within and outside the law) see better prospects of earning a fast rouble abroad than at home.

The demographic prospects in Russia are grim. The population shrank in the decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union by 5 million; it has the highest mortality rate in Europe and one of the lowest birth rates. Russia's own estimates suggest that the population

will contract by over 30 per cent to 101 million by mid-century, but statisticians concede that it could be lower. At the moment the death rate exceeds the birth rate by 70 per cent. There is an epidemic of public health problems – drugs, alcohol, tobacco and sexually transmitted diseases – and the war in Chechnya has helped to spread TB. Russia has a skilled and educated workforce, and a strong community of scientists, but public health and demographic problems continue to affect the size and quality of the workforce and, if President Putin is to be believed, national security as well. In his first state of the nation address in July 2000, he warned, 'We are facing the serious threat of turning into a decaying nation.'

I imagine that it is often tough in Russia to distinguish between legitimate business and organized crime. A friend of mine tells the story of a next-door neighbour in his block of flats – quiet, from the northern Caucasus – who kept to himself. Once a week a large car stopped outside the block; two bodyguards got out, covering the street with concealed weapons; one then entered the flats ahead of a third man carrying a bag full of money. The neighbour took delivery. It was all very matter-of-fact – 'Neighbours', Russian-style. The consequences of corruption are equally evident. Where the Yeltsin family and their hangers-on blazed the trail, the former secret policemen who now surround President Putin follow close behind. When we were negotiating WTO access with the Russians, the last two sticking points were awkward precisely because they touched on corrupt private interests: the overflight charges that European airlines have to pay to fly over Siberia, and the liberalization of telecommunications.

President Putin's regime rests on pillars that would have been familiar to the last tsar before the revolution – the army, the secret service, the Kremlin bureaucracy and nationalism. 'Our partner' and 'our friend', as President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder call him, has tightened the grip of his security apparatchiks over political life in Russia. Taking the wicked massacre of children by terrorists at a Beslan school in 2004 as an excuse, President Putin has continued the squeeze on such Russian pluralism as had begun to flower. His government now controls the audiovisual news media; print journalists are browbeaten and even poisoned; provincial governors are handpicked by the Kremlin rather than elected; and the security services

have greater powers to silence opposition. For all those who have seen strong signs of nascent Russian pluralism – as I did at the so-called Moscow School (a training course for democratic activists) – the Kremlin's reversal of policy on modernization and reform is doubly depressing.

I first met President Putin in late 1999. We were in Helsinki for the EU–Russia Summit. At the last moment, President Yeltsin was indisposed, not a rare occurrence during his presidency. He sent acting Prime Minister Putin to represent him. Putin is a slight, fit-looking man, sharp witted, very cold-eyed, with a good line in rather hectoring argument, seizing on alleged double standards to deflect criticism. He is well briefed and holds particularly strong opinions about Moslems (he turned away questions on Chechnya from one journalist at a press conference with an unsavoury reference to the brotherhood of the circumcised), about terrorism, about the Baltic States and their attitude to their Russian-speaking minority, and about the strategic importance of oil and gas. That first encounter was on a day when the news agencies were reporting explosions and great loss of life at a market in Grozny. We asked him about the reports. He claimed to be uninformed but said he would check on them. He came back to us to say that it was what counterterrorist experts call 'an own goal'. The Chechen rebels ran a weapons bazaar and some of their own explosives had detonated. At lunch he sat between Javier Solana and me. We quizzed him about this response. He looked us in the eye and repeated the story. It was odd. I had never been so blatantly lied to at a meeting like this before. Normally, mendacity comes in better disguise. The damage had, of course, been done by Russian forces, which were soon to reduce Grozny to a ruin similar to Beirut or Kabul. We knew that Putin was lying. He knew that we knew he was lying. He did not give a damn, and we all let him get away with it – on that occasion, and again and again.

At first we used to raise Chechnya at meetings. At the heads of government meeting a few weeks after that first encounter in Helsinki, with the media in a frenzy of concern about Russian abuse of human rights in Chechnya and the disproportionate use of force against the rebels there, Chancellor Schröder supported by President Chirac suggested that we should put on hold the provisions of our long-

standing cooperation agreement with the Russians. This was a meaningless gesture, and I said so, questioning exactly how I was to describe the results of our decision if pressed by the media or even by our own officials. The President loftily responded that this was a matter of bureaucratic detail, and that the Commission should leave the big political issues to leaders. This was the high-water mark of President Chirac's insignificant stand for human rights in Russia. Within weeks he was cosying up to Putin and he never looked back. And also within weeks my officials and I at the European Commission were being hectored for being uncooperative with Russia.

The whole Chechnya story continued to be depressing. Critics of Russian policy could not fool themselves that there was an easy way out of the murderous crisis. The state that was created after the first Chechnya war in the mid-1990s was a terrorist haven. It was never going to be easy to find a political accommodation, and while Russia exaggerated the threat that Chechnya posed to her territorial integrity, she could legitimately expect the international community to give this integrity unqualified support. We could also have provided more practical support for fighting terrorism in Chechnya and for reconstructing the economy of the territory. But there was never a realistic Russian political strategy; the Russian armed forces were brutal, corrupt and incompetent; and our efforts to help – for example, through the provision of humanitarian assistance – were treated with derision. Russian officials – President Putin, prime ministers, foreign ministers – obfuscated and lied. They ignored our letters. They denied that we had raised concerns about specific issues with them – for example, access for humanitarian workers to the UN's secure radio network. Naturally, they got away with it.

As I said, in the early years we would raise Chechnya with Russia at meetings. This usually happened when the presidency was in the hands of the smaller, northern member states – Denmark, Ireland, Sweden. But increasingly Chechnya was regarded as a rather tiresome obsession of the European Commission. At a summit in Moscow under the Spanish presidency, José María Aznar – who had flown to Moscow in Mr Putin's private jet – brushed the issue aside as being of little consequence. Prime Minister Berlusconi went a step further and acted, in his own words, as President Putin's defence attorney at

a toe-curlingly embarrassing press conference, giving him extravagant cover on Chechnya, the Yukos affair and media freedom. Meanwhile Russian and Chechen casualties in the northern Caucasus mounted. Some estimates suggest that in the wars fought by Presidents Yeltsin and Putin, 250,000 Chechens have died and the population of the territory has fallen from 1.5 million to 500,000 at the most. Our ally, friend and partner in the fight against terrorist barbarity does not appear at first blush to have much to teach us.

The effect of our feebleness in handling Russia is as bad for Russia itself as it is for us. Negotiations are endless and do not get very far. In every discussion the Russians try to 'cherry-pick', focusing on the issues that concern them and ignoring the ones that bother Europe. Because we are not consistent and firm, we do less business than we would like and so do the Russians. In five and a half years, we did three significant deals with Russia. We had a more or less satisfactory negotiation on WTO access, despite the efforts of some member states to push us into unnecessary and disadvantageous concessions. We also concluded a difficult agreement with Russia about Kaliningrad. A third agreement in 2004 extended the trade and cooperation agreement negotiated with Russia by the original fifteen member states to the ten new members. I had responsibility for these two latter sets of talks. Negotiations on Kaliningrad were particularly troublesome because Mrs Putin herself came from Kaliningrad, and because the key issue of access through Lithuania to this part of Russia (now girdled by the EU) meant that all the President's and the Duma's dislike of the Baltic states, once part of the Soviet Union, bubbled to the surface. Despite the behaviour of some of our member states, we got an agreement on Kaliningrad during a Danish presidency, with the tough, no-nonsense Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in the chair on our side of the table. In the case of the extension of our Russian agreement to the new members, we were helped above all by them. The arrival in the EU of the former Soviet satrapies, now proud and independent states with a certain experience of dealing with Moscow, firmed up our policy. An ounce of their experience was worth several tons of humbug from Paris, London, Berlin and Rome.

Why did the bigger member states – France and Germany in particular – find it so difficult to develop a sensible, principled strategy on Russia? In Germany's case, maybe Chancellor Schröder was affected by Mr Putin's fluency in German, though it is odd to like someone for an attribute acquired in order to function as a spy in your own country. I imagine there were three main reasons for the Chirac-Schröder approach. First, President Putin was seen as a useful occasional ally against the United States (for example, during the Iraq war); and the notion of Europe as a counterpoise to Washington might have been given a little more credibility if Russia were to be added to the European mix. Second, President Chirac in particular sees diplomacy in terms of great men, the leaders of great countries, talking together in mirrored, marbled halls. Cast detail to the winds; history is made by those who understand the grander picture, and who can summarize its most salient features in a portentous platitude. Third, some Europeans assume that Russia's energy resources give Moscow a hold over us. In truth, Russia needs our market just as much as we need Russia's product, and if we were smarter we would strengthen our negotiating hand by doing more to increase the flow of oil and gas to Europe from the rich fields of central Asia and Azerbaijan.

The main victims of our failure to develop a better and more balanced relationship with Russia are its neighbours. Again, here we fool ourselves. I began this chapter by saying that Europe wants stable, well-off neighbours. This is not Russia's aim. Russia wants weak neighbours and a sphere of influence inhabited by dependent supplicants. So we make no progress in solving the disputes that enfeeble Russia's neighbours: Moldova's problems with the breakaway, bandit territory of Transdnistria; the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh; the weakening of Georgia through Russian support of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. 'Where can you still see the Soviet Union these days?' I once asked. 'In the Russian Foreign Ministry,' was the reply. Actually, the ministry's DNA has older origins. Russian foreign policy around its borders is tsarist in intent: post-imperialism as practised (in Georgia's and Moldova's case) under the protection of corrupt Russian troops involved in the smuggling of drugs, weapons, fuel and alcohol. As Professor William Wallace has observed, there is something dangerously absurd about a policy that bitterly resists any autonomy in Chechnya in the northern Caucasus

while supporting the secession of non-viable parts of Georgia in the southern Caucasus.

Perhaps we should take some recent comfort from Russia's decision not to intervene in the last triumphant stages of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine – whatever Russia had been conspiring to do earlier. It will take vigilance to ensure that Ukraine is not now bullied off the democratic path it has chosen, either by political threats or by Russia's manipulation of Ukraine's energy requirements. But the survival of a democratic prospect in Kiev does not tell us much about what will happen in her bigger encircling neighbour. Russia has been one of the great survivors of history. With luck she will resume her erratic journey towards democracy and pluralism. We are not, however, doing much to encourage this process, conniving rather at policies and attitudes that will create a more dangerous neighbourhood for us all. Russia needs a strong and outspoken partner in Europe, not a mealy-mouthed pushover. If we want Russia to share our values, a good place to start standing up for them is in Russia itself.

8

Happy Families

Forget Europe wholly, your veins throb with blood.
To which the dull current in hers is but mud . . .
O my friends, thank your God, if you have one, that He
'Twixt the old world and you set the gulf of a sea.

James Russell Lowell

It is, I suppose, what Donald Rumsfeld might call a 'known known'. Even while we are pelting one another with genetically modified tomatoes, we do know really that there is more that unites the transatlantic community – North America and Europe – than divides us. The speech that asserts this proposition, so regularly made and sometimes even heeded, comes easily: 'The new republic formed from the human, cultural and political stock of old Europe . . . the shared attachment to Enlightenment values . . . participative democratic government under the rule of law . . . the common sacrifice in war . . . the joint post-war commitment to new forms of global economic and political governance . . . the struggle to repel Communism's advance . . . the vision of a world, prosperous, democratic and free . . . hands across the ocean . . . "westward, look, the land is bright" . . . to "the indispensable nation" add "the indispensable partnership".' And so on. Both sides of the ocean can do this stuff in their sleep.

Like many known knowns, it is broadly true, but it is not of course the whole story. Moreover, a known *un*known is that we cannot be entirely sure what is going to happen to the partnership in the coming years. To raise this question, to suggest that change may be in the air,

to strip away some of the myths that obfuscate the story of the alliance – the myth that it has always been plain sailing, or the myth that it has only been in recent times that the alliance has hit roughish water – is to court disapproval. In *Henry IV, Part II*, Shakespeare noted:

> Yet the first bringer of unwelcome news
> Hath but a losing office . . .

Unless, however, we discuss these issues free of cloying cliché and political prejudice, we may find it too tough to manage our relationship as it changes in the years ahead, to our mutual benefit and to that of the rest of the world. We will also set back the prospect of the values that we publicly esteem, and sometimes uphold, gaining sway in other continents as the century advances.

At the beginning of the 1890s, America might have been described as a free-rider in a world made pretty safe by Britain's imperial reach and naval might. The British navy had 33 coaling stations and 11 bases in the seas around America, which – while claiming by then the status of the world's greatest industrial power – possessed no battleships and had only 25,000 men under arms. For years America had successfully pursued its revolutionary foreign policy, offering friendship to all but concluding alliances with none. In a world of empires, America the republic had chosen another path. That all changed with the Spanish-American War of 1898. America annexed Hawaii, Guam, Wake Island and the Philippines, where 200,000 civilians died between 1898 and 1902. The republic's innocence was lost, but not its aspiration to avoid foreign entanglements, wherever possible. Though persuaded reluctantly to come to the aid of Britain and France late in the First World War, America was not keen to become enmeshed in the problems of war, peace and economic depression with which others wrestled unsuccessfully in the 1920s and 1930s. Neville Chamberlain was not alone in thinking that, 'It is always best and safest to count on nothing from the Americans but words.' That changed with the Second World War and its aftermath. Now America, the planet's mightiest military and economic power, faced a world in which the world's oldest empires were disintegrating. Only the new Soviet empire in Europe remained, threatening the rest of the continent with subjugation to tyranny. America embraced, with

becoming reluctance, a new role of global leader, in command of a virtual empire of commercial and cultural predominance and of more or less willing dependent feudatories. 'We have got to understand,' said Dean Acheson, 'that all our lives the danger, the uncertainty, the need for alertness, for effort, for discipline, will be upon us. This is new to us. It will be hard for us.' And so it was, though the task was handled with extraordinary dexterity and commendable commitment.

Even for a great power, diplomacy is not easy, and America had to cope regularly with the assumption that it was throwing its weight around, even when it was doing no such thing. It also had to deal with three other problems. First, there was the resentment of those who had been saved, militarily and economically. In *The Analects*, Confucius noted the colleague who was cross with him even though, as Confucius pointed out, he had done him no favours. Second, there was condescension masquerading as sophistication. Third, there was resistance to what was seen as the Americanization of indigenous cultures and ways of life: we dressed like Americans, listened to their music, watched their films, and drank their carbonated drinks – even while we rejected some of what they seemed to stand for, particularly in the miserable years of the McCarthyite inquisition and during the failed efforts to bring what Senator William Fulbright called 'little pissant' Vietnam to heel.

It is plain wrong to see anti-Americanism as a phenomenon of recent years, the reaction to an assertive, nationalist president, whom we in Europe do not understand and with whom we assuredly fail to empathize. In the most creative, generous-spirited and comradely years of American leadership there were still those in Europe who carped and bitched. Sometimes there was at least a shred of justification for the resentment – at America entering the war so late, and at the ill-disguised relish with which Americans read the last rites over the British Empire. But more frequently the European antagonism was reprehensible. Unsure whether it should take greater exception to the help it was offered, or to the prospect that it might not receive all the assistance it wanted, France took the lead, displaying what the historian Robert Gildea describes as 'a kind of petulant ingratitude'. *Le Monde*, founded in 1944 after the liberation of France, supported an armed and neutral Europe standing between the US and USSR. The

arrival of the new NATO commander in Europe in 1952 was greeted by French riots. Those political fatheads, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, were in the thick of the troublemaking. As early as 1946, de Beauvoir was complaining that America's attitude to Europe and France was one of 'arrogant condescension'. The American soldiers who had once been 'our liberty' were now 'our dependence and a mortal threat'. Later she was to opine that '*our* victory had been stolen from us', though the use of 'our' in this sentence begged a few questions. But as the early victories in the battle to keep Coca-Cola out of France were reversed by the French courts, it became clear that no corner of France was safe from the incoming American tide.

The British had their own special brand of patronizing contempt, which was not anti-American, old boy. It is just, said Harold Nicolson to an American acquaintance, that Europeans were 'frightened that the destinies of the world should be in the hands of a giant with the limbs of an undergraduate, the emotions of a spinster, and the brain of a peahen'. You find the finest literary flowering of these sentiments in the novels of Graham Greene, particularly *The Quiet American*. Greene was prescient about what was to become the bloody quagmire of Vietnam, but even so the depth of his hostility to America is pretty shocking. Again and again, he puts the boot in. The young American idealist Alden Pyle 'was determined to do good, not to any individual person but to a country, a continent, a world . . . He was in his element now with the whole universe to improve.' Most famously Greene notes (and he is clearly talking about all Americans, not just Pyle): 'I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused.' In the frontispiece to the novel (published in 1955) he quotes Byron:

> This is the patent age of new inventions
> For killing bodies, and for saving souls,
> All propagated with the best intentions.

So it was not only the boulevard Bolsheviks, the frequently traduced French intellectuals, who seethed and scorned. Within a few years of American-led military victory, the foundation of the United Nations and the launch of the Marshall Plan, here was old Europe showing its appreciation. As Randy Newman once sang:

> We give them money – but are they grateful?
> No, they're spiteful and they're hateful . . .

There was never a golden age in transatlantic relations when all Europeans doffed their hats to the superpower that defended our freedom. We were always a bit tiresome, and sometimes – as I have said – there was a good reason for it.

For all the talk about family, Europeans and Americans are at once cousins and strangers. We are more different than we like to admit, and are surprisingly ignorant about one another. Europeans note with surprise how many Americans have never travelled outside their own country and how some politicians even make a virtue out of not possessing a passport. More tellingly, Studs Terkel notes how the taxi drivers in his home city of Chicago, who come from every part of the world, regularly express to him their astonishment at how little their American passengers know about the cabbies' countries of origin. I guess this casual disregard of the world outside has much to do with being a superpower. Some days you can scour in vain even quality American newspapers to find a story about Europe. This reflects, in part, where most of the significant political action is. In any newspaper in any other part of the world, there is page after page of news about America – its politics, its business, its popular culture. So we really should know more about Americans than they know about us.

I doubt if that is true; and our own assumption that America is much like us only bigger, faster and richer, is constantly upended. It is a more regular experience if you are a native English speaker. Shared language creates a presumption of similarity that does not long survive a brush with reality. I remember the shock on my first visit as a student when I realized that I felt more at home in Athens, Greece, with few English speakers, than in Athens, Ohio. The sense of cultural alienation varies from one part of the country to another. I recall a long visit of speaking engagements to the West Coast of the United States, when I was Governor of Hong Kong. My visit began in Orange County, south of Los Angeles. It might as well have been the moon. I dined off that legendary rubber chicken, with a limp salad, iced water and weak coffee, and then tried to answer questions from an audience

that clearly regarded me as a quaint even exotic creature, with curious views way off any recognizable political map. We moved north to Los Angeles and then on to San Francisco and Seattle (one of my favourite cities anywhere in the world). As we struck north, I felt increasingly comfortable, though San Francisco is sometimes politically a little piquant even for my own tastes. But Seattle felt like home: a lovely city whose inhabitants, I suspect, fib about the climate in order to keep outsiders away. As one might expect, Seattle has one of the greatest bookshops you could ever hope to find, the Elliott Bay.

The surprising realization that you are very foreign in many parts of the United States comes hand in hand with the shock of discovering how difficult it is to generalize, and that in a way is what makes me doubt how accurate is the endlessly parrotted observation that we are all, Europeans and Americans, much the same, and share basically the same values. Which Americans are we talking about? Do we mean Americans who are more obese than any people I have seen anywhere in the world, or Americans who live a life governed by ascetic fitness regimes with carefully controlled diets of vitamin supplements and steamed broccoli? Do we compare ourselves to evangelical Christians, who wait expectantly for Armageddon and a rather dramatic end to the Middle East Peace Process, or to those for whom religion is an intolerant gospel of political correctness that puts many of the values of the Age of Enlightenment to the sword – seeking, for example, to hound from office the president of one of the world's greatest universities for speculating aloud about the sources of gender differences? Do we identify with Americans who preach a gospel of rugged, individual capitalism, scattering its riches widely to the benefit of all, or Americans who appear to stack the cards in favour of those who have plenty and who ignore those who have little or nothing? Which America shares European values?

In so far as these things bother him (after all, he has been elected for a second term, and this time without the judicial intervention of the Supreme Court), President Bush's problem with much European opinion is that he stands at the heart of several of these puzzling questions about how much we Europeans really *do* have in common with our American partners. The European identity itself is admittedly complex. What does an Andalusian peasant have in common with a

Swedish lumberjack, a Catholic priest in Trieste with a Lutheran pastor in Tallinn? There are certainly differences in Europe. But on the issues of religion, patriotism, political conservatism and inequality, Europeans are clearly much closer to one another than they are to Americans – and all these issues have become increasingly important to the way America is seen and behaves around the world.

Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that 'peoples always feel the effects of their origins'. We should not therefore be too surprised that America today asserts its religiosity with such selective and self-centred force. The Puritan Founding Father, John Winthrop, argued that the early colonists were creating 'a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us'. The colonists were doing the Almighty's work. 'Thus stands the cause between God and us,' said Winthrop. 'We are entered into Covenant with Him for this work.' From the very beginning then, Americans saw themselves in Herman Melville's words as:

> . . . the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world . . . God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet come and lie down under the shade of our ark, without bloody hands being lifted. God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls.

Some of those who lay down 'under the shade of our ark' needed some persuasion. True, America is predominantly the home of old Europeans who fled west to escape political persecution or economic hardship, or who emigrated simply out of the hope of a better life. Most of them found one, not least the relations of my Irish forebears (nine out of my stepfather's ten West of Ireland uncles emigrated to North America), who followed 'the tenement trail' from slums to suburbs. But there were others who had the choice made for them – the native Americans (W. H. Auden's 'cudgelled people') and the African victims of the slave trade.

The concept of 'a chosen people' can be attractive when its leaders summon their fellow citizens to a generous and whole-hearted commitment to the ideals of a religion that boasts charity (in the case of Christianity) as the greatest of its three theological virtues. Martin Luther King's crusade for justice for black Americans, couched in

biblical language, gave many non-Americans the vision of a city *being built* on a hill. It was work in progress. When black Americans were 'free at last', we sensed that there was a chance for more people in other countries to be free as well. The example was catching. Yet too often the chosen people seem to have assumed possession of a golden share in God. They are unique among His creatures, like many of Queen Victoria's subjects, practising and aspiring to standards that no one else can attain; yet because of their uniqueness they are able to impose their own way of doing things on all the lesser people of God's largely unfavoured earth. Might is clothed in holy orders – and the 'orders' embrace both meanings of the word. A former Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, setting out the limits of Christian patriotism in an admirable sermon (though much disliked by Margaret Thatcher and the tabloids) at the thanksgiving service to mark the end of the Falklands War in 1982, argued that, 'Those who dare to interpret God's will must never claim Him as an asset for one nation or group rather than another.' It was true of Britain then, and it is true of America now. The American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr went much further, exploring the irony of a country full of committed Christians tempted in the post-war years to play God with the world, helped by nuclear weapons and the Central Intelligence Agency. Today President Bush's rhetoric is packed with references to the concordance between God's will and America's mission in the world. 'The liberty we prize,' the President says modestly, 'is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity.' But it is for America to define both the liberty – God not being immediately available to do the job Himself – and the best way to secure it. In this sense, when the President was deemed after 11 September 2001 to have misspoken his launching of a crusade against Islamic terrorism, because of unfortunate medieval parallels, he was really enunciating a profound truth. He is seen by many of his supporters as playing a quasi-sacerdotal role: God's instrument to accomplish His will on earth, and by direct identification the will of His chosen people too.

The prominence of religiosity in American political language, electoral rhetoric and policy-making, is another reminder of how wrong the experts were who predicted, not long ago, that religion would play a declining role in international politics. Our late Polish Pope

John Paul II helped to redraw the boundaries of freedom in Europe, though he does not seem to have had much impact on the family behaviour of Europeans. Islamism grows in intensity – and, in some of its manifestations, toxicity. How influential (and benign) is American religion? Clearly the importance of evangelical Christians has been strengthened by their alliance with right-wing Catholics (over abortion, stem cell research, sex education and gay issues) and with right-wing Jews (over the Middle East). Although, if I were Jewish, I would think twice about throwing in my lot with those Christians who foretell an imminent last battle between Good and Evil in the Holy Land and the conversion of the Jewish race to Christianity. Many Europeans, including those like me who are practising Christians, are uncomfortable with the messages, behaviour and beliefs of America's fundamentalist Christians, just as we are with fundamentalism elsewhere. We have suffered from fundamentalism in Europe ourselves. I used to muse, when we were condemning the Taliban's desecration of Buddhist carved figures in Afghanistan, about Oliver Cromwell's troops riding from one English cathedral to another to smash the heads off the Christian statuary. We are still not entirely free from religious fundamentalist bigotry; Northern Ireland comes to mind. But on the whole, this is part of our history, and the Christian message is usually today conveyed in moderate tones that do not deny past crimes done in God's name nor the existence of the modern world.

One reason why 'Come to Jesus' oratory may grate is that, while Europeans have not wholly turned their backs on religion, it seems to matter less to us than to Americans. According to the Pew Research Center, 59 per cent of Americans say that religion is very important to them, compared to only 27 per cent of Italians, 21 per cent of Germans and 11 per cent of the French. America remains, in G. K. Chesterton's phrase, a nation 'with the soul of a church', a church moreover with some surprisingly traditionalist views, for reasons that may not be wholly dissimilar to the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism. In its seeming destruction of familiar landmarks and signposts, globalization perhaps encourages a reversion to what we take to be simple, ancient truths and customs. The church, mosque or temple provides an oasis of certainty, order and beauty from the assault of alien ideas and temptations. In his book *The European Dream*, Jeremy

Rifkin sets out some of the statistical evidence of religious belief in America, where 46 per cent of the population describe themselves as born-again Christians in what has been called the fourth great religious revival to sweep America in the last three centuries. Over two-thirds of Americans believe in the Devil (the figure is the same for college graduates). A third of all Americans believe that every word in the Bible is God's and a quarter think that the teaching of creationism should be mandatory in publicly funded schools. A recent Gallup Poll showed that almost half of Americans believe in creationism and just over a quarter in evolution. Four out of ten Americans believe that the world will end with an Armageddon battle between Jesus and the Antichrist, and 47 per cent think that the Antichrist is on earth already. (There are no figures for those who believe he is camped out on New York's UN Plaza.)

Does all this actually matter? Rifkin notes that according to the World Values Survey, most Europeans, Canadians and Japanese reckon that there can never be absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil; circumstance plays a part in determining the distinction. Most Americans, on the other hand, believe that the guidelines about what is good and evil are clear and apply to everyone regardless of circumstances. If you are trying to form a common transatlantic view of what sort of world we want to live in and how we can achieve it, it is hard to believe that these differences are of little consequence. Perhaps they will matter most in those areas likely to have the greatest impact on the human condition, where science provides the evidence and the goad for international policy: for example, concerning the environment (to which I will return in the last chapter). Does Jesus have a view on gas-guzzling, four-wheel drive vehicles? I do not spurn religion's role in public debate, but recall Einstein's observation, 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.'

As one might expect, Americans – the 'chosen people' – are more nationalistic than those who are all too aware of their own imperfections. The visitor to the United States is struck by the public evidence of this. Drive through American suburbs and you see so many flagpoles with the Stars and Stripes fluttering over the front lawns. In Britain,

it takes an international football tournament, or the very occasional commemoration of a wartime victory, or a rite of passage in the House of Windsor to get the British to fly the flag, led by the regiment of patriotic cab drivers. For a party to mark the fifth anniversary of my departure from Hong Kong, I hung the old governor's Union Jack from a first-floor window at home. My neighbours thought I had gone mad. One also gets the impression that American visitors to Washington's tourist sights are doing more than spending a jolly family holiday in the capital. They are like Catholics visiting Rome, solemnly trooping around the shrines of a religion. In a National Opinion Research Center Poll, the United States came first of 23 countries in its citizens' sense of national pride. Seventy-two per cent of Americans said they were very proud of their country. Less than half the sample in the main Western democracies – including Britain, Denmark, France, Italy and the Netherlands – said the same. It may surprise Americans to learn that the Pew Research Center found that only one out of every three Frenchmen believed that their culture was superior to others. The figure for Americans was about twice as many. What on earth has got into the cheese-eating brigade? Has 'defeatism' joined 'surrenderism'? While generally kind and welcoming to visitors, Americans have long resented – even more than most others – any criticism of their country. Tocqueville called this 'irritable patriotism'; it is not new but it can be unsettling.

As a British, indeed as a European, Conservative, I believe among other things in markets, individual enterprise, limiting government's role, participative pluralism, personal responsibility, the importance of the family and the rule of law. I am a Catholic and a patriot. So far, I suppose, I am describing someone who could be part of the fast-growing American Right. Dig a little deeper and the comparison starts to look a bit tattered. Capitalism does not for me supersede democracy, nor guarantee it. Nor is it synonymous with the very rich bosses of large corporations making ever more out of a system rigged to their benefit. Capitalism is not a form of religion. Those who play casino capitalism should not be what Tom Wolfe described as 'Masters of the Universe', they should be subject to the same laws, and ethical values as the rest of us. Capitalism should operate within the law, not the law within capitalism. It is offensive that senior figures

in political life find it so easy to confuse making their own private fortune with the public good; the names of Vice President Cheney and Halliburton come to mind without much intellectual strain. And it is surely laughable when the highest awards are showered on those who promote the most gimcrack schemes to make themselves rich, at least for a while. The geniuses who invented the pyramid of derivatives at Long-Term Capital Management were awarded the Nobel Prize for their cleverness, not long before the whole edifice came crashing down with the financial community digging deep into its pockets to prevent too much collateral damage. To every excess, there comes a reaction. Failure to insist on high corporate standards, and on a sense of responsibility to something broader and more important than the maximization of reward for senior executives, strips away part of the essential protection of and justification for what remains the best system for increasing the prosperity of a community.

It is curious that the apologists for the most rampant and uncontrolled forms of capitalism are invariably the greatest critics of government, even though they usually seek to suborn government and the public purse for their purposes. They seek handouts and tax breaks, government contracts and commercial sponsorship. The lobbyists of corporate America crowd around the policy makers and legislators of Washington, helping to make its environs one of the most prosperous parts of the country. Government spending, not least at the Pentagon, helps promote industrial development and the fabulously endowed research programmes on university campuses. Just as the first telegraph line was built by the federal authorities, so at the heart of what used to be called the New Economy lies technology that owes most to government. 'Both the basic science and the technology of the Internet,' writes Godfrey Hodgson in *More Equal Than Others*, 'were largely the product of research and development done under the impetus of the Cold War.' What sense can it make to believe that wealthy corporations should be able to lean on government but that everyone else should stand on their own feet?

As a European Conservative, I believe strongly that the State should not do too much. For most members of the Left and Right in Europe, this debate about the State is a matter of degree. I would like to see the State doing rather less, and individuals doing rather more for

themselves. I do not think it makes sense for conservatives to trade promises with the Left about greater public spending on state services. Conservatives should offer lower taxes, better management of the public sector and the use of market instruments for enhancing the quality of public provision and the resources available to it. I think there is room for greater private provision in health care, education and pensions. I am happy to define a centre-right domestic agenda in these terms, and to be attacked and described as an expenditure cutter as a result. I know of no sensible definition of conservatism that includes the belief in a Big State and writes its manifestos on open cheques for public services.

But I *do* believe in good public services for those who require them. Slash and burn is not a conservative approach to government. Government is not inherently suspect, to be treated as an enemy of a conservative society. Since, as a Conservative, I believe in stability and order under the rule of law, I want government that is responsive, respected and properly endowed to carry out its many functions.

I am also sufficiently conservative to believe in balancing the government's books. I do not like deficits – either when they are run up by governments or by households. As a Conservative in America, I would be appalled at the size of the structural budget deficit and the trade deficit – both now standing at 5 per cent or more of gross domestic product – and at the debts carried by ordinary families. Are these things signs of a vigorous family-oriented Conservative society? America has to attract more than $2 billion a day – weekends included – just to finance its current account deficit. More than 4 dollars out of every 10 of American Treasury bonds, bills and notes are presently held by foreigners. In 2004, America attracted 80 per cent of global savings. In this mad world, the savings of poor Chinese peasants purchase American Treasury securities to help keep interest rates in the US lower and the financing of the deficit more secure. The trade-off for the Chinese and other Asians for investing in this mountain of paper is that it eases the pressures on them over the exchange rate of their own currencies and over the size of their surpluses with America. They fund US debt so that Americans will continue to buy their products. But how would I view this as a Conservative with European values living in America? I would surely be unhappy about my country

borrowing so much from the rest of the world in order to purchase whatever the rest of the world is making. What an old-fashioned Conservative I have clearly become!

I would also be uncomfortable at the scale of household borrowing. Is this a sign of sustainable prosperity or is it a bubble? Americans now save less than 2 per cent of their disposable income. The savings rate in the euro area is about 12 per cent. Total household debt in the US represents 84 per cent of GDP; it is 50 per cent in the euro area. American debt represents 120 per cent of personal disposable income. The euro area figure is 80 per cent. Real increases in wealth come from technological progress or productivity increases, not from asset inflation.

Indebtedness does not feature in my own list of family values, nor do I like the idea of the State abandoning families financially while condoning interference in their private lives. When we talk about the European social model, we are often referring to policies that vary a good deal from country to country, that do not always work particularly well any more, and that certainly require reform. But these policies have one underlying characteristic. We do not believe that extremes of inequality make for social stability, a proposition that also used to find favour in America. Indeed, Tocqueville begins *Democracy in America* with this sentence: 'Among the novel objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of condition among the people.' He could not write the same sentence today. There is greater inequality of wages in America than there was, with corporate chief executive officers earning 107 times as much as average workers, double the ratio in 1989 and 5 times the figure of 40 years ago. There are similar figures for income and wealth: the incomes of the richest grew three times as fast as those of the average family in the 1990s, and during the same period the very rich also increased their share of national wealth. Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, argued that 'this country will not be a permanently good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a reasonably good place for all of us to live in'. Presumably growing inequality is regarded by most voters as an acceptable condition since the issue does not overturn administrations in the way that it would anywhere in Europe (where

inequality has also been growing in some regions, though with much less extreme results).

Europeans use state and public funding to support families in a way that would presumably appal an American Conservative, who believes that most social ills can be alleviated by economic trickle-down (from the bank accounts of the rich to the small wage packets of the poor) or by voluntary action by charitable organizations, for example church groups. Failing social improvement, there is always policing and the penitentiary. In Europe there are 87 prisoners per 100,000 population; in America 685. In Europe more or less free health care and education are at the heart of family policy. Partly as a result, we live longer than Americans and have a much lower infant mortality rate. The health statistics in urban Washington bring to mind those in a developing country. America spends more than anyone else on health care but comes 37th in quality of service. Standards of literacy and numeracy among American school children are poor in comparison with their European and Asian peer groups, but American higher education is the best in the world, partly because of government funding of research but also because of generous support by alumni much encouraged by the tax system.

For many Europeans the greatest difference in values comes in attitudes to human life. It would be dishonest to pretend that Europeans are uniformally opposed to capital punishment. They are not, even if their governments are. But there is far more public opposition to the State taking life than exists in America, and I do not believe that any European country even under the threat of terrorist violence would today restore capital sentences for the most wicked crimes. The greatest difference in attitudes lies elsewhere. I am writing this sentence on a morning when the newspapers have been full of reports of the case of Terri Schiavo, a brain-damaged Florida woman. Congress has rushed through an unprecedented bill to try to encourage the courts to save the life of someone said to be in a permanent vegetative state, a condition from which the American Academy of Neurology says that no one has ever recovered. The President has sacrificed his holiday to return to the White House to sign the bill into law in the middle of the night. Mrs Schiavo's husband and legal guardian wants to withdraw her feeding tube; her parents want to keep her alive; judges have

found in the husband's favour; politicians manoeuvre; the Republican Party's supporters on the religious right bang their Bibles down on the table.

As I write, the morning news has come on leading with the story of another teenage boy who has ran amok with guns killing several schoolmates and members of his family. What chance of Congress passing laws to restrict gun sales and gun ownership, to prevent any more of these sadly too frequent childhood slaughters? There is occasionally evil and insanity, even among children, everywhere. But what sort of family values turn a blind eye to the access that minors have to weapons in America? Worse still, what family code raises its voice against doing anything serious and effective to prevent further teenage atrocities? What would we be told by the right-to-lifers who worked through the night to 'save' Terri Schiavo about the incontinent use of firearms? The usual argument is that it is not the guns that are the problem, it is the people who use them. Extend the argument. It is not the crack cocaine that is the problem, it is the people who use it. It is not the missiles that are the problem, it is the North Koreans who may fire them. Sometimes you extend an argument to absurd lengths to demonstrate its inherent weakness and folly. But this argument begins stupid and ends in small coffins. As it happens, I have always voted in favour of more legal restrictions on abortion and against capital punishment. I think there is some consistency between the positions. But I deplore excessive political interference in right-to-life issues, especially when it is so hypocritical.

Let me reprise my positions as a conservative European. I am a fiscally conservative, free-market believing, family-supporting internationalist, who thinks as a Catholic that my Church goes too far in what it preaches on the family and sexuality. Reading the 2004 study of American conservatism by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*, I think that I have found someone with whom I could sympathize. He supported civil rights, a higher minimum wage and larger immigration quotas. He favoured higher tax when necessary to pay for education and for the nation's science and defence bills. He was a member of Planned Parenthood and a friend of Estelle Griswold, whose legal challenges

helped to enshrine the right of sexual privacy in American law. He co-sponsored the bill that set up the Peace Corps. He hated McCarthyites and scorned partisanship. According to the authors, 'his hostility to the radical right was as much aesthetic as intellectual'. His name was Senator Prescott Bush, the present president's grandfather.

Micklethwait and Wooldridge argue that his sort of conservatism is now only for students of history. The new right, they argue, is the new establishment, whose rise (to paraphrase Tocqueville) has been 'so inevitable, and yet so completely unforeseen'. Perhaps they are correct, although a country's centre of gravity shifts from time to time, and I am more persuaded by those who argue that President Bush was re-elected as a war president than by those who contend that he succeeded principally because he articulates the new Conservative values of a growing majority. Yet certainly for the moment, it looks as though the divisions in attitude between Europe and America may grow, or that, at the very least, they will not dissolve, and that previous assumptions of unity across the Atlantic may come to appear as the unnatural consequences of the Cold War. One of the main criticisms of this thesis of a swelling conservative majority comes from those who argue that because of immigration, America will become more Hispanic and Asian over the coming years. But this should not bring too much comfort to Europeans looking for evidence of shared values. The main source of immigration to America in the past has been Europe. Even as late as the 1950s more than two-thirds of those admitted for settlement to America came from Europe and Canada. By the 1990s, fewer than one in five of new immigrants set out from Europe, almost half were from Latin America and one in five from Asia. It has been estimated that by the middle of the century half the total American population will be Hispanic. Who can tell what the consequences will be for American attitudes and values?

That America is in many respects so different from Europe is a proposition more likely to be opposed than the statement that the country is a mighty superpower economically, culturally and militarily. As an economic powerhouse, America is little bigger than Europe – each economy represents about 30 per cent of world GDP, with Europe

exporting rather more. What is striking is that whatever the cultural and attitudinal differences, the economic ties are intimate and growing, and appear to survive unscathed despite occasional political turbulence. The figures assembled by Dan Hamilton and Joseph Quinlan, in *Partners in Prosperity* for the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University, are compelling. Despite the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the rise of Asia and emerging markets elsewhere, the US and Europe remain by a long way each other's most important commercial partners. The transatlantic economy generates roughly $2.5 trillion in total commercial sales each year. Most American and European investments flow to each other rather than to lower-wage developing nations. Despite all the rows over Iraq in 2003, corporate America invested nearly $87 billion in Europe in that year, with $7 billion in Germany, and $2.3 billion in France, a 10 per cent increase on the previous year. (This was the year of the American car bumper stickers proclaming 'Iraq Now, France Next'.) American investments in the Netherlands in that year were almost as great as in the whole of Asia. Over the past decade US firms have put ten times as much capital into the Netherlands as into China, and twice as much as into Mexico. Total European investment in the US exceeds $1 trillion, this accounts for nearly three-quarters of all foreign investment in America. American companies make half their annual foreign profits in Europe, and many European multinationals regard America as their most important market. It would take an awful lot of uneaten French fries and boycotted bottles of Pomerol to equal the value of the growth each year in European sales to the American market.

There are, periodically, suggestions that we should try to stimulate further transatlantic economic integration by working to create a free trade area around our ocean. This would be a vast political undertaking, and I have doubts about how much it would accomplish and how long it would take to achieve results. Most of the barriers to even greater trade and investment across the Atlantic are not old-fashioned tariffs but complex issues of harmonizing our financial and other regulations. Negotiating improvements here would be a marathon, with twenty-five countries on one side and America's quasi-independent regulatory agencies on the other, buffeted as they are by

protectionist industrial lobbying. It will, for example, take a painfully long time to negotiate an open skies agreement between America and Europe that would bring so many benefits to air passengers. Security concerns add a troublesome dimension. As a European commissioner I shared responsibility with my Dutch colleague, Fritz Bolkestein, for negotiating with the Americans on their right to have access to the details of passengers travelling to the United States. American concerns were wholly understandable; the way they went about expressing them was rather less so. With Bolkestein I had a wretchedly complicated job trying to squeeze concessions on their original impossible conditions out of Americans, and then sell the same concessions to the European Parliament. The Americans thought the two of us were unreasonable; the Parliament thought we were Washington's patsies.

American officials have a tendency to declare their policy and negotiate about it afterwards, having created all sorts of problems for their partner, in this case over our data protection legislation. I guess this is the sort of behaviour that you expect from a superpower. But is it imperial? Are we all dealing today, like it or lump it, with the new Rome to whom as outlying feudatories we must pay homage and our dues. America's military might, and the way it is deployed, provide the evidence that some seek in order to make this charge. America spends on defence more than Europe, Russia and China combined – indeed, probably as much as the rest of the world put together. Through the last decade defence spending has amounted to about 4 per cent of America's GDP. America could knock over any government in the world if it wanted to do so. It has the technology to destroy with greater precision than a military machine has ever had before, though as many Iraqi and Afghan casualties testify the precision is far from perfect. It can spy on us all, friend or foe, its satellites reporting back what we say and photographing everything we do, though there is here a second caveat. As both Colin Powell and the UN Security Council retrospectively discovered after the Iraq war, the interpretation of photographic evidence can sometimes mislead. Like a Shakespearean monarch giving orders to his baronial followers – Essex to Warwick, Pembroke to Carlisle – an American president can say 'Go' and his tanks and guns will be embarked on carriers or be

deployed from aeroplanes and helicopters to whatever land he wishes, however inhospitable the terrain. America's military might is truly awesome and its field commanders – the C-in-Cs responsible for all this coiled and sometimes deployed power – travel the world like the proconsuls of old. With their own planes, diplomatic advisers, technology, telecommunications and legions, they are more potent by far than any ambassador or assistant secretary from the State Department.

So this may look like an empire – an 'unofficial' empire as I said at the outset – but is it a *real* empire? The existence of so much military power on its own does not make it so. In any event, as Professor Joseph Nye has argued, the US defence burden in the 1990s was lighter than it had been in the 1950s. While the American economy has grown, military spending has declined steeply in relative terms from an average of 10 per cent of GDP in that earlier period to 4 per cent today. Past empires spent much higher proportions of their wealth on military power than the United States. Nor is there much sign of an imperial impulse to take up 'The White Man's Burden', to use the racist title of Rudyard Kipling's poem, written in 1899. In his excellent biography of Kipling, *The Long Recessional*, David Gilmour notes that it was addressed to the American people, exhorting them to annex the Philippines. He writes:

> The message to the Americans was close to the justification Kipling habitually gave for British rule in India. After the rulers have taken possession, they remain to toil and to serve, to prevent famine and to cure sickness, to dedicate their lives and even to die for the sake of the 'new-caught, sullen peoples'. It is literally a thankless task: no pomp, no material reward, 'no tawdry rule of kings' – just the blame and hate of the people 'ye better'.

This was, indeed, the best justification for nineteenth-century imperialism, but to their credit it never had much appeal for Americans in the twentieth century, and I cannot imagine many Americans choosing this path of duty, sacrifice and dominion today. American universities do not train an imperial caste; Americans do not on the whole seek territory – though they are concerned about military bases and secure oil supplies. They import people rather than export them – most Americans resident abroad are in rich countries making or saving their

money, not settling and seeking to govern or exploit poor nations. The historian Niall Ferguson, who would rather like the Americans to take on the role of a liberal empire, notes that even American officials would prefer to stay at home rather than go off somewhere abroad to learn Arabic. He quotes one CIA case officer: 'Operations that include diarrhoea as a way of life don't happen.' There are too few Alden Pyles to run a real empire, something I have heard bemoaned by a few Europeans. I recall sitting one glorious July evening in the open air at a dinner at Stanford's North Californian campus, listening to the once very left-wing, now very right-wing, British polemicist, Paul Johnson, lecturing the assembled rather conservative throng on the need for them to take on the burdens of empire. Again, in Kipling's words, the injunction to Americans was:

> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives' need;
> To wait in heavy harness,
> On fluttered folk and wild . . .

Generously, he offered that Britain would be there alongside, 'searching [our] manhood/Through all the thankless years'. The audience, polite if puzzled, heard him out, got into their Cadillacs and Mercedes and drove back to their homes in Palo Alto to prepare for another busy and profitable day at the office. Americans are not by nature imperialists: hallelujah!

There have, as I noted earlier, been lapses. The Spanish-American war of 1898 was one such. 'The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people,' wrote *The Washington Post*, 'even as the taste of blood in the jungle.' Albert Beveridge, soon to be Senator from Indiana, proclaimed the Americans 'a conquering race . . . we must obey our blood and occupy new markets and if necessary new lands', taking them from 'debased civilizations and decaying races'. He poured scorn on anti-imperialist arguments: 'Cuba not contiguous? Porto Rico not contiguous? Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous? [We shall] *make* them contiguous . . . and American speed, American guns, American heart and brain and nerve will keep them contiguous forever!' Mark Twain was called a traitor for opposing this. 'Shall we go on,' he asked, 'conferring our Civilization upon the peoples that sit in

darkness, or shall we give those poor things a rest? Shall we bang right ahead in our old-time, loud, pious way, and commit the new century to the game; or shall we sober up and sit down and think it out first?'

For much of the twentieth century, America seemed to heed Mark Twain. Her greatness was measured not in territorial acquisition or in military or political domination, but in her exemplification of the benefits of liberal democracy, human rights, individual freedom and material progress. But is that how things are still seen around the world today? Even if American attitudes have not changed fundamentally, even if America has not explicitly set its sights on donning the imperial mantle, has the longevity of American predominance and the way it is today expressed symbolically, diplomatically, politically and militarily shifted sentiment decisively against American leadership?

I noted at the beginning of this chapter that transatlantic rows are not new. There were disagreements over America's growing commitment in Vietnam in the 1960s and the associated radicalization of a generation that detested American militarism. There was the removal of NATO from France and of France from NATO. Then came Henry Kissinger's 'Year of Europe' in 1974, when both sides of the Atlantic were reeling from the after-effects of the oil shock and looking for a better way to understand each other's decisions. So concerned were Europe's foreign ministers that they held an emergency and informal meeting at a German castle called Gymnich, which has given its name to the now regular, informal meetings that these ministers still hold twice a year. Five years later, Helmut Schmidt set off years of demonstrations with his brave decision to allow the United States to station a new generation of nuclear weapons – medium-range cruise and Pershing missiles – on German soil. When President Reagan spoke to the Bundestag in 1982, 400,000 protestors took to the streets. Has anything really changed? Have we not merely witnessed a spasm of rage before, during and since the Iraq war – in Europe and beyond – much like the occasional brouhahas of earlier years?

I am not sure that it is as simple as that. Even before the Iraq campaign, surveys of international opinion – for example, those

carried out by the excellent Pew Research Center – showed growing disenchantment with America. Its image has been on the skids, even in countries like Britain, Poland and Turkey, whose populations had previously taken extremely favourable views of the United States. As the *Financial Times* reported in discussing a 2003 Pew survey: 'Views of America are becoming more contradictory and ambivalent: some remain positive but . . . uneasiness or outright hostility to America's position as sole superpower and global hegemon is creating more negative perceptions.' The newspaper went on to argue that these were rubbing off on the market attractions of some of the most popular American consumer brands. Maybe the professional skills of President Bush's former spokesperson Karen Hughes, who has been drafted into the State Department to overhaul and improve its public diplomacy, will transform attitudes to and impressions of America.

The problem is in part the cumulative aggregation of images. Even for a senior foreign official dealing with the US administration, you are aware of your role as a tributory: however courteous your hosts, you come as a subordinate bearing goodwill and hoping to depart with a blessing on your endeavours. Some of this may be the result of security, to some extent understandable, though it is a pity that these necessary controls (not only in the US) seem so frequently to be in the hands of men and women who have suffered a charm and initiative bypass. In the interests of that humble leadership to which President Bush rightly aspires, it would be useful for some of his aides to try to get in to their own offices for a meeting with themselves some time! Attending any conference abroad, American Cabinet officers arrive with the sort of entourage that would have done Darius proud. Hotels are commandeered; cities are brought to a halt; innocent bystanders are barged into corners by thick-necked men with bits of plastic hanging out of their ears. It is not a spectacle that wins hearts and minds. The avoidance of calamity cannot surely demand such public relations fiascos. The *Newsweek* columnist Fareed Zakaria noted, shortly after the war on Iraq: 'Having travelled around the world and met with senior government officials in dozens of countries over the past year, I can report that with the exception of Britain and Israel, every country the administration has dealt with feels humiliated by

us.' Ms Hughes – more power to her elbow – might spare a moment or two to look at what the impact of American hegemony feels like close up.

How much is President Bush himself the problem? It is true that his is a brand that does not travel well. From Dayton to Delhi, President Clinton could make himself loved with behaviour, words and body language so accurately described by Joe Klein in his novel *Primary Colors* and in his book on the Clinton presidency, *The Natural*. No one could say that Bill Clinton's appeal outside America was because he did not seem American. He is a man of his place and his times, more gifted than anyone I have met in politics at moving a conversation seamlessly from interesting anecdote to principle to policy wonkery. First he would tell you a story about a village he had visited in India where someone had just acquired a computer; then he would muse on the extent to which technological progress could easily increase the divide between rich countries and poor; finally, there would be some credible scheme for bridging this divide. He talked and talked until he felt he could do no more to make himself loved by everyone in the room. His charm lasered in on everyone in his company. Until he thought that he had won you over, or could do nothing else to accomplish this objective, a meeting with him would run on and on. He was a scheduler's nightmare. I have met some people in politics whose choice of career has surprised me: they clearly do not like people very much. But there was no questioning why Bill Clinton was a politician: he loved us all to bits, all God's children. Big, beefy, brainy – he could not get enough of people.

Whatever may be the personal skills with which President Clinton woos and wows non-Americans, it is plainly the case that his successor has much more difficulty charming Europeans, and others. In some ways this is not very fair. In person, he comes over as a likeable man, friendly, courteous, direct. The head slightly on one side, he draws you with a smile and a kind word into his circle for a moment or two, deploying the magnetic force that comes with being the world's Number One. The last time I met him, in Ireland in the summer of 2004, he greeted me with a cheery, 'Dad says to say "Hi".' Oh yes? But the effort was more natural than calculating. The President's walk is the most curious thing about him: the arms swing loose from the

shoulder; the wrists face forwards. Is this the way my physiotherapist wants me to rearrange my shoulder-slumping posture?

It may not be the man himself who rubs Europeans up the wrong way, but the reputation with which he arrived in office and the policies he has pursued there. President Bush came in with the reputation of a dim cowboy at best intellectually lazy, given to tripping over even the simplest words in the language that he spoke in his odd jerky drawl. Much of this was patronizing and wrong. It was not as if, when he came to Sweden for his first summit with Europe's leaders in 2001, he was sitting down at the table with a group of philosopher kings, though one or two of them clearly saw themselves as such in his company. When we had our first restricted session with him – half a dozen on each side – he seemed well briefed, articulate, amusing and comfortable to delegate issues to his colleagues. He had no need to show that he was the boss – he obviously was. At subsequent meetings, I never found myself disliking the man, however much I disagreed with what he was saying. It is usually easier in politics if you dislike the person as well as the words, so I guess I feel more comfortable with Vice President Cheney.

My surprise at observing Bush the Younger was how little he could be described as a chip off the old block. His father was more East Coast, more low key, even as president somehow less noticeable. I remember a reception at Buckingham Palace in 1991 when Britain was chairing the G7. We were milling about, sipping warm champagne, when I heard a tall gentleman with an American accent behind me responding to the pleas from the lady next to him about the state of the National Health Service. 'I'm so sorry, Ma'am, but I can't help you. My name is George Bush, I'm President of the United States.' No one would have made that sort of mistake with his Texan son. But perhaps, anyway, the father and the son were distanced by the younger president's experiences – from hell-raising, money-losing and booze to born-again Christianity. When Bob Woodward asked President Bush the Younger whether he consulted his father on the Iraq war, he replied, 'He is the wrong father to appeal to in terms of strength. There is a higher power I appeal to.' It does sound a bit unsettling to a European. 'We don't do God,' Mr Blair's media Rottweiler, Alastair Campbell, told a journalist who sought to lead a not wholly reluctant

prime minister down the aisle. But the fact that Europeans 'don't do God' is not a reason for heaping ridicule on a politician who does.

Style is not at all the issue with Bush's vice president. Mr Cheney does not do style. He is two fingers to style. He is what and who he is, and sees no reason to disguise it or pretend to be anything else. If he was not averse to even the most distant reflections of transparency, this 'I don't give a damn what you all think of me' attitude might command a certain reluctant admiration. As it is, he is an implacable presence – conservative if not reactionary – low tax for the very rich, make as much of it as you can, aggressively nationalist, conspiratorial, the patron of the Washington branch of the Likud party. I too am a conservative, but feel that Mr Cheney's conservatism is cut from timber from a very different part of the forest.

Behind all these matters of touch, feel, impression and image lies a far more substantive question. Henry Kissinger drew attention to America's awesome power in a book published in 2001, *Does America need a Foreign Policy?* He wrote: 'At the dawn of the new millennium, the United States is enjoying a pre-eminence unrivalled by even the greatest empires of the past. From weaponry to entrepreneurship, from science to technology, from higher education to popular culture, America exercises an unparalleled ascendancy around the globe.' But that, he concedes, is not enough. It does indeed create its own set of problems. You can be almost too powerful, or be seen to be too powerful, for your own good. His sentiment was foreshadowed by Edmund Burke who, near the height of Britain's imperial pomp, had commented:

> I dread our own power and our own ambition: I dread our being too much dreaded . . . We may say that we shall not abuse this astonishing and hitherto unheard of power. But every other nation will think we shall abuse it. It is impossible but that, sooner or later, this state of things must produce a combination against us which may end in our ruin.

Dr Kissinger the historian knows this as well as anyone, and indeed in the dying sentences of the book from which I have already quoted, he notes that the challenge facing the United States is 'to transform power into consensus so that the international order is based on agreement rather than reluctant acquiescence'. It is not an impossible

trick to take. For so long the world's verdict was that America stood for very much that was good. It had given the rest of us the post-war international order. It was plainly a land of opportunity and individual freedom. The real source of its greatness was not its unrivalled power, but the fact that the world bought into its dream, recognized its intellectual and scientific supremacy, and acknowledged the strength of its economic and political model. How on earth can America regain that global image? How can it rebuild international order based on agreement, and how can Europe help?

9

Invincible but Vulnerable

At some point we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America.

President George W. Bush, 2002

In Europe we spent the first months of the Bush administration trying to get a fix on the new team. We had known more or less where we stood with the Clinton administration. They were familiar faces, pursuing familiar policies, embroiling us from time to time in familiar rows. They were heavily involved in the Middle East. They were pursuing a strategy of tough engagement with North Korea. Following initial hesitation, they had settled for a cooperative policy with China. After India went nuclear, they had slowly rebuilt a relationship with Delhi. They worked closely with us in the Balkans. They seemed to understand what we were becoming in Europe. They argued with us on trade but seemed to share our sentiments on development assistance. They disagreed with us on the outcome of a variety of multilateral negotiations – for example, banning landmines, and binding the international community to act in combating climate change – but differences of opinion rarely degenerated into sterile slanging matches. Madeleine Albright was regularly on the telephone inducing us to deliver what we had promised and complimenting us when we did. When you went to see her or Sandy Berger, the National Security Advisor at the White House, you had the impression that they were genuinely interested in what you had to say. I remember a visit that Albright and I paid to Bosnia, during which we agreed on

a timetable for the changes that local politicians needed to make. We met political leaders in Sarajevo together and took turns to bang the table. The French made a mild and silly fuss about it in Brussels. What was all this hobnobbing with the Americans? In the Commission, we took no notice.

Not everything in those days was sweetness and light in our relations with Washington. There had been serious quarrels, for example, about the conduct of the war in Kosovo, and we might recall Ambassador Seitz's feeling at an even earlier stage that the two Atlantic partners were slowly drifting apart. But no one then was talking about marital breakdown; the focus – when our relationship was discussed at all – was on mediation or counselling.

Whatever else we anticipated from the Bush presidency, we certainly did not expect that everything would continue as before. There were rumours that the acronym chosen to describe policy was ABC – Anything But Clinton. Yet any changes that might be taking place (and I will come shortly to three of them) were delivered to us gift-wrapped by a new Secretary of State, who initially calmed incipient anxiety just as later on he aroused puzzled sympathy. Colin Powell is a marvellously reassuring figure, knowledgeable, articulate and charming. It is, I imagine, a coincidence that the three public officials I have met who best combine natural grace and authority are all black: Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan and Colin Powell. Powell was as calming an influence on Europeans as other members of the administration and some of its hangers-on were irritants. If America wanted to look like Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, send in Colin Powell; if it wanted to appear like Charles Bronson in *Death Wish*, then deploy the public talents of Vice-President Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld or one of the neocons like Richard Perle. I had personal reason to be grateful to Powell. Once or twice when I expressed concerns about the drift of American policy – on, for example, the 'Axis of Evil' speech and Guantánamo Bay – his public responses were pretty friendly and gentle by the standards that were to become all too common. On a trip to Washington on one occasion, I was outraged by two columns in *The Post* denouncing Europeans as anti-Semites, and suggesting that, having failed to complete the 'Final Solution' in Europe, we were now trying to make good that failure by promoting it in the

Middle East. I wrote an angry rebuttal, denouncing anti-Semitism but distinguishing between that hateful prejudice and criticism of the policies of Mr Sharon and the Likud Party. A couple of days later, in Madrid for a meeting, I had a call on my mobile from Washington. It was Colin Powell to congratulate me on the article.

The three policies that made us a little nervous were first, the Middle East; second, the Korean Peninsula; and third, the abrogation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) Treaty, which had sought to forestall the development of long-range nuclear missiles through limiting the defensive systems against them. The Bush team was plainly not minded to continue the Clinton level of engagement with Israel and Palestine. The reason given was simple. Clinton had tried so hard at Camp David and Taba (2000–01). Because of Yasser Arafat he had failed. It had been a humiliating rebuff and even Clinton himself could not have gone on like that. Progress was extremely unlikely so long as Arafat was in business. So the Bush team stood aside, the politics drifted and the violence grew.

On Korea, even before North Korean breaches of past promises on nuclear weapons became public, President Bush appeared to turn his back on the reconciliation policy pursued by the government in Seoul. Colin Powell had initially endorsed it. Hence, the surreal visit we paid to Pyongyang. On the ABM Treaty, the Americans made it clear that this was a matter between them and the Russians; and if the Russians could be pushed into accepting what was in effect a *fait accompli*, then there was no place for the rest of us to grumble around the table. The ABM Treaty had to go so that America could resurrect the Star Wars defensive shield so beloved of President Reagan and many defence industry manufacturers. With Anna Lindh, Sweden's foreign minister, boldly in the lead, we raised the issue at a meeting with Dr Condoleezza Rice, then the National Security Advisor at the White House, in her cramped office. We got a sharp dressing-down. It was not for us to question America's identification of threats to her security and her assessment of the best way of tackling them. If Washington perceived a security threat then the administration would be derelict in its duty if it did not deal with it. The ABM Treaty was scrapped; Star Wars tests were conducted, without providing much positive evidence of the effectiveness of the system; tragically, a few months

later America was attacked with less sophisticated technology but with devastating effect.

There was one issue, above all, that went well beyond the usual foreign policy agenda. This issue really turned off European opinion and underlined that things had changed. It was President Bush's brutally direct rubbishing in 2001 of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on global warming. We were not stupid. We knew that any American administration would have great difficulty getting binding commitments to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through Congress. But the President's rejection of the treaty – he said it was 'flawed' and 'unrealistic' – went well beyond a statement of the prevailing political reality in Washington. It was like the Pope denouncing Galileo. This is Washington here, ex cathedra, and we tell you that the sun goes around the earth. World, get stuffed. Even Colin Powell could not sell this one, try though he might and indeed always did, rarely allowing even a hint of body language to indicate disagreement with the ill-judged orders he often had to follow.

As the months passed, a political grouping with members both inside the administration and among the ranks of its cheerleaders outside began to make itself and its opinions increasingly well known. The assault on America in September 2001 gave these ideologues greater prominence and their ideas more resonance. They were the so-called neoconservatives, who gave a spurious intellectual dressing to the muscular assertive nationalism that guided Washington's policy in the wake of al-Qaeda's murderous assault. I am not convinced that it makes much sense in practice to attempt an elaborate dissection of the differences between, say, Mr Rumsfeld and his former deputy, Mr Wolfowitz. While the example I give is a world away from their own positions, perhaps there is the same sort of distinction as exists between a Marxist–Leninist who has a system in which he believes and which explains everything, and a Stalinist who simply wishes to exercise power without constraint. Neoconservatives certainly possess a body of received opinion and an unhealthy enthusiasm for conspiracy, which betrays perhaps how many of them have journeyed from the far left to their present political home. Assertive nationalists, on the other hand, simply want to do whatever they believe to be in

America's immediate interest, with no hand-wringing appeal to allies or debate with Nervous Nellies and Doubting Thomases.

The one thing that neoconservative does not mean is conservative. As is often the case, 'neo' means not 'new' but simply 'not'. Neo-liberals are not usually liberals; neo-intellectuals rarely open books; neoconservatives are definitely not conservatives. After all, conservatives want to conserve things, especially if they are working pretty well, recognizing with the Sicilian prince in Lampedusa's great novel, *The Leopard*, that things must occasionally change in order to stay the same. But a world made by America, largely in America's image, in which America has done so well, is not (in the neoconservative opinion) to be preserved, with change coming only where necessary to maintain order and stability. The present world order must not merely be changed. It must be overthrown, overturned, with Afghanistan and Iraq becoming the Normandy beaches in the next World War. What is required in this neo-world is permanent revolution, or at least permanent war. This is Mao, not Madison. A prominent neoconservative, Max Boot, told readers of *The Wall Street Journal* that he looked forward to 'a new era where America, like the British Empire, will always be fighting some war, somewhere, against someone'.

Many of the neoconservatives cut their teeth thirty years ago with the late Senator 'Scoop' Jackson of Washington State; socially a liberal, and a strong environmentalist, Jackson opposed détente with the Soviet Union and supported the Vietnam War. He championed Soviet Jewry and gave strong backing to Israel's policies in the Middle East. Some of these acolytes went on to serve in the first President Bush's administration, but thought too many of its policies, particularly the failure to topple Saddam Hussein, anaemic and deficient in chutzpah. They strongly supported Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party in the 1990s, opposed the Oslo confidence-building process in the Middle East, and pressed President Clinton to return to the first President Bush's unfinished business in Iraq. For them, the events of 11 September 2001 provided a justification for war on Iraq. For all the relevance this had to stamping hard on al-Qaeda, it could presumably just as well have been war on Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Syria.

It is a characteristic of neoconservatives that the world is divided

into good and evil; the faithful judge political character according to the willingness to use force and believe that the main factor in determining the relationship between one nation and another is military power. Islam is seen as a threat to America's interests and in many of its guises plainly belongs to the Manichaean dark regions. Israel and its history appear to be seen literally through the chapters of the Old Testament books of Joshua and Judges, where Jericho and Ai are torched – the latter 'an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day', where the enemy kings of the Amorites are hanged from five trees, where the children of Israel are delivered into the hands of the Philistines for forty years, and the blind Samson takes revenge for his two eyes as he pulls down the pillars and buries his enemies in the rubble. I find this biblical approach to politics as chilling as is occasionally the case with the use of the Old Testament on war memorials. There is a plaque at Hyde Park Corner in London commemorating the role of the Machine Gun Corps in the First World War. It reads 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands', a biblical tribute to the technology of mass killing. Fire and sword, shock and awe: this is the world of the neoconservatives, dangerous to us all because in Edmund Burke's famous phrase 'a great empire and little minds go ill together'.

Yet as I have argued, the world against which American neoconservatives and nationalists rail and roar was largely made by their own countrymen. The draper from Missouri, President Truman, with the help of an extraordinary generation of public servants, used the might of America to remake the world in the spirit of Woodrow Wilson's dream after the First World War. The undertaking in the 1940s was extraordinary. Dean Acheson later wrote:

> The enormity of the task . . . only slowly revealed itself. As it did so, it began to appear just a bit less formidable than that described in the first chapter of Genesis. That was to create a world out of chaos; ours, to create half a world, a free half, out of the same material without blowing the whole to bits in the process.

President Truman, Secretary of State Marshall, and their colleagues created the institutions of global governance – political and economic – that shaped and arbitrated our times. They actively promoted the

winding up of Europe's empires through self-determination. They created the military alliance that contained the last 'evil' empire – Russia's colonization of central and eastern Europe. They encouraged the opening of markets and invested hugely to help put continents back on their feet. The formula worked in Europe and it worked in East Asia.

This is the world in which I grew up. It was not a time when everything went right. Vietnam demonstrated the limits of rationalism and metaphor in the conduct of foreign affairs – a point to remember whenever dominoes are called in evidence in discussing some alleged security imperative. We also discovered in the jungles and paddyfields of south-east Asia that technology and wealth are insufficient to fight and defeat an idea. In addition, our tendency throughout the Cold War to divide the world between good countries that supported us and bad ones that flirted with the Soviet bloc, distorted policy, often laid up problems for the future, and from time to time corrupted values. You could be very bad indeed but provided you were on our side – taking our money, our weapons and our whip – your sins would be forgiven.

Yet overall, the American post-war settlement was a spectacular triumph. By the century's end, America's President was able to claim, and did so regularly, that for the first time in history more people lived in democracies than in tyrannies. Moreover, in fifty years we saw a six-fold increase in world output accompanied by a twenty-fold increase in trade in goods; we were producing the same amount of goods and services every three years that it had taken the whole of the previous century to produce. Pax Americana was good for the world.

You can pick up the threads of America's strategy in the speeches of George Marshall, not least his famous Harvard Commencement address in 1947, which announced his aid plan for Europe. Marshall argued at Harvard:

> Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.

Elsewhere he took this point further. On a visit to Oslo in 1953 to accept the Nobel Peace Prize, he said:

> Democratic principles 'do not flourish on empty stomachs . . . people turn to false promises of dictators because they are hopeless and anything promises something better than the miserable existence that they endure.

All of which convinced this soldier and statesman that he should vigorously oppose – again in his words – 'the tragic misunderstanding that a security policy is a war policy'. It was on the basis of this philosophy that America helped to create a world richer and more stable than any would have imagined possible at the outset of the enterprise. But however fabulous American power, she still had to work with others, by and large legitimizing her leadership through her acceptance of the rules that she more than any other had created. Another soldier turned politician, President Dwight Eisenhower, made the point in the same year, in his 'Chance for Peace' speech: 'No nation's security and well-being can be lastingly achieved in isolation but only in effective cooperation with fellow-nations.'

The world has changed, partly because of some of our successes. But there is never a moment when the task of keeping the peace is finished, when liberal democracy is secured for ever. The first volume of Karl Popper's thrilling defence of the open society, written during the Second World War, ends with a reminder that we have to go on carrying our cross, fighting for humaneness, reason and responsibility, planning for both security and freedom. The struggle never ends. The beginning of a new century has brought new dangers, though not in my judgement a better way of tackling them than the cooperative, consensus-building, example-rich approach we have taken over most of the last sixty years, with America in the lead.

The first group of threats that confronts us today emerges from, and survives among, the detritus of empires from the Balkans to the Gulf, to much of Africa, to the central Asian republics, to Kashmir, and even in a sense to the Korean peninsula. We have to add to these other flashpoints, like Taiwan, that have been left behind as history has rolled forwards. In several of these cases, the prevention of conflict is made both more necessary and more difficult by the weaknesses in

the international agreements we have negotiated to prevent the manufacture and proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Secondly, on every continent, failed or failing states spawn problems. In the past, developed countries perhaps kidded themselves that they could insulate themselves from the problems of the world. If a country collapsed into penury and civil war, that was sad for its people. We might offer them loans and assistance. We might lecture them about the benefits of open trade, good government and so on. But ultimately it was their problem, if they could not dig themselves out of their hole. Today we see that we cannot wall ourselves off from the misery around us. There is, for a start, the so-called CNN effect. The availability of 24-hour network news makes it harder to inure ourselves to starvation and genocide when we witness it in our homes. But, even if we could, there is the problem that failed states become the breeding ground for terror. Once, our concern was with state-sponsored terrorism. Today we are equally concerned by terrorist-sponsored states of the kind that existed in Afghanistan. A US official rightly remarked, when America's *National Security Strategy* was published in 2002, that the threats in today's world are more often from failing states than from conquering ones.

Then there are three horizontal groups of problems, all in some ways connected. There is the revolt of the alienated, to which I have referred already. Traditional communities and cultures are undermined by urbanization and modern science, which constitute a threat to existing beliefs. Literal interpretations of Genesis are challenged by Darwin; ancestral orthodoxies about gender are confronted by social, economic and political changes; television invades domestic lives where even books were hitherto only rarely seen. Reversion to religious fundamentalism is a very human reaction to what is seen in many societies as the worst of Western culture and values, and as brash imperialism. The issue is not just a question of Islamic fundamentalism. It occurs in other religious traditions. And it exists within cultures as much as between them: just look at the messages spelled out on some of the Christian fundamentalist websites. It is not easy to adapt to new ideas, new science and new influences that challenge traditional authority and received opinion. This resistance to the new

and the global does not necessarily turn into a threat. But religious fundamentalism does sometimes find expression in political radicalism and hatred of alien, often Western and specifically American influences. Radicalism may be eminently justified by the brutality, greed and inefficiency of a great many governments in the world. The current, widely prevalent hatred of America is *not* justified. But nor will it be eliminated by dropping bombs on those who hate all things American.

Closely allied to the revolt of the alienated is the revolt of the dispossessed. The simple fact is that much of the world is desperately poor. And with modern communications and the aggressive marketing of Western culture, the poor are now much better informed about how the other half lives. It is hardly surprising that there is widespread hostility to globalization seen as a Western conspiracy designed to benefit primarily the aggressive advocates. I have little doubt that globalization – the combination of technology, capitalism and the opening of markets – has made most people better off. But over a billion have been left behind to subsist on less than a dollar a day. So there is a risk of the case for globalization choking on its own inequities. That argues strongly for more generous flows of development assistance – more generous and better managed. While we should not exaggerate the past failures of development aid, nor delude ourselves about the extent of our generosity (a particular problem in America), we have too often – to borrow from the title of William Easterly's book on the subject – found the quest for growth in poorer countries elusive. How *can* we better convert good intentions and large cheques into less global inequity, especially in some countries where the concept of the nation has carried little force, and where development has had less impact among elites as a governing philosophy than staying in power and amassing wealth?

I was a development minister in the 1980s spending a good deal of time in Africa. I lived for five years in Asia in the 1990s and then began visiting Africa again in the next few years. The comparison was a depressing experience. There is still much poverty in Asia, but there is also rising prosperity, greater stability, and hope. The greatest development problems accumulate in Africa, where in too many countries violence, tyranny and corruption incubate misery and disease.

We have frequently aided and abetted the process of turning bad polities into kleptocracies through ill-directed development assistance, instead of providing the right incentives for recipients. It is all very well hunting for excuses, and admittedly there are plenty – the long-term consequences of colonialism in some cases (though not by any means all); the impact of geography which, while not destiny, can create prodigious natural difficulties in that belt of countries either side of the Equator; unfair global commercial arrangements and inadequate external support. All this explains some of the problems faced by Africa, but we are perhaps too prissy, too nervous about political correctness, in pointing to some equally pertinent reasons for endemic failure – wickedness, greed, murder, bad government, pillage. A great American journalist, Keith Richburg, spent years as *The Washington Post*'s Africa correspondent, in the era of genocide in Rwanda and civil war in Somalia. Richburg is black and wrote a brave book, *Out of America*, about his pride in identifying himself as an American, and his inability to feel a similar sense of identity with what he witnessed in Africa. So for him, the description '*African* American' was not a bit how he felt.

I have too many memories of the horrors of African decline, not least a long visit in 2001 to the shambles of the Democratic Republic of Congo and its neighbouring states, which have spent the last few years robbing the Congo of its natural resources (blood diamonds, for example) and fighting their proxy civil and tribal wars across its vast impoverished spaces. The capital, Kinshasa, is a wreck of a city. The poor Congolese: to have endured (read Conrad) the worst of colonialist exploitation and then the worst of post-colonial misrule. I visited Harare on the same trip, for an awful encounter with President Mugabe whose army, doubtless commanded by some of the best officers that Sandhurst could train, has been the worst of the looters in the Congo. I had visited Mugabe last in the mid-1980s, when he was frequently cited as a model of African magnanimity. No more. He had turned into a crackpot tyrant, with a gang of thuggish cronies who are together ruining their beautiful country. The two-hour discussion with him largely focused on Western mendacity, wicked colonialism, the pleasures of doing business with the wise Margaret Thatcher, and the serpentine behaviour of Mr Blair's allegedly homo-

sexual clique. I am quite sure that neither prime minister would have recognized the picture that he painted.

Mugabe looked and sounded deranged. When Lord Carrington was doing business with him negotiating the relegitimizing of Rhodesia in the early 1980s, he used to muse on the pleasant Lancastrian ring to the pronunciation of his name backwards 'E-ba-gum'. Just over twenty years on, President Mugabe has moved far beyond humour. Yet when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 in the wake of explicit evidence of vote-rigging, the use of violence against his opponents and the growing impoverishment and starvation of his people, he was cheered to the rafters by most of the African delegates present. For me, this said all too much about what is wrong with Africa. Until the African Union, and the continent's regional organizations – led by South Africa and Nigeria above all – are prepared to take a tougher line on bad government, corruption and the destruction of democracy, we are not likely to be able to make much difference in tackling the continent's woes even if we spend more money (as we should) on development assistance. Countries can recover from disaster, as Mozambique has recently shown. But without political stability, too many problems fester and deteriorate with results from which we in the West cannot insulate ourselves.

Throughout my years as a European commissioner, we were intermittently involved in efforts to bring peace to Sudan, where one conflict succeeded another. As we witnessed the latest killing in Darfur I had a grisly sense of *déjà vu*. War in that country seemed without end. Back in late 1988, I had made my third visit in a year to Ethiopia, this time to visit the camps on the Nile River plain in the south-west of the country, which were accommodating refugees from the brutal war between the government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the south of the country. I had long discussions with some of the younger Sudanese inhabitants in the camps about their experiences. Most of them had similar stories. They had spent three or four months escaping from Sudan, trekking backwards and forwards across the country to get away from marauding gangs of hostile tribesmen or detachments of the Sudanese army. About half of those who started off on the journey actually got through. One group of young boys – led by teenagers about the same age as my

older daughters – told me of their long march; seventy began the journey; forty eventually completed the march sustained over three months by a diet of berries, roots and leaves. I asked one of the sixteen-year-old leaders how they had found their way to the Ethiopian border. He replied matter-of-factly that it was very easy; they had simply followed the trail of corpses.

At the end of my visit, I was asked if I would address the school that had been set up for the 12,500 camp children, 60 per cent of whom were, in the euphemism of the aid workers there, 'unaccompanied', by which they meant orphaned. After I had spoken, they asked if they could sing to me. They sang the Lord's Prayer in their language, Dinka, and then a text from Isaiah, which I assumed to be the verses about beating swords into ploughshares. I was wrong. Lying in my bed that night in the British ambassador's comfortable bungalow on the hillside above Addis Ababa, as the old fan whirred above my head, I spotted a Gideon Bible on the table and looked up the reference they had given me. What they had actually been singing under the hammering African sun was a text familiar from carol services at home: 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.' Too many in Africa still dwell in that land of the shadow of death, with little prospect of the light shining on them unless we can combine better government with more generous assistance.

There are other lessons about poverty and development. Compare an earlier period of globalization almost as remarkable in its effects, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The results were memorably described in Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* in 1919. In those years, the gates were open to trade in agricultural products as well as in goods, to the movement of people as well as that of money. At the very least, we have to ensure that the international trade talks that began in 2001 in Doha result in fairer rules and greater access to our markets for the things that poor countries produce, especially food. It is indefensible for rich countries to spend almost seven times as much on subsidizing their agriculture as they do on aid.

Finally, there are the problems thrown up by increasing globalization, which require a coordinated international policy response. Globalization offers tremendous opportunities; look today at Asia's advances and the fall in the number of people living in poverty in China and India. But Dr Jekyll is stalked by Mr Hyde. As well as the benefits of modern science, machines and communications, and the prosperity that may be derived from freer trade, there is also the dark side of globalization, from environmental degradation to the drugs trade, from terrorism and the proliferation of weapons to transnational crime and communicable diseases like Aids. What does it require for us to move from an intellectual understanding of these problems to a more determined attempt to turn comprehension into policy and effective agreements? Perhaps the threat of avian flu hanging over Asia and the rest of us will do the educational trick – though only, I fear, when we find ourselves dealing with its dreadful consequences rather than, in the first place, preventing it turning into a pandemic. All these problems should remind us that stability and prosperity – a goal of foreign policy in each separate nation – can only be achieved if nation states act together in pursuit of interests that transcend their boundaries.

Put all the present-day horrors together – failed states, alienation, poverty, the global reach of terrorist violence – and what do you get? One consequence for sure was the atrocity of 11 September 2001, which so shocked America and rather improbably gave the neoconservatives the chance to shape policy in the image of their own fears and dreams. America's horrified surprise at its own vulnerability confirmed neoconservatives in their view that their country should not allow herself to be a buried piece on the global chessboard, a queen hemmed in by pawns. As the pre-eminent world power, America believes it has the strength to insist that it should exercise power unencumbered as far as possible by entanglements of international law or by allies – rather than obedient followers – with ideas of their own. It is not just a question of whether America *can* behave like this. There is a persuasive, sometimes dominant school of thought in America that argues that it *should*. One American sovereigntist, Jeremy Rabkin, has described recognizing that your first duty is to protect your own democracy and the rights of your people as a

'dictate of the law of nature'. Another prominent neoconservative, John Bolton – promoted in 2005 to be US Ambassador to the UN in a gesture that indicated the Bush administration was not without a rather macabre sense of humour – has indicated on a number of occasions how this definition should be seen in practice. For example, at a UN conference in 2001 to discuss controls over the deadly trade in small arms when he was Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Mr Bolton asserted frankly, 'The United States will not join consensus on a final document that contains measures abrogating the Constitutional right to bear arms.' Armed thugs in Sierra Leone and Sudan, dependent on the small arms trade for their killing power, could take comfort from the mantle of protection apparently thrown over their activities by the American Constitution.

We should pause here and give due deference to Mr Bolton's role and reputation. Much is made in the description of this unusual diplomat of his moustache, and it is indeed a magnificent creation, a more benign addition to his upper lip than those other more abbreviated moustaches that achieved such notoriety in the twentieth century. With the publicity attendant on Security Council meetings, it will soon be a world star, fêted across continents. But I think if I was concerned about America's public diplomacy, I would be more worried about the words that will issue from the lips beneath. *Cave*, Karen Hughes.

Mr Bolton is the Pavarotti of neoconservatism; his views have taken the roof off chancelleries around the globe. For him there is no *United* Nations, there is only one nation that counts, America. Cooperation is for sissies. Some apologists in Europe for the Bush administration claim that his appointment to the UN did not represent a blow to multilateralism, but was a shrewd way of advancing support in America for a reformed UN, at the same time getting him out of policy-making in Washington. Representing the superpower at the UN is not like hiding your lantern under a bushel. We will assuredly hear more from Mr Bolton. The last time I saw him, I opined that we needed to use sticks and carrots to deal with Iran. 'I don't do carrots,' he replied. No, indeed, but the rest of the world may soon do a good line in raspberries.

For neoconservatives like Mr Bolton, unilateralism is not just a reflection of US power, but a positive virtue. America's hegemony is benevolent, and such is the primacy of American values and institutions that it is no bad thing if others must adapt themselves to US preferences. I can see why that view is so attractive. There is something dismally repellent about philanthropy and international do-goodery divorced from real human relations: well-meaning and well-dressed peripatetic internationalists talking interminably about poverty in a variety of the world's more expensive capitals; the endless fudge; the dreary, unreadable declarations; the maelstrom of self-interested humbug masquerading as high principle. At one such meeting, I happened to be reading Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, and wondered whether Mrs Jellyby might have slipped unnoticed into the conference hall with her concern about 'cultivating coffee and educating the natives of Borrioboola-Gha on the left bank of the Niger' rather than her own neglected children. Better, surely, than this the honest pursuit of profit and national interest. Did we learn nothing from Adam Smith?

While understanding this point of view, I cannot share it. On the contrary, the instinct to return to a narrow definition of the national interest – to assert the primacy of US concerns, and especially economic interests, over any outside authority – constitutes a threat not just to the developing international order, but to the US itself. As I have argued, for the best part of fifty years, the United States, almost above all other nations, has been internationalist – and a tremendous force for good in the world. Has the system of global governance created after the Second World War now outlived its usefulness? Is conventional multilateralism now outdated because of the imbalance between American power and that of all others? Has technology unleashed forces that overwhelm the borders and conventional governing institutions of nation states, so that traditional modes of cooperation between them inevitably fail? Has the liberal dream of an international community been shown up for a sham by the selfishness of rich and powerful countries ruthlessly focused on the protection and enhancement of their own interests? Answer Yes to all those questions and you are left with a pretty bleak outlook, a Hobbesian world in which capitalist democracy defends its wealth and values

from the random violence of the angry and the poor – like the 'gated communities' in rich suburbs. Is that how the world has to be?

It is not obvious to me that the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Palestine and Pyongyang, heroin and Aids, the Pentagon's precision-guided munitions and the spasmodic acceptance of the UN's authority – to name a few salient features of our times – demonstrate that the Truman-Marshall approach no longer works. On the contrary, it seems clear that we need more of it not less. But it is equally clear that unless the United States is prepared to lead a rejuvenation of multilateralism, it is not going to happen. So how do we persuade Washington of this?

First, it is important to recognize that the task is not impossible. Opinion surveys (for example those undertaken by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund) demonstrate that many of the views of Main Street America on international affairs have not changed all that much, whatever the mood within the Washington Beltway and whatever the growth in conservative and Christian fundamentalist sentiment. American voters still believe strongly in international cooperation; indeed, large majorities even appear to favour signing the Kyoto Protocol and supporting the International Criminal Court. They also, rather sensibly, believe that America should try to share its global role with Europe, even when Washington sometimes disagrees with European governments. Why should a sensible American citizen want his own country to bear the heaviest burden in order to defend civilized countries against so many threats to their security and well-being?

The biggest doubt is not whether most Americans would like Europe to help carry the world, but whether they think we really will. In Europe, we huff and we puff; how much breath does that leave to do anything serious? We know the nature of the task of advocacy that we have to perform. We need to persuade Americans that the concept of a nation whole unto itself is anachronistic; that the 'national interest' implies *inter*national cooperation and *inter*national obligations; that the things Americans want – jobs, prosperity, peace – can only be secured if the United States works with others; that the problems I identified as the dark side of globalization can only be tackled by unprecedented levels of international cooperation; that the threat or

use of military might is not always the only or the right way to keep the world safe. But in order to perform this last task, we in Europe have to be prepared to face the question that force *is* sometimes required to uphold the international rule of law, and be able to provide some of that force ourselves. Overall, to make Americans believe in multilateralism we have to do more to sustain it ourselves.

Neither the task of persuasion, nor the demonstration of increased European capacity to make multilateralism work, will be easy. As we have seen, there is today a much more aggressive strain of nationalism in America's attitude towards the rest of the world. Watch Fox News and get the taste of this piping hot. Explaining the difference between American and international news coverage of the build-up to the war in Iraq, the channel's star, Bill O'Reilly, asserted, 'Well, everywhere else in the world lies.' America can set its own course, ignoring the doubters and the liars, because if it needs to do so, it can destroy any enemy just like that. And this military certainty comes apparelled in moral conviction. Anatol Lieven reminds us in his book *America Right or Wrong*, published in 2005, that the Vice President's wife Lynne Cheney writes in her A to Z 'patriotic primer' for schoolchildren: 'Z is the end of the alphabet, but not of America's story. Strong and free, we will continue to be an inspiration to the world.' I hope this becomes true again. But the book brings rather alarmingly to mind the Victorian alphabet called *Babes of the Empire*, which included this classic quatrain:

> D for the Dervish in sunny Sudan.
> Oh see him perform his eccentric can-can!
> But now he has joined us – the pride of our nation;
> He dances from frenzy to civilisation.

Perhaps no one was listening when Mr Blair, in his fine speech to both houses of Congress in 2003, said (greatly daring), 'All predominant power seems for a time invincible, but, in fact, it is transient.'

The notion of belligerent self-sufficiency infused the Republicans' presidential campaign in 2004. Admittedly, no one expects election campaigns to have much in common with a Socratic dialogue. Hyperbole rules with the assistance of a smidgeon of mendacity. Nevertheless, even by the customary standards, the outpouring of hostility

against foreigners and their multilateral entanglements came as a surprise. To suggest the need to consult allies was apparently to advocate the outsourcing of foreign policy to Paris and Berlin. All seemed to take their lead from President Bush himself, who had said in his second State of the Union address in 2003, 'Yet the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others.' A successful election campaign behind him, and with his former National Security Advisor, Dr Rice, installed as Secretary of State, the President set out to mend fences with the treacherous Europeans. But was he using real planks and nails? Had there been a conversion, on the flight to Brussels, to the need for allies, who might be expected to have their own opinions and to wish to express them occasionally?

There will be several difficult tests of whether there has been any post-election shift. But since a current and perhaps understandable strand in European thinking is that, if we can, we must avoid any impression of damage to or change in the transatlantic relationship, there will be a reluctance to ask any of the questions that may produce the wrong answers. So no one, for example, will raise the issue of one of the central tenets in the Bush administration's national security strategy, namely the new doctrine of pre-emption of threats, which roughly translated into Rumsfeldian means this: since we in Washington don't know a lot of things that we don't know, we should reserve the right (being bigger and more powerful than anyone else) to attack others before we are attacked ourselves. Two of the greatest living historians in Europe and America have given their verdict on this assertion of *droit de grand seigneur*. Sir Michael Howard regards it as 'one of the most important documents in the history of America', which 'seemed to be demolishing the whole structure of international law as it had developed since the seventeenth century'. He could have cited President Eisenhower's view: 'We cannot consider that the armed invasion and occupation of another country are peaceful means or proper means to achieve justice and conformity with international law.' For Arthur Schlesinger, the strategy represented a fundamental shift from a foreign policy based on containment and deterrence through multilateral agencies to hitting your enemy (if necessary on your own) first. As the strategy asserts, 'The best defence is a good offence.' Successive presidents, he has noted, have rejected this

approach, which he believes dwells on the very edge of legality. In the most controversial application of this principle in Iraq, Professor Schlesinger argued that the Americans went beyond pre-emption and that President Bush chose to fight a preventive war. In his book *War and the American Presidency*, Schlesinger wrote in 2004: 'The entire case for preventive war rests on the assumption that we have accurate and reliable intelligence about the enemy's intentions and military capability – accurate and reliable enough to send our young men and women to kill and die.' We now know that the information on Iraq – and this is the mildest criticism one can make – was neither accurate nor reliable. So what price prevention, pre-emption and wars of choice today? What is the status of a strategy that reminds us of President Truman's dictum, 'You don't "prevent" anything by war, except peace.'

Our best bet in Europe is probably to act in ways that make it less likely that the strategy of preventive war will be tried out again, and more likely that the United States will return to more familiar, popular and successful ways of dealing with the world and of exercising global leadership. This requires that we should define more clearly what Europe wants to do and can do in international affairs and then narrow the gap between aspiration and delivery. There should be, first, no question of us trying to be another superpower. We cannot be and we should not try. There is presently only one superpower, and it is our task to live alongside it and help it to carry out its responsibilities effectively. Second, there is nothing to be said for Europe in effect assuming a role as unfriendly neutrals, captious critics of what America does but incapable of doing much ourselves to make the world more as we would like it to be. Third, I am not attracted by the idea of aspiring to be America's global adjutant, obedient acolytes who do more or less what we are told, like it or lump it. The sensible role that we should want to play is as a capable partner, respected for our advice and our ability to act on our own when necessary, defining ourselves not in contradistinction to America but as ourselves – allies with minds of our own.

This requires of Europe at least four things. First, we need to make greater progress in developing and upholding common positions on

foreign and security policy. The problems in doing this are overwhelmingly political rather than institutional. Does Prime Minister Blair want to carry other Europeans with him when seeking to play the part of friend at court in Washington? Does Chancellor Schröder have any clear idea at all of how to develop Germany's role, balancing its Atlanticist sympathies against its traditional role of helping to define and lead the European debate? He always gives the impression that the very short term is for him very long indeed. Does it matter much what Prime Ministers Berlusconi or Balkenende think outside Italy and the Netherlands? Is there any consistency or meaning to President Chirac's practice of French exceptionalism? Even when they are right, the French can be infuriatingly perverse or incomprehensible. Having scolded the Americans for bullying the world, in 2002–03 President Chirac then tried to bully Europe's new member states for having the cheek to disagree with him. There was more than a hint of Napoleon, and more than a wisp of inherited glory, about his biographer, the silky smooth and amiable Dominique de Villepin (then French foreign minister and now prime minister) when he spoke in the UN Security Council against America's Iraq policy. 'France,' he said, 'has always stood upright in the face of history before mankind'. Does this mean anything at all? Obviously it sounds much better in French. It echoes General de Gaulle's words, carved on the pedestal of his statue on the Champs Elysées: 'There exists an immemorial covenant between the grandeur of France and the freedom of the world'. Change the name of the country and an American Republican neocon could not put it any better.

Secondly, Europeans have to do more to shake off the reputation that we are non-paying passengers in America's chariot. We are too inclined to criticize America while depending on her security shield; too prone to advocate multilateralism while knowing that if a multilateral solution requires force nothing much is likely to happen unless America is involved. We are now starting to develop the capacity to act with and even without NATO support in peacekeeping roles; we have done this in the Balkans and in Africa. Whenever there is heavy work to do, as in the air war over Kosovo in 1999, we have to call on American firepower. We should be able to do more for ourselves, and Americans are right to scold us for not having the capacity. Yet when

we try to develop it, many of them detect a dagger at the heart of NATO.

It is depressing that most surveys of public opinion suggest that Europeans want their countries to do more together on the world stage, provided it does not cost taxpayers more money. This disingenuous self-deception should be challenged by those political leaders who bang the European drum. France and Britain both spend about the same proportion of their gross domestic product on defence – 2.6 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively. They are the most serious military powers in the European Union. Italy spends 1.9 per cent, the Netherlands 1.6 per cent, Germany 1.4 per cent and Spain 1.2 per cent. Procurement and research budgets are correspondingly low. The story might not be quite so gloomy if Europeans spent their existing budgets better with improved standardization and interoperability of equipment. We regularly set goals for improving our capabilities, which we subsequently miss. It should not be as bad as this. Even though Europe spends much less than America, we still have in aggregate the second largest defence budget in the world and have on paper 1.5 million troops. On paper. In fact we have difficulty meeting the target of a force of 60,000 for rapid deployment. We require for this purpose three rotations a year; that requires 180,000 troops and the ability to move them a long way at short notice. We can just about manage the deployment, provided we can lease transport aircraft from Ukraine, Russia or America. Plans to construct our own military transport began in 1984 and stretch ahead to 2020 – that's if we are lucky.

There have been other deficiencies, which reflect the fact that we were moderately well prepared to fight a war against a Soviet threat across the central German plain thirty years ago, but rather less capable of dealing with today's security problems. For example, it was evident from our experience in the Balkans that we had not invested enough to protect our communications against modern interception. Serbian and Croatian intelligence were able to monitor our electronic communications during operations in Bosnia in the last few years. To be fair, we have done slightly better at developing the capacity to undertake the sort of civilian jobs that are required during and after military deployments – the provision of police, lawyers, judges,

prosecutors, experts in civil administration and civil protection teams. But the overall picture is far from good enough to satisfy inquisitive American friends. Even a modest improvement would enhance our credibility as a partner.

'Military power by itself is never enough to sustain your predominance,' Mr Rumsfeld was told by a panel he set up to consider the global pressures on America's military machine. This brings us to the third task for Europe, to show that we understand the relationship that George Marshall highlighted between security and economic development. We have to do more to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development and build governing institutions in poor countries. I have already noted some of the difficulties here, and also stressed the importance of the work. It is work where the European contribution outstrips the American; we should not crow but, since it is easier to persuade European taxpayers to give more for development assistance than for defence, we should further increase the work we are prepared to do here.

Joseph Roth, who chronicled the last days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, wrote in one of his short stories: 'Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the people of my native place were of two sorts: they were either very poor or very rich. To put it another way, there were masters and servants.' That empire did not last. Extremes of affluence and poverty threaten today's global stability for similar reasons. The international community is committed to reducing these huge disparities with the target of meeting a series of so-called Millennium Development Goals, set out by the UN in 2000 and endorsed at a conference in Monterey in 2002. The targets include halving the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day between 1990 and 2015, reducing over the same period by two-thirds the mortality rate for children under five, and meeting a host of other objectives in education, health and the environment. To achieve these goals there will need to be a big increase in aid from developed countries, whose performance in this respect worsened through the 1990s. In the late 1980s total development assistance from the rich countries as a percentage of their income was about 0.33 per cent; today it stands at 0.25 per cent. There is still an accepted target that this figure should be increased to 0.7 per cent. A few countries, all of

them European (Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden), keep this pledge. To put these percentages into absolute figures, the rich countries have pledged to double the amount they were spending in 2002 to about $100 billion per year in 2010. Another $50 billion per year would be required to meet the goals they have accepted. These figures are not outlandishly high when set against the $900 billion per year that the world spends on armaments, and the figure of more than $300 billion per year that we spend on subsidies to farmers in rich countries.

Europe has set about meeting the targets set for budgetary increases in a way that is far more sensible than in the past, when everyone endorsed the 0.7 per cent figure and then most countries forgot about it. We have agreed that over a succession of target periods those EU member states that spend less than the average percentage of gross national income allocated by the whole of the Union should raise their budgets to at least that figure. Each time that happens, the average will rise, the target will increase, and aid budgets will be ratcheted up towards the UN figure, at least for the better-off, older member states. All of the fifteen older EU member states have now pledged to get to 0.7 per cent by 2015. Europe's performance is not great, but it is getting better.

America's contribution to development has become a fraction larger in recent years starting from a much lower base. Jeffrey Sachs has pointed out that since 2001 defence spending in America has gone up by 1.7 per cent of gross national income, tax resources have declined by 3.3 per cent, and development aid has grown by 0.04 per cent. Surveys suggest that Americans think they give about thirty times more in development aid than is in fact the case. Nor is it true that private giving by Americans makes up for public parsimony. The figures given to make this point erroneously include as development assistance private workers' remittances to their families back home. Despite President Bush's admirable commitment to global programmes for combating Aids, America's contribution to poor countries is at the bottom of the league table published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development: even Italy's miserable 0.17 per cent beats America's 0.15 per cent. The gap between America and the rest of us looks set to continue to grow. That may well be

part of the price we pay in Europe for demonstrating that when it comes to meeting broader multilateral targets, we are not paper tigers.

The fourth task for Europe is to do all we can to persuade Americans that the best way of applying what the UN has called 'the glue of common interest', is by working to strengthen that global institution in whose creation the United States played the decisive role. For Europeans to prevail upon Americans to love the UN may be as tough an assignment as for Americans to induce the British to love the European Commission. Both institutions play the role of symbolic bad guy in national debates, partly because of the things they get wrong (exaggerated though these failings may sometimes be), partly because of the way (perhaps inevitably because of the behaviour of their members) they come to personify the gap between human aspiration and all-too-human delivery. A day at the UN does bring into especially sharp focus the lavish dollops of fudge to which I referred earlier in this chapter. But for every hypocrite and scoundrel at the UN, there are dozens of men and women working for it in miserable places around the world, putting their lives on the line and often losing them – more UN civilian workers have been killed in recent years than peacekeeping soldiers. The UN represents what we should want the world to be, and the fact that it falls so far short of the ideal is our fault, not that of the ideal itself and of those who try to serve it.

Scandal and mismanagement eat away at confidence in the institution and we are more merciless about it because it is an international body, staffed by people with diplomatic status, than we would be about the same failures at home in national institutions. While American critics hammered away at the UN's serious mishandling of the oil for food programme in Iraq – much of it the fault of the member states themselves – the surprising and expensive role played by Halliburton in Iraq's redevelopment seemed to pass by equivalent public scrutiny and attack. In the spring of 2005, Kofi Annan put on the table a comprehensive set of proposals for managing the UN better, for restoring some of its moral authority, for improving its effectiveness in dealing with threats like terrorism, for reasserting its functions in legitimizing the use of force in international disputes, for enhancing its ability to build democratic institutions in countries torn apart by strife, for preserving human rights everywhere, and for giving it greater

clout in tackling economic, social and environmental dangers. It is no good picking and choosing the bits of these proposals that one likes and leaving the rest on one side; no good grumbling that we should not grant the Secretary-General these responsibilities because the UN is inherently unreformable. The UN is only unreformable if we choose not to reform it.

Reform is in the interest of small and weak states. But it is even more in the interest of the large and the powerful, and above all it is in the interest of the US. This is one of the reasons the UN was created in the first place. America needs a strong and credible UN; it needs the UN to do some of the dirty work to prevent conflict and to clear up afterwards, as in East Timor, Kosovo and Afghanistan. It needs the UN to shield its might from the world's resentment and to communicate its purposes to the rest of the world. It does not diminish itself by accepting the UN's authority, something it should and often does want others to do. American power requires an agent of legitimization in order to ensure that America does not lose the authority that has come with its historic commitment to the rule of law. Machiavelli was wrong: it is not better to be feared than loved. It is even worse to be neither feared nor loved.

European governments have to say these things politely but firmly to our American partners. Europe should accept the UN reform proposals and campaign for them aggressively together as one, and singly as twenty-five member states. We should tell the US that we want it to be what it was when it helped rescue Europe from the dark: the world's leader, acting through working institutions of global governance, the world's moral and political exemplar at home and abroad. America can continue to change the world for the better – not simply because of what it can do to other countries, but because of what it can persuade those other countries to become.

10

Meanwhile, Asia Rises

Two separate reports from *The Wall Street Journal*, Monday 13 June 2005:

1. Kamal Nath, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry – 'China may win the sprint, but India will win the marathon.'

2. Bo Xilai, China's Minister of Commerce – 'Chinese people have a saying: "If you respect me by an inch, I'll respect you by a foot."'

Once upon a time the muzak of China, blaring out in railway stations and from the megaphones on government buildings and street corners, was the old Communist Party anthem 'The East is Red'. It isn't red any more. In China, Maoist command economics has given way to . . . what exactly? Let's call it for the moment 'market Leninism.' And in the Asian continent's second great land power, India, a gentler, more benign but not much more successful brand of socialism is gradually, too gradually, being replaced by more open and liberal economic management. And the result? The number living in poverty in both countries plummets; two great countries begin to resume their place as world leaders; and the rest of the world either ignores what is happening or ponders nervously the consequences of these transformations for all our futures.

I have been a more direct witness of events in China, though as Minister for Overseas Development I visited India frequently in the 1980s because Britain's largest aid programme was there, and I have seen close up the changes in that country as well. My initial sighting

of China was in 1979. I had gone to Hong Kong during my first summer vacation at Westminster, with a small group of MPs. During our week in the colony (or territory, as it was usually euphemistically called), we were taken up to see the border with China between the main crossing at Lo Wu and the next crossing to the east at Wen Jindu. From police posts, we peered over the barbed wire at the village of Shenzhen, the meadows, the paddy fields and the slow-moving sailing barges on the waterways. This was where several Hong Kong policemen had been killed just over a decade earlier by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, whose atrocities spilled over into bombings and violent demonstrations in the colony. But the scene we saw that day in 1979 had the timeless and gentle innocence of the pictures on blue and white porcelain. So this was willow-pattern China, stretching unknown and unknowable back into a history from which it could not break free, and away to the distant mountains, deserts and mighty rivers that criss-cross its vast spaces.

As Governor of Hong Kong, I returned to this border frequently to show visitors what now lay on the other side of the boundary fence, and to inspect the work of the police patrols who attempted to prevent immigrants crossing illegally into Hong Kong to find out for themselves whether its roads were really paved with gold. By now the village of Shenzhen had become a bustling Special Economic Zone, turned into a sort of suburb of Hong Kong by China's embrace of capitalism. The porcelain pictures were shattered. Now there were skyscrapers, shopping malls, discotheques, businessmen, crooks, factory workers and prostitutes – and traffic jams, too. I remember one night-time inspection visit to the border, looking across close to midnight at the blazing headlights of the traffic in Shenzhen's busy streets. It was raw, frontier capitalism – Adam Smith stir-fried by Gradgrind and Fagin.

For many China watchers, it is the transformation of Shanghai that provides the yardstick for measuring change. This is hardly a rigorous test. Periodic visits to Shanghai tell even less of China's overall development than occasional snapshots of New York or Los Angeles would tell of America's. Nevertheless, Shanghai does provide dramatic evidence of change. When I first used to visit the city in the 1980s it was difficult to recognize in the drab urban surroundings the louche, glitzy,

international city of the pre-war years. It would be an exaggeration, but not much of one, to say that after 8 or 9 p.m. you could count one by one the dim electric lights in the streets. On the famous Bund, Shanghai's waterside esplanade, only the Peace Hotel and its ageing jazz band recalled the vivid past. It was never clear how these vintage musicians along with the elderly quicksteppers, the dusty worn carpets and the cut-glass whisky tumblers, had survived the Gang of Four, including Jiang Qing (Madame Mao), who had made Shanghai the stronghold of their political madness during the Cultural Revolution. Today, the city has recaptured the razzle-dazzle of the past. On a recent visit to make a programme for the BBC, we sat after dinner, Australian Cabernet Sauvignon in hand, on the roof-level terrace of our restaurant on that same Bund bathed in neon, looking across at the skyscrapers on the other side of the river in the area called Pudong. Shanghai has elbowed its confident way into the new century.

Where Shanghai blazed ahead, others now follow. In the 2000s gazing out of your hotel room in other Chinese cities, you see a sight familiar from Shanghai or my old home, Hong Kong: everywhere you look, there are cranes. On an official visit in 2001 to Xian, the city that stands at the gateway to the poor western provinces, we finished our banquet with the deputy governor of the province early, and went for a walk in the old, Moslem quarter of the city. We strolled along the broad medieval city walls, but hearing the sound of dance music from a park below, climbed down to see what was going on. In a corner of the park, with fairy lights in the trees, there was a large public dance floor, and two or three hundred Chinese kids line-dancing. The clothing labels were the same – whether or not the garments were pirated copies – as they would have been from Tokyo to Toronto: Nike trainers, Ralph Lauren polo shirts, Pepe jeans. It's less than half a lifetime since Mao suits and disciplined drudgery. At least today, even if you cannot practise politics freely in China, you have the liberty more or less to escape from politics. As Deng Xiaoping might have said, it is indeed glorious to get rich – and far, far better to line-dance than to starve.

And China *is* getting rich, though not with the inevitable accumulation of rewards assumed by so many foreigners, and by Chinese investors like my interpreter in Xian. I noticed as we drove from

meeting to meeting (and from terracotta warriors to museums of magnificent Han dynasty artefacts) that he spent most of his time making calls on his mobile phone. 'What are you doing?' I asked. 'Talking to my stockbrokers,' he replied, using the plural. 'I make more money playing the market than working for the government.' 'But what happens,' I asked, 'when the market falls and you lose money.' 'You never lose money,' he replied confidently, 'investing on the stock market in China.' I hope the day never comes when he discovers this is not true. China, with its present political structure, would have great difficulty coping with a feel-good factor that turned suddenly and nastily sour.

But so far, so good for most Chinese. The number living in extreme poverty fell by 220 million in the last two decades of the twentieth century. This is substantial progress from what amounted to a ground-zero start. Less than forty years ago, 38 million Chinese died in Mao's great famine; hundreds of millions struggled to survive on a daily calorie count (itself probably exaggerated by Mao propagandists like Han Suyin) that was below the level deemed just about sufficient to sustain human life in Auschwitz. While the people starved, grain and other foodstuffs were sold abroad to buy armaments and the equipment for Mao's crackpot heavy industry projects. Resources were misallocated in what were horrendously large quantities for a poor country – in order, for example, to shift industries from their original locations to what were deemed by Mao to be more strategically defensible inland sites. He wished as much as possible of China's industrial infrastructure to survive the nuclear war that he coolly contemplated. '*Mercacciones innumeras*' ('an incalculable amount of trade'), Christopher Columbus had noted in the margins of his copy of Marco Polo's *Travels*. This has always been China's condition. It took the malign genius of Mao Tse-tung, who was probably responsible, according to the brilliant biography of him by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday (*Mao: The Unknown Story*), for over 70 million deaths, to add yet more impoverishment to the ruin caused by the civil wars of the 1930s and 40s and by the Sino-Japanese war. The full measure of Mao's wicked years of power is the speed and scale of the recovery since his own death and the beginning of the reforms boldly launched by Deng Xiaoping. When you bounce back from hell, the recovery

looks all the more impressive. For some economists, the big question is not why China has done so well in the last quarter century, but why it has not done even better.

For eighteen of the last twenty centuries, China's economy has been – so far as one can make these measurements – the biggest in the world. Later in this century, it will be again, which should not come as too great a surprise given that its population is about one fifth of the world's. This growth is admirable: it has been managed without regional or global disruption; it does not look as though it is about to end; it is manifestly good for China and the rest of us; it is not something to fear but something we should hope can be sustained. As I was writing this book through the winter and spring of 2004–05, it looked as though China and the US were responsible for about half the world's recent growth – China as a result of making and selling things, the US largely as a result of borrowing (particularly from China) to buy the things that others (again particularly the Chinese) manufactured. Wal-Mart had become a larger trade partner of China than Russia or Australia. China makes two-thirds of all our photocopiers, microwave ovens, DVD players and shoes, half of our digital cameras and two-fifths of our personal computers. The new workshop of the world, China has become the third largest exporter, and within a decade is likely to be the world's largest exporter and importer too. When I became Governor of Hong Kong in 1992, China's average tariffs stood at 41 per cent; after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, they fell to 6 per cent, the lowest level for any developing country. China's own market is increasingly important for its neighbours – many of its factories assemble the components it imports from other Asian countries – as well as for the rest of the world. China's economy surges ahead, leaving a clutter of superlatives in its wake, with even the starchy economists in the International Monetary Fund predicting that she will be able to continue growing at a scaled-back 7.5 per cent a year into the indefinite future, drawing on an almost unlimited supply of cheap labour and the benefits of a gradual shift in investment from the inefficient public sector to the far more dynamic private sector. Too good to be true? As usual there are those who tumble over the dividing line from rational to irrational exuberance.

This has always been the case. The potential riches of trading with China have invariably unhinged Westerners. They have been seduced by statistics that would have been impressive even without the old Chinese tradition of exaggerating them. In their book on the Sino-Japanese conflict in the 1930s, *Journey to a War*, W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood recorded that 'the daily news bulletin was read by Mr T. T. Li: "Of seven planes brought down by Chinese ground forces, fifteen were destroyed by infantry."' The tradition lives on. But when it comes to economic discussion, it is no longer really necessary because the story is sufficiently impressive without hype. Nevertheless, the Chinese dream is always oversold and comes smothered in snake oil. I do not particularly blame the Chinese for this, or at least I share out the criticism in equal portions. A Chinese official once explained to Jonathan Mirsky, the distinguished American journalist and sinologist, why Mao's China in the 1970s was so enthusiastically and so incorrectly misreported in the West. 'We wanted to deceive you,' he said, 'but you wanted to be deceived.'

The best account of the results of mindless China frenzy is *The China Dream* by Joe Studwell, the editor of the *China Economic Quarterly*. He notes how many of the great warlords of Western capitalism made fools of themselves and sometimes lost the collars and sleeves of their shirts by leaving their usual commercial criteria and commonsense at home when they set out, great corporate visionaries, to take China by storm. McDonnell Douglas, General Motors, Daimler-Benz, General Electric and AT&T, are a few of the giants who bear the scars associated with being a sino-visionary. Studwell is particularly good at picking apart the meagre commercial results of the 'showbiz' tours to China made by Western political leaders with ever-growing regiments of businessmen. In Hong Kong I usually saw their entry to or exit from China. I counted them in and I counted them out, along with the huge figures they claimed for new business. Germans, French, Canadians, British, Americans – they came and went with presidents, prime ministers and trade ministers leading the pack. Very few people – a few tiresome journalists on *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and commentators like Mr Studwell – ever asked what happened to all these alleged deals. The answer was – not much. Studwell concludes: 'Even with state-supported exports at fire-sale

prices, it is unlikely that a quarter of the $40 billion of deals signed on government-to-government trade missions in the mid 1990s ever went ahead.' The most significant sales on a commercial basis were aircraft, which the Chinese bought because they needed them not because they were doing political favours to anyone. However, they still made as much as they could out of playing off Boeing purchases against those of the European Airbus. None of the major deals allegedly agreed in $12 billion of memoranda signed by American missions to China at this time ever came to anything. On his first 'showbiz' trip to China, American Commerce Secretary Ron Brown claimed to have netted $6 billion of business. An official at the American Embassy in China told Studwell that the actual business resulting from this visit added up to about $10 million.

The main British business delegations to China, while I was Governor of Hong Kong, were led by the Trade and Industry Minister, or President of the Board of Trade, to give him his full Churchillian title, Michael Heseltine. I am a big fan of 'Hezza', as the tabloids call him. His career is a justification for having politicians running things rather than civil servants; he makes a difference and gets things to happen. He is a man for the big gesture, and is much more often right than wrong. His commitment to urban renewal in Liverpool and elsewhere after the city riots of the Thatcher years was morally right and politically effective. There is an unashamed dash and even, when necessary, corniness about him that makes him a formidable political performer, and any squeamishness about his showmanship is relieved by the sense he conveys that he, like you, knows it is all a bit of an act. I always admired three other things about him. First, he is as brave as a lion. Second, he has an enviable ability to master a great department of state without getting bogged down by the work. He followed me in 1990 for his second stint as environment secretary. I had found it a grindingly tough job, regularly doing four or five hours of paperwork after returning from the House of Commons or an official dinner as late as ten o'clock at night. Most weekends brought about ten hours of departmental paper with them. Michael Heseltine ran the department extremely well, without ever taking home more than the odd piece of paper. He mastered the big issues and despatched business without any apparent effort. Third, he has what was used to describe the

outside cultural interests of politicians like Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey, a hinterland. He knows a great deal about horticulture, especially trees, and is a birdwatcher, every bit as avid as Kenneth Clarke.

Just about the only issue on which we have ever been in disagreement was Hong Kong and China. The difference of view was not acrimonious; he was open and above board about his opinions. He thought what I was doing in Hong Kong was wrong and was bad for British business prospects in China, though as I pointed out in *East and West* there was no objective evidence of this. Our trade with China increased during my governorship. Anyway, in 1996 Michael Heseltine led his second trade mission to China and announced that he and his wife would depart through Hong Kong where he would spend a weekend with the governor and his family. He arrived radiant with sino-frenzy, and I spent the whole of an otherwise delightful weekend, during which we walked in the New Territories, identified exotic trees and shrubs, spotted birds and bought antiques, dreading the moment when Michael would give me a piece of his mind. Nothing happened until Sunday evening. After dinner he said to me, 'Do you think we could have a quiet word tomorrow morning?' 'Sure,' I agreed, and was duly taken aside by him after breakfast. 'Let's go outside,' he said to me, leading me out on to a terrace that proudly displayed a collection of ancient bonsai trees. 'Look,' he said, 'I hope you won't take this personally, but there's one thing I've got to say to you as a friend.' I waited nervously. 'You're not,' he said, gesticulating towards them, 'pruning those bonsais properly.'

Will the China boom continue? There are plenty of reasons for caution. Corruption exacts its own tax, consuming – according to some estimates – between 10 and 20 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. Misgovernment is widespread, with environmental degradation (for example, desertification) and public protests over municipal housing, the loss of jobs and arbitrary local taxes. Failed and failing state enterprises gobble up investment, leading to the politicization of credit and an incipient banking crisis. There is a huge overhang of bad debts. Regulation is non-existent or haphazard, with rampant fraud, counterfeiting, and smuggling. How in these circumstances can e-commerce or credit cards be developed? There is widespread tax evasion and capital flight. Overseas investors, who pour

their money into China, extract only the same returns from these huge commitments as they receive in aggregate from much smaller investments in South Korea and Taiwan. Investing in China is not like winning the lottery. And for all the spectacular growth figures, China remains much poorer than the West in terms of income per head, even when you base the calculations on the lower costs of the services that people sell one another domestically, such as haircuts, transport fares or restaurant meals.

Despite all this, the Chinese economy keeps thundering away, and there is plenty of good news on the other side of the balance sheet. With 60 per cent of the population still living in the countryside, China has access to much more cheap labour whenever she needs it. As the state sector shrinks, the private sector, which is growing about twice as fast as the rest of the economy, will be able to attract more of the resources available for investment. The more efficient allocation of capital should boost productivity. China's economy is more open to trade and investment than most others, with exports and imports making up 75 per cent of GDP against an average of 30 per cent for comparable countries. *The Economist* magazine calculates that if China grows at about 8 per cent a year, and income distribution remains the same, by 2020 the top 100 million households in China will have an average income equivalent to the current average in Europe. This will represent a huge middle-class market for the sort of consumer goods made in Europe and America, though increasingly Asians design, make and sell these products themselves. In Singapore I recently saw a brand of Asian malt whisky called 'Matisse'. Whisky, not cognac. Branding in this case clearly demonstrates the sort of cross-cultural myopia that would encourage Samuel Huntington to reach for his laptop.

At the end of his book on Western advisers in China, *The China Helpers*, which takes us from the Jesuit missionaries of the seventeenth century to the Soviet military advisers who gave early assistance to China's nuclear ambitions, Jonathan Spence argues that for China the time for turning to outsiders for help is over. He concludes: 'Chinese advisers have begun to compete in many areas with advisers from the West, seeking to provide the validity of a Chinese world view through

the sophistication of Chinese expertise. The battle has been joined. China, which once surpassed the West, then almost succumbed to it now offers to the world her own solutions.' The book was first published in 1969, and it did look then to some observers as if China, even in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, had a new model of austere socialism to offer the world. We now know what this amounted to and the suffering and hardship it produced. So what happened? For all the talk about Chinese characteristics and socialist trappings, China bought into capitalism – into all its virtues and all its vices – so that the Communist regime could survive, but also (to be fair) so that the people could prosper and make the most of their formidable energies and aptitudes. A Confucian society that had espoused one Western ideology, dreamed up by a German Jew in Europe, now turned to another that we in the West like to claim as our own, even though its principles are everywhere valid and its practices everywhere more benign than any known alternative. How should we now react to China's capitalist conversion and its results?

There is a Chinese saying for every eventuality. As I left Hong Kong in 1997 in the pouring rain, I heard my smartest diplomatic adviser telling a group of Western journalists that there was an old Chinese adage: 'When a great man leaves, the heavens weep.' Challenged by me to admit that he had made it up, he stood his ground but looked sheepish about it. My own preferred approach in present circumstances would go far beyond another – real – Chinese saying: 'What you can't avoid, welcome.' China's economic progress is good, not bad, for America, Europe and the rest of the world. It has lowered the price we have to pay for many of the goods we buy (look at the 30 per cent reduction in real terms over 10 years in the cost of clothing and shoes in the US); it has created a bigger market for our own goods; it has provided a motor for regional and global growth. The only present economic threat China poses is to low-paid uncompetitive jobs in the West. Why do so many Western politicians seek to preserve badly paid jobs for other people, rather than vote for the funds to retrain them for much better paid jobs? No politician that I have ever met wants to work in a badly paid job himself.

Recent protectionist squawks in the West have been directed at the surge in China's textile exports following the end of the global quota

regimes at the beginning of 2005, and these protests have also been linked to grumbles about the unfair advantages Chinese exports enjoy because of her undervalued currency. We always knew that the end of quotas would lead to a surge in Chinese clothing exports; we prepared gingerly for this outcome, dismantling protection too late and too slowly. We have not given China a good lesson in the virtues of free trade. As for the currency, it is worth recalling that China's maintenance of currency stability during the East Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 helped to abate the effects of that crash and to assist the recovery from it. I doubt whether any likely revaluation of China's currency will make much difference to the economy's competitiveness in global markets.

Overall, China's economic recovery has not disrupted the world's economic progress but enhanced it. Would we have preferred it if China had continued poor and backward? Where problems arise they should be dealt with not by trying to contain or harry China, but by seeking to involve her constructively in global economic management. Russia (which would not have qualified on economic grounds) was added to the G7 as a sop for wounded nationalist pride and as a reward for abandoning totalitarianism for an abbreviated form of democracy. Russia will even chair the G8 in 2006. Frankly, Russia – despite her energy riches – is not going to make much difference to our economic futures. But China will. Even if we wish to retain the democratic credentials for membership of the rich countries' G8 club, we should be looking for ways to involve China (and perhaps India, Brazil and South Africa) more formally in its economic discussions.

Some of China's neighbours regard her rise nervously as a real or at best a potential threat. They worry that like nineteenth-century Germany, she may be just too big and powerful for her own continent. Japan has watched the Chinese economy grow from one twentieth the size of her own in 1980 to a quarter of the size today. She observes nervously the development of China's navy, and China's ambitions to explore for oil in seas where Japan, too, feels it has proprietary interests. For its part, Russia notes that while its own Far East territories lose people and industry, neighbouring Chinese regions boom and prosper. Is China a threat to its neighbours, and to the only global superpower, the United States?

Nothing will prevent China having a huge impact on the coming century. Whether or not that is for good or ill will partly depend on how the rest of us handle her and help shape her global role. We will have to do a lot better than the superpowers of the past. Russia manipulated Chinese politics and conflicts with the primary intention of containing Japan and installing a puppet regime in China. The puppet outgrew and outlasted the string pullers in Moscow. The US followed messy involvement in China's civil war with containment of the country she was accused by McCarthyites of losing from the ranks of the free world. Nixon and Kissinger wisely restored relations, although the degree of their infatuation with Mao Tse-tung and his subaltern in tyranny, Chou En-lai, was as unnecessary as it was abject.

An unhealthy growth of belligerent nationalism – seen most notably in the anti-Japanese riots that were tolerated, and even encouraged, in 2005 – is probably the main reason for concern about China. This nationalism is partly a result of the historic distrust and animosity between China and Japan. China's criticism of Japan is understandable, as anyone who has visited the memorial in Nanjing to the Chinese civilians slaughtered by Japan in 1937 would surely agree. Japan's apology for its war record in Asia has never been as generous and wholehearted as Germany's in Europe, and some Japanese diplomats still question whether criticism of their behaviour in China is wholly justified. For the record, it is. But China should beware allowing in her own country the growth of the sort of aggressive nationalism that set Japan off on its own militaristic path in the pre-war years. That nationalist sentiment also endangers cool thinking in China about how to handle Taiwan. America and Europe have to discourage Taiwan from provoking the mainland, for internal domestic reasons, through flirtations with the symbols of sovereign independence. On her side, China had better understand that, while it may not be a point that can be explicitly conceded, Taiwan's political reunion with the mainland (following on the deepening of economic relations) will have to await political change in China. Chinese leaders should not fool themselves that better equipped armed forces and (by 2020) the possession of more than one hundred long-range missiles will bring the happy fulfilment of their national dream.

The best way of encouraging China to behave responsibly, and of

discouraging the deliberate stoking-up of nationalist sentiment as an alternative to the sort of quasi-moral fervour that Communism used to inspire, is to treat China as a responsible partner and to draw her into multilateral relationships and the growing network of international rules and regulations. This is exactly what we did with the negotiation of Chinese accession to the World Trade Organization. We shall need to treat China (and India) in a similar way if, as I shall argue in the final chapter, we are to defuse one of the continent's greatest security challenges – North Korea – and deal with the broader issue of which Pyongyang's behaviour is merely the most strident example, as well as tackling other global problems.

My own relationship with China and Chinese officials when I was Governor of Hong Kong was the subject of much comment and indeed some amusement as a result of the imaginative use of the riches of the Chinese language to denounce me. Much of this invective was presumably motivated by the old Chinese strategem of killing the chicken to frighten the monkeys. But the chicken was neither killed nor spit-roasted, and emerged two years after my departure from Hong Kong as the European commissioner responsible for external relations, including those with China. From that moment on, Chinese officials behaved impeccably towards me, giving me considerable 'face' as they would say, rolling out red carpets and generally showing their most generous and genial side. I have inevitably mused about the reasons for this, trying not to kid myself that there had been an instantaneous conversion to my virtues, nor believing – since I went on saying much the same things – that Chinese courtesy had bought me off when it came to talking about democracy or human rights. First, Chinese behaviour was very professional; their senior officials are invariably much more sensible than the advice they get, for instance, from business supporters. They were more likely to serve their own interests by trying to get along with me than by ostracizing me. The Chinese take a long and practised view. In Hong Kong I had been doing my job. They knew exactly where they stood with me, even if they did not like what I did and the way I did it. On the other hand, I suspect that when I left they concluded that they had not been very well advised on what I was up to and on how to handle me. Hong Kong was stable and rich. We had not looted the colony before

our departure nor sailed off in *Britannia* with the silver teaspoons. They assumed sovereignty over a splendidly successful city. Second, I think they recognized that whatever my views on democracy and human rights (which they knew well and were to get to know even better) I had an almost obsessive interest in their country, believed it would shape all our futures, and wanted my own country and Europe to have the best possible relationship with China. The first time that I met a senior Chinese official after I became a European commissioner, he said to me in English, 'Pang Ting-hong' – my Cantonese name – 'this time we should cooperate.' 'Agreed,' I replied, 'but that is what I would like to have been able to do last time!'

My semi-formal pardon for past crimes came a few months after I arrived in Brussels. The then Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan came to see me. Like his successor Li Zhaoxing, he was a cheerful and experienced diplomat. He sat down at the large table in my office and looked up at a line of photographs of my daughters on the wall. 'How come,' he enquired, 'such beautiful daughters have such an ugly father?' 'The Minister is telling a joke,' the Chinese ambassador said quickly. Minister Tang went on from his opening crack to tell me that senior leaders – he read this sentence out carefully from his brief – had concluded that I was 'an element of concord not of discord'. So there it was: not just remission but a pardon. While I was a commissioner, I saw President Jiang Zemin several times (after one of these meetings, his interpreter asked if I would sign a copy of my book *East and West* for him) and met his successor, Hu Jintao.

I was lucky to be dealing with China at a time when Europe's relationship with her was developing strongly. This partly reflected the fact that continuing European integration – the launch of the single currency, the broadening of the single market, enlargement – fitted into China's world view, in which there are several poles of influence not simply one hegemon: not a very surprising idea if you represent over a fifth of humanity. I sometimes felt when I met Chinese visitors that they seemed to believe more strongly in Europe's world role than we did ourselves. They certainly took resolutions from the European Parliament almost as seriously as the European Parliament did. We produced two sensible strategy documents during my years as a

commissioner. They drew cordial and thoughtful responses from the Chinese side. We became increasingly important trade and investment partners, and developed close working contacts in many other areas – the environment, education, research, economic regulation, transport, satellite development, combating illegal immigration and so on. We worked assiduously – particularly Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy – to secure China's entry into the WTO. An annual summit with Chinese leaders kept an eye on the progress of this burgeoning relationship. I recall a state guesthouse meeting in Beijing with Jiang Zemin that had been planned for rather too close to the hour at which my colleagues arrived on an overnight flight. I was fortunate to have flown in the day before. We sat in the usual horseshoe-shaped arrangement of white antimacassar-covered chairs, the lidded mugs of tea on the small tables beside each of us constantly replenished from large vacuum flasks. The room was hot; the night flight had been long; and I suddenly realized that I was the only member of the European party who was awake. Jiang Zemin and I had an interesting discussion about Shakespeare. I recommended that he should read the history plays, which underlined the importance of political stability. He nodded with interest.

Not everything was harmonious. We had strong disagreements about human rights, and it often fell to me at our regular meetings with the Chinese government to set out our criticisms of China's record. We had agreed with the Chinese that we should have a separate dialogue between experts on human rights, which we supported with programmes for training judges, developing democracy at the village level, and funding some civil society NGO activities, for instance on the environment. The dialogue was courteous enough but it did not really make much progress, a point that we would raise from time to time with our Chinese colleagues. The exchanges could become quite boisterous, especially with any of the Chinese leaders who were prepared to depart from their script. After a meeting in Copenhagen at which the formidably impressive Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji led the Chinese team, we had a vigorous debate about capital punishment. The Premier and I traded the sort of arguments that I have not heard since I used to discuss such questions with my constituents in Bath.

I usually got the job as well – though it was really a matter for the

member states – to set out the EU's views on the continued relevance of the arms embargo that had been first imposed after the Tiananmen killings in 1989. This did not come up at every meeting, but when it did, the Chinese position was always the same, expressed firmly though not with table-banging passion. It went as follows. We had different interpretations of Tiananmen. In any event, things had moved on since then. China had changed: a new generation of leaders was coming to the top. China did not want the embargo relaxed in order to make huge new arms purchases; it wanted this so as to end a humiliating situation in which it was placed in the same category as Burma and Sudan. This was an affront to China's dignity. When I replied, my line was usually to say that we understood the Chinese position; that even if we were to drop the embargo, there was still a code of conduct on arms sales that would restrict them; and that, while we were not suggesting that there was any linkage, it would help us to persuade opinion formers in Europe that we should look at this situation again, if China were to ratify the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and take other measures that we had been pressing on them in the human rights field, such as allowing Red Cross visits to China's prisons. Then we would move on. I think I am sufficiently experienced in negotiating with Chinese officials to know the difference between an issue on which they feel strongly and one that will help determine the whole relationship. Arms sales fell into the former category; attitudes to Taiwan into the latter. When I opened a strictly commercial office in Taiwan to deal with some of the problems associated with their entry to the WTO, as well as to handle our commercial interests in what was Europe's third-largest Asian market, I took elaborate care to explain this position very carefully to Chinese officials, and there was no protest.

So that was the situation on this issue at the end of 2003, until the Schröder-Chirac duo sought – initially successfully – to railroad through the Council of Ministers a change in policy. On a commercial visit to China, during which he was heavily promoting German exports, Chancellor Schröder announced that in his view the arms embargo was out of date and should be dropped. At the European Council meeting of heads of state or government shortly afterwards, President Chirac raised the issue himself – after initially trying to get

Romano Prodi to do so. Since the whole Council had voted to take a common position to impose the embargo, it required a decision in Council to drop it. Chirac wanted an early decision that he could announce during the state visit that President Hu Jintao was to make to France at the end of January 2004. He was unable to get the quick announcement he wanted, but other governments – including the British – seemed prepared to go along with dropping the embargo, provided we could point to a more transparent and effective code of conduct restricting the sale of arms where they might, for instance, be used for internal repression or could contribute to regional instability. Greater transparency about arms sales did not attract as much enthusiasm from the French as dropping the embargo.

As the months rolled past, as we gave a good working demonstration of how not to conduct a European foreign policy, and as meetings of experts went round and round the same old arguments, it became increasingly clear that, while dropping the embargo might lead to a modest further warming of the relationship with China, it was likely to lead to a sharp deterioration in Europe's relationship with America (a much bigger market for arms sales than China) and in particular our relationship with Congress, where Europe seemed to be living up to its reputation for cynical shopkeeper diplomacy. In addition, European arms production is heavily dependent on America as most defence companies are now transnational (and mainly US) conglomerates. Europe is especially dependent on the import of high-tech components whose flow to us would be threatened if the US believed that they would make their way to China.

America's hands on this whole issue are not entirely clean. According to calculations made by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 6.7 per cent of China's arms imports come at present from America as against only 2.7 per cent from Europe. Moreover, American Humvees – the armed troop carriers familiar from news footage from Iraq – are actually made in China for the People's Liberation Army. But to be fair to America, the worry was not about low-tech equipment. Washington was more concerned about the sort of high-tech exports that could assist in the digital warfare of the future. Here there was another issue, however, that America seemed to be ignoring. The second largest arms seller to China (after Russia) is Israel, which

reverse engineers the technology it gets from America (for example, in fighter planes and helicopters) and sells it on to its clients, who include China, Cambodia and Burma. When an American surveillance plane was forced down by F8 fighters over China in 2001, photographs of the incident showed they were carrying Israeli-built Python 3 missiles under their wings. China itself has a profitable arms trade – for example, selling missiles and launchers to Iran. America will presumably wish to take a more comprehensive look at the issue of arms sales than simply to stamp its feet in response to Europe. After all, this is a good area for international agreements.

Nevertheless, the European position did appear irresponsible and short-sighted, not only to America but also to other Asian countries, like Japan and Taiwan, especially when China maladroitly passed legislation authorizing the use of force to counter any Taiwanese assertion of independent sovereign statehood. It is America, not Europe, that guarantees stability in Asia, and America therefore deserves to be properly consulted about any policy change. The arguments adduced publicly for the new policy were confused and even absurd. On the one hand, it was said the policy shift would not lead to any increase in arms sales; it might even lead to a reduction. Yet according to French Defence Minister Michel Alliot-Marie, if Europe sold arms to China, this would avoid China manufacturing arms herself. This argument could, I suppose, be used to justify selling nuclear technology and missiles to North Korea. European references to the need to respond to China's hurt dignity were clearly a weaker motive for the policy than the assumption that going along with China on this would lead to more European exports, starting with Airbus. There is no evidence that China does business on a basis any different from everyone else; it seeks the best product at the best price. The fact that it goes on hinting that friendship and compliance with Chinese positions can lead to big, fat contracts is a tribute to Western (including American) gullibility. We cannot blame the Chinese for this. If we so regularly behave like suckers, why shouldn't they treat us like suckers?

During the course of 2005 this whole wretched arms embargo saga slipped and slithered into European attempts to backtrack on to more defensible ground, returning with such dignity as we could muster to

the position to which we had adhered before the Schröder-Chirac initiative. To drop the embargo, it is now said once more, will require a significant Chinese gesture in the human rights field and agreement on a transparent code of conduct. We came full circle, back to where we had started. In the course of this policy ramble, Europe has lost face with China, America and Asia. Europe cannot conduct its relationship with China on the basis of ill-judged commercial aspirations. We need to talk to America about China, and to China about America, and to encourage these great countries to talk to each other. It is important to work at convincing Washington that China should not be regarded as a strategic threat, but as a crucial partner. If the arms embargo rumpus has damaged our credibility on China in America, we will have done her no favours.

The greatest peril we face is not how we can cope with China's continuing success, but what we do if China gets into difficulties. The most troubling prospect is the mismanagement of the political change that will at some time inevitably follow the sweeping economic and social changes in the country. Some still argue that it is misguided to think that China can become democratic and pluralist. But history does not suggest that Confucianism is inherently hostile to freedom, any more than it supports the notion that Christianity always favours it. For much of the first half of the last century, following Sun Yat-sen's democratic revolution, China debated and even from time to time practised democracy before Mao slammed the door shut on it. He did this because he was a tyrant, not because he was Confucian. Taiwan today is Chinese, Confucian and noisily democratic. An even more pessimistic argument asserts that recent Chinese experience – division, warlordism, civil war – has left the Chinese twisting and turning between the alternatives of stability with servility on the one hand, or instability plain and simple on the other. So it is said that China needs an emperor with a strong hand, even if having one makes it more difficult for China to join the modern world. Reports today of widespread rural and urban protest against social inequity and arbitrary misrule do not lead one to believe that China (under its modern emperor) is very stable, but at the very least suggest that China's condition is one of stable unrest. Moreover, where technology was

once thought to entrench totalitarian rule, today it liberates the individual. Over 250 million Chinese have mobile phones and more than 70 million are regular Internet users. Even blocking some of the most politically sensitive websites cannot give the government the total control over access to information that it once enjoyed. The handling of the SARS virus epidemic was one indicator of the incapacity of even an authoritarian state to write its own story and to cope with modern menaces without greater transparency.

China – like other authoritarian regimes in recent years in Asia – shows that it is possible to develop an economy without democracy. But I doubt whether you can sustain a modern economy for long without democracy and its principal fixtures and fittings – pluralism and the rule of law. A tightly controlled and inflexible political system does not create an environment conducive to innovation and creativity. It is to our own academic and commercial benefit in the West that so many of China's brightest scientists and entrepreneurs come to America and Europe to study, work and register companies. For all China's professed interest in creating a legal system that will be regarded as fair and predictable by foreign investors and companies, it is well-nigh impossible to do this so long as the law is still regarded as one of the Communist Party's main instruments of control. The authority of the government still depends in part on public anxiety about exactly where the limits of an admittedly enhanced personal freedom lie. How much can the individual write, or think, or say without overstepping an invisible line? This is the phenomenon described by the American sinologist Perry Link as 'the anaconda in the chandelier'.

On a visit to China in 2002, I was invited to speak to the Central Party School. 'What would you like me to speak about?' I enquired. The reply came back that the cadres (whose then school president is now China's president, Hu Jintao) would like me to give my thoughts on politics in a post-ideological age. This seemed rather a Blairite, New Labour-ish sort of subject, but I nevertheless sought to oblige. I tried to argue, with perhaps an excess of subtlety, that globalization was one of the factors that was breaking down the old divisions between the politics of the individual and the politics of the State, between choice and the market rather than command economics,

between pluralism and authoritarianism, between right and left. But at the same time, as it narrowed the ground over which the political battle was customarily waged, it also asserted its own tested orthodoxies about what was most likely to sustain economic development and to guarantee stability. We were slowly but surely – East and West – moving towards similar approaches to good governance. By my own standards, I was cautious and even tortuous, but I think I must have got across what I was trying to say, because the first question was about how greater government openness could help deal with corruption and money-laundering.

Chinese leaders are wholly correct when they say in response to criticism that life has got far better for their citizens and that they do enjoy more freedom than was even recently the case. They also point at Western failings and double standards. But none of this remotely justifies the continuing widespread abuse of human rights – the imprisonment of dissidents, the incontinent use of capital punishment, the persecution of religious groups and sects, the treatment of Tibet. The real threat to the regime from Falun Gong was not its beliefs, which appear to embrace traditional Chinese views on breathing exercises and pretty harmless generalizations about the condition of humanity. What worried China's leaders was waking up one morning to find thousands of the sect's followers sat outside the leadership compound, without anyone in that leadership knowing in advance that it was going to happen or understanding how it could possibly have happened. Where were the security services and the police? How could this sect mushroom and organize without the State's knowledge? At a meeting with European leaders, when we quizzed Prime Minister Zhu Rongji about his government's handling of the Falun Gong, he expressed his frustration at trying to deal with them. He said that he had taken the trouble (the political risk as well, probably, given the story of Zhao Ziyang's visit to the student demonstrators in Tiananmen) to go out and try to talk to some of the crowd. They were not open to reason, he said. But what sort of reason is it that tries to deny individuals the right to believe what they want? And what is the alternative belief system offered by the Communist Party in China today? Whatever else it may be, it is not Communism. Its main philosophical refrain is little more profound than the old

soldiers' ditty: 'We're here, because we're here, because we're here, because we're here.'

How much do China's leaders understand the need to change? Is change something they can manage smoothly, or will they face – as Tocqueville noted of the *ancien régime* before the French Revolution – the maximum danger of instability at precisely the moment that they try to loosen the screws? Can they simply manage their way through a continuing period of controlled turbulence, juggling so many awful problems at the same time without anything clattering to the ground, thanks to a continuing, growth-induced feel-good factor?

There is undoubtedly a good deal of debate in today's China about how change might be managed – building, for example, on the experiments in democratic village governance and in extending the choice offered among party candidates for official positions. Early hopes, however, that President Hu Jintao might prove a closet reformer have borne no fruit, perhaps not wholly surprising given his stint as party secretary in Tibet in the late 1980s, which concluded with the imposition of martial law in Lhasa. To be fair he has on the whole been judicious in his decisions on foreign policy and has shown a commendable concern about rural poverty and the environment. But he has also cracked down on the media, religion, the Internet and all forms of dissent. The view of party leaders appears at best to assume that China can change the way the system works without changing the system itself. This is almost certainly impossible. Until attempts are made to change not only the way the way the system works but the system itself, there is a continuing and growing danger that when change inevitably comes it will be massively disruptive.

India is the world's largest and in some respects greatest democracy. It does not appear to face the sort of seismic shift that threatens China. India is poorer than China – enjoying only half China's national income per head at the beginning of the century – and her growth rate is lower. Her population on the other hand is growing faster than China's and she will outstrip China in size during the course of this century. India's economic performance – what has been called the sluggish Hindu rate of growth – is sometimes deemed to be a

consequence of her pluralism. It is said to be the price that India pays for its majestic democracy.

That is unfair and underrates just what Indian democracy has managed to achieve. Since the bloody days of the transition to independence on the subcontinent, India's political progress has been remarkable. Democracy has helped to ensure that ethnic and religious tensions have not blown the country apart. Moreover, as Professor Amartya Sen has observed, it has helped to preserve India from calamity. There has been no man-made famine such as killed tens of millions in China. There has been no cultural revolution. There has been no bamboo gulag. There has been no Mao, though there are a lot of Indian Communists who unlike their Chinese cousins appear still to believe in Communism. The problem in India has come not principally from pluralism and participative government, though admittedly the Indian political system sometimes has difficulty bringing to a decision-making end the discussions that lie at the heart of any democratic society. But the real brake on progress has been the economic policies that were for too long pursued, with socialism written into India's independence constitution.

Change began slowly under Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s and then moved ahead more rapidly in response to a foreign exchange crisis in the 1990s. With Manmohan Singh as finance minister (he is now, thanks to Sonia Gandhi's statesmanship, prime minister), India took the first steps to abandon what was called the 'licence raj' scrapping over-regulation and controls and opening up the economy. This liberalization has further to go and India still suffers from too many of the relics of a centralized socialist economy. There is insufficient investment in the infrastructure and in telecommunications. The manufacturing sector is too weak. But growth has picked up; real incomes per head rose by about 50 per cent in the 1990s; there was a fall in the number of the very poor; and the middle class – described as the 'consuming class' by Indian statisticians and numbered at about 150 million – is growing fast. India is moving from the bullock cart to the motorbike to the car.

The Indian economy has not been held back by democracy but by fiscal mismanagement, corruption and a history of overprotection. Where India has been able to get over these impediments – for

example, in information technology, software and services – it is doing extremely well. Bangalore is home to over 300 software companies and 150 high-tech multinationals. One hundred and thirty of the Fortune 500 companies have offices in the state of Karnataka, India's science capital. Yet India remains worried about China's relatively better performance measured, for example, by the amount of foreign investment both countries attract. It is still true that many Western businessmen overfly India on their way to invest in China. The figures that suggest a twelve-fold Chinese advantage exaggerate the position, largely ignoring the investments in India by her diaspora and including the 'round-tripping' through Hong Kong by Chinese investors. India has not, however, yet triggered anything like the enthusiastic interest engendered by China's performance. Greater economic liberalization should in time focus more international attention on the advantages of investing money in a democracy under the rule of law where there are institutional safety valves to cope with crises and where that famous playing field really is flat.

The Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes suggested in 1998 that his country's development of its own nuclear weapons was not prompted by worries about Pakistan, with the Kashmir dispute still proving a drain on both countries' resources, but by concern about China. India has certainly had a difficult relationship with China, with a sharp military defeat in the border dispute more than forty years ago, and with the worry today that India is being encircled by Chinese influence in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma and even Sri Lanka. For everyone else's peace of mind, and in their own political and economic interest, it is important that India and China establish a harmonious relationship. They should be dynamo economies in the twenty-first century, and major players in regional and global governance.

India and China are inevitably much cited in the debate about the relationship between political and economic freedom. I recall the wise remark of Margaret Thatcher when she was once asked during a visit to China which came first, political liberty or economic freedom. She replied that it did not necessarily matter which one you started with, since you would inescapably finish up with both. There is,

however, one Chinese community where there is no democracy but a free economy, and indeed a broader liberty that goes well beyond the ability to make money doing whatever you wish within the law. That community is Hong Kong, the only place I have ever been able to identify that is liberal but not (alas) democratic.

The modest democratic progress made, albeit far too late in the day, in response to the promises to Hong Kong's citizens in the Joint Declaration signed by Britain and China, were partly and predictably rolled back after 1997. Apart from that, a continuing adamantine refusal to countenance greater democracy, and one or two cack-handed interventions in the legal and political affairs of the community, China appears to have resisted the temptation to meddle constantly in Hong Kong's affairs – at least until recently. Hong Kong has not been politically lobotomized; its high degree of autonomy has been clipped but not suppressed. Hong Kong remains one of the freest cities in Asia, with a resilient economy that has survived and recovered from the Asian crash, and an equally resilient citizenry.

Nearly a decade after the handover, no one can dispute that Hong Kong also retains its sense of citizenship; it is the only Chinese city to have one, sustained by a vigorous civil society, strong professions and clean and efficient public services. Chinese leaders seem reluctant to relax and to recognize that they have nothing to fear from Hong Kong's moderate political ambitions. If China's leaders were to learn to trust Hong Kong, it would be an important step on the road towards managing with wisdom, sophistication and the prospect of a successful outcome the political transition that China herself will one day surely have to make. We all have a stake in the smooth attainment of that venture. As in political so in economic matters, we will all benefit from a China that succeeds and be damaged by a China that fails.

II

An Education to the World

'I don't know what you're talking about, about international law. I've got to consult my lawyer.'

Interview with President George W. Bush, 2003

Back to the beginning.

At school with the Benedictines in leafy suburban London, most of the clever boys were pushed into the classics stream: Latin, Greek and ancient history, at least until Ordinary Level examinations at the age of fifteen. We were taught the history of the classical world by a Cambridge graduate with a West Country burr, a penchant for turning every subject into a tripartite list (pretexts, causes, results), and a passion for Thucydides. So we, of course, had to read his great history of the thirty-year Peloponnesian war, the fracticidal struggle between Greek city states that began with the Athenian empire ruling the seas and ended with its terrible defeat by grim Sparta.

The war exemplified what Thucydides at the time, and Plato and Aristotle in the long, sad aftermath, regarded as the central evil of politics – namely the abuse of public power. A key and disastrous event on Athens' road to defeat was the sack of Melos. The Athenians attempted to bully the Melians into switching sides from Sparta to them; the Melians declined to do so; they were besieged and captured, the men slaughtered, the women and children sold into slavery. Thucydides records in detail the dialogue between the Athenian envoys and the Melians that took place before the atrocity. The representatives of mighty Athens, flexing their muscles, tell those of weak

Melos to recognize reality. First, they should understand a dictate of nature:

> Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves, nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist for ever among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way.

Second, the Athenians give the Melians a sharp lesson in the meaning of justice:

> We recommend that you should try to get what it is possible for you to get, taking into consideration what we both really do think; since you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.

Until recently, America has not acted like the Athenians. Indeed, American global authority for almost a century has been rooted in an understanding of the lessons of that dialogue and of its consequences, which explains why the rest of the world has on the whole accepted that in the American age there is a difference between ascendancy and intimidation. America has not stamped its foot and expected the rest of the world to tremble. The ideas of President Wilson, and the actions of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and their successors, have shaped an international order largely in America's image. It has been marked by three developments. First, there has been the end of colonial empires and the triumph of self-determination. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, a young Vietnamese kitchen worker at the Ritz hotel sent a petition to Wilson asking for self-determination for his country. Half a century later, having defeated the French colonial power and the American superpower, Ho Chi Minh got what he wanted, though he interpreted the 'self' in self-determination rather too literally for democratic tastes. Overall, however, we did see – as the second decisive theme of the twentieth century – the progress on every continent

of democracy and a greater respect for human rights. 'The world,' Wilson said, 'must be made safe for democracy.' To which G. K. Chesterton responded, 'The world cannot be made safe for democracy, it is a dangerous trade.' So it has proved, in the Congo for example, and in Chile, yet the advance of democracy has by and large brought the benefits of better government, greater prosperity and order to most countries. America has intervened directly again and again to promote democratic progress. Just looking back over the past two decades, the US played a big part in bringing democracy to Taiwan, South Korea, the countries of central and eastern Europe, and of the Balkans, exerted economic and diplomatic pressures on repressive regimes like South Africa, and in the 1980s alone stopped military coups in Bolivia, Peru, El Salvador, Honduras and the Philippines.

From the end of the Second World War, America tried to alchemize its own sense of constitutionalism, due process and civil liberties into a rule book for the whole world. Eleanor Roosevelt, the president's widow, led the efforts to agree the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in 1948 promoted the values enshrined in the US Constitution. 'We wanted as many nations as possible,' she said, 'to accept the fact that men, for one reason or another, were born free and equal in dignity and rights, that they were endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of Brotherhood.'

Third, the last half-century saw the victory of capitalism and the opening of national markets under rules that most obeyed. So the twentieth century ended as it had begun, with surging trade – albeit with too many unfair restrictions on the economic activities of today's Melians, the poorer, weaker countries.

US military power has been deployed to secure freedom and, in much of the world, stability. In western Europe, American missiles and soldiers guarded the democracies against Soviet advance. In east Asia, where the absence of the sort of reconciliation between Japan and China that Europe witnessed between Germany and France has denied the continent an equivalent geopolitical stability, the American fleet has helped to keep the peace. But just as important for the superpower has been the sense in other parts of the world that its awesome might was a force for good. Resentment, envy and anger at

what America represents and what it does have usually been overwhelmed by a stronger sense that, for all its mistakes and imperfections, America really is 'the city on a hill', to whose standards most aspire and whose values most admire. This is at the heart of what is called 'soft power', America's weapon of mass attraction.

Soft power has many components – economic, cultural, political, military and educational. The last of these is hugely influential and (if public spending priorities are any guide) equally greatly underrated in Europe. America is not only the city on a hill, it has most of the campuses on the hill. Look at any league table of the world's greatest research universities and it is dominated by America with Europe a poor second, threatened with being overtaken by Asia and Australia in the next couple of decades. This is largely a matter of money. America spends twice as much on research and development as Europe, both on campuses and through industrial laboratories. American universities have far higher private endowments than European ones. Only two European universities – Oxford and Cambridge – would get into the list of the top 150 American universities in terms of private benefactions, and the American taxpayers have also been more generous to research and universities than their European counterparts. One result is that American universities act like a magnet to many of the brightest and best students from around the world. This should give the US a great opportunity to inculcate its values in the next generation of academics, business leaders and politicians around the world, except of course that so many foreign-born graduates stay in America when they have finished their courses, adding to America's economic, educational, scientific and cultural wealth.

Much of this can be welcomed by Europeans. Scholarship knows no boundaries, and universities from Harvard to Stanford probably have a much more benign effect on all our futures than the Pentagon (though it does admittedly pour dollars generously into many of their research programmes). European concern should not be about what Americans do well, but about what Europeans are now doing so badly. What does our underfunding of universities and research tell us about ourselves with all our pretensions to sit around and safeguard the cradle of Western civilization? We lose some of our best minds at the moment in their academic lives when they are likely to embark

on the sort of research that will win for some the accolade of a Nobel prize. Ten years ago half the European students on doctoral programmes returned home after completing them; today the figure is only a quarter. We beat our chests about our aspirations to have a more competitive economy that draws strength from pushing back the frontiers of knowledge. But we still have a European budget that favours yesterday over tomorrow, subsidies to farmers who contribute a dwindling share of our gross domestic product rather than investment in scholarship and technology. Above all, what does our collective meanness about research and universities say about us as a society? Self-confident societies invest in their futures and leave an intellectual legacy to future generations. What will *we* leave? It is possible to dig up passable excuses for the extent to which America outspends us on armaments and military power. But what possible excuse is there for the huge discrepancy in the investment in knowledge? America, Mars: Europe, Venus? Add Athena to Mars, and if you are European feel thoroughly ashamed.

A central feature of American soft power has been that the US has usually accepted that its hard power – its ability to get its own way if it wanted by virtue of its size and strength – should be constrained by a network of rules and agreements. The rules that it wished others to follow, it would follow too. Naturally, if it wanted to it could ride roughshod over the rest of us. But that is not the path America has customarily chosen. It has followed the advice of Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, and shown 'a decent respect to the opinions of mankind'. Doing that, it has respected its own better self, and secured its own better interests, another example of where doing right is also to do the right thing.

It should not come as a surprise that the globalization of economic activities, of the prospects for betterment, and of the threats of calamity, has led to a broadening and deepening of the structure of agreements that America played the major part in assembling in the first place. The environment, the theft of other people's bright ideas, the security of investment, the opening of markets, the proliferation of weapons, the laundering of illegally acquired money – all these issues and many more have brought a growing web of rules and

agreements. It is called the international rule of law. It is what protects us from the other sort of law, which would otherwise fill the growing space that globalization creates, the law of the jungle. It protects the Melians and allows the Athenians to hold on to their power without being hated for having it. It does not threaten the identity of the nation state, but it allows nation states to get on with one another, in a more harmonious and civilized way. Like domestic law, international law conserves order. Big, strong conservatives should be its greatest admirers and advocates.

Some Americans suggest that there is no need to sign up to a nebulous international rule of law to show their better face to the world; their crusading commitment to democracy should suffice to achieve this goal. But the point about the rule of law is that it applies everywhere; the fight for democracy tends, for old-fashioned reasons of realpolitik, to vary in enthusiasm and consistency from region to region and country to country. The cause itself can therefore be discredited by the perception that it is only being pursued selectively.

No one doubts that Washington today wishes to see democracy unroll across that part of western Asia that we call the Middle East. But what happens when we reach the Silk Route countries to the north of Afghanistan – Tamburlaine's stamping grounds – or Pakistan to the south? Pakistan provides a high-octane example of double standards. Democracy has had a hard time of it there. Government has tended to move, turn and turn about from Punjabi soldiers to often corrupt but elected Sindhi landowners, both ruling castes dependent on usually excellent civil servants. General Musharraf represents the latest military turn of the wheel. The streets of his capital, Islamabad, bear the names of all the appurtenances of a pluralist constitution, but the real constitution is down the road at the military cantonment in Rawalpindi. Musharraf is an impressive soldier – courteous, bright, voluble (not least when telling you things you know are not true about weapons proliferation or terrorist attacks on Kashmir). One can quite see why the American administration and many in Europe regard him as a reliable buttress against the dangers of Islamic extremism in his country. '*Après lui, le déluge*.' He has supported efforts to weed out the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and while we cannot overlook the fact that Pakistani military security helped to plant them

there in the first place, we can perhaps allow them the excuse that at least initially they were acting as surrogates in America's efforts to tie down the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and then expel it from the country. When great powers sow bramble patches, they do not always remember that plants grow.

But whatever you say about General Musharraf, he is not a democrat. He installed himself in a military coup; under his leadership the military has infiltrated swathes of commerical life and civil society; he has flirted with elections but the nearest he has come to the real thing is to rig a referendum in his own interests. There may well be arguments for turning a blind eye to all this, as well as to the continuing disgraceful treatment of women and the inadequate efforts to replace the schools run by Islamic extremists with state-managed or controlled institutions (donors should be more helpful in this sector). But Musharraf will not last forever. A strong man will not save Pakistan from extremism, unless he is encouraged to develop strong institutions to underpin his rule. It would be better to talk to President Musharraf about participative democracy rather than sell him American F-16 fighter jets. F-16s are not going to safeguard Pakistan, however attractive the roar of their engines in the officers' mess in Rawalpindi.

Travel north and double standards become more blatant still. The central Asian republics are not an alarming accident waiting to happen but an accident that has begun to happen. They have remembered more than they have forgotten from their decades as Soviet colonies. Political repression, corruption and command economics hold them back and gnaw at their foundations. Kazakhstan is probably the most secure thanks to its huge energy resources. Elsewhere oil and gas reserves ensure Chinese and Russian support, but that is not going to defy reality. Cotton production has created terrible environmental problems, depleting the Aral Sea. In Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan it has enriched small cartels of traders favoured by the government and reliant on cheap – including child – labour. Turkmenistan suffers under one of the world's most oppressive regimes, its economy mired in corruption and criminality (with evidence of official involvement in drug-trafficking) and its political system in thrall to a president whose stamp on affairs runs as far as banning

gold teeth, though not gold statues of himself. Kyrgyzstan has already witnessed the overthrow of one regime, though we await evidence that its successor will be a significant improvement. Impoverished Tajikistan has recovered from a bloody civil war in 1997 but still lives uneasily with the tensions generated by the rivalries of warlords.

Uzbekistan – with a population of 25 million – is cause for the greatest worry. To the romantic names of Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara, we must now add the less well-known name of Andijon, the city in the east of the country where in May 2005 up to 750 mostly unarmed Uzbeks, including many children, were gunned down to end what the government mendaciously claimed was a revolt by Islamist extremists. President Islam Karimov is an unreconstructed Soviet toughie. It is quite difficult to pinpoint a redeeming feature. At a two-hour meeting with him in the spring of 2004, he did not give an inch on any of the concerns I raised with him: torture did not happen in his country; his opponents were dangerous jihadists; the economy was doing fine. Uzbekistan is what the World Bank rather coyly calls a 'low-income country under stress', which is a diplomatic way of saying that it is a failing state that could implode at any moment. Official figures seek to cover up a miserable economic performance that has seen widespread social discontent and high unemployment among the young. Opponents and critics of the regime are harassed, locked up and routinely tortured. Karimov's government drives moderate Islamists into the hands of extremists and, sadly, the West – especially America – is associated with it. These points were all made trenchantly by the last British ambassador in Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, who – whether or not it is connected – is no longer a member of the diplomatic service. Why do we take such a feeble position regarding a repressive government that plays the role of recruiting sergeant in such a dangerous part of the world? During a visit to Tashkent in February 2004, Donald Rumsfeld spelled out the reasons: 'The USA recognizes Uzbekistan as a key initiator as regards maintaining peace and stability in central Asia and all the region as a whole. It supports the country's clear-cut efforts in this direction. Relations between the two countries are aimed at achieving exactly these goals.' So Uzbekistan can go its own miserable way because it is a useful base for fighting extremism in Afghanistan. In due course,

will we be using bases in Afghanistan to fight extremism in Uzbekistan?

A researcher in Bukhara cited by the International Crisis Group in one of its reports on the country, reported an Uzbek schoolteacher who told him: 'I had heard a lot about American democracy. I thought that the appearance of American troops here would change the situation for the better. Now I see that the regime has only been strengthened, and arrests and abuses only increased.' America's $300 million assistance to the government in 2002–03 largely supported a security relationship that threatens to produce long-term insecurity. Surely America should look again at its strategy in this region, alongside its European partners, who have cooperation agreements and modest assistance programmes here that achieve at present very little, though there are many meetings at which Europe tut-tuts about human rights and the lack of economic reform.

America's status as a superpower is not going to be rivalled by Europe. But Europe, if it is encouraged to act effectively, if it has the political will to do so, and if it is prepared to invest the money often required to play this role effectively, should be able to help America to act as a global leader in ways that enhance a system of global governance that suits market democracies, great and small. We have not got much time if we want to put our own stamp on this process. I wrote earlier of the re-emergence of China and India as substantial economic players in the world; their economic significance will have political consequences. They will not simply accept the West's agenda in finance, trade, the environment or security policy. What are we in Europe to do? Side with them against America, or with America against them? Or should we try to persuade both America and Asia, but first and most important our Atlantic partners, to accept a development of the multilateral system and the rule of law that will enable the older re-emerging powers to live peacefully and prosperously side by side with the more recently established powers of the West?

In most of the key areas that will determine our future safety, prosperity and well-being, China is crucial, beginning with the environment. China's economic growth has been one of the reasons for the recent rise in oil and other commodity prices, forced up by

escalating demand. Today, China uses over 8 per cent of the world's oil – replacing Japan as the world's second largest consumer – and has been responsible for two-fifths of the increase in global consumption since 2000. Its oil demand has doubled in the past decade, and energy (as well as the need for other natural resources) has started to shape China's foreign and security policy. China deployed 4,000 troops in Sudan to protect an oil pipeline that it had helped to build there, and was notably reluctant to support UN sanctions against that country in response to the Darfur atrocities. China's basic manufacturing industries guzzle energy, burning today 40 per cent of all the coal burned in the world. What does all this economic development and energy use mean for the environment? At the beginning of the century, China was the second biggest emitter of carbon (according to the Pew Research Center), responsible for 14.8 per cent as against 20.6 per cent for America, 14 per cent for Europe, and 5.5 per cent for India. The emissions grow, and simple extrapolation can easily cause nightmares, even perhaps for a Texan oilman like President Bush. Take car ownership. At the moment only one Chinese citizen in every seventy has a car, compared to one in two in America. What happens as this gap is closed? How many Chinese sport utility vehicles would we be happy to see on east Asia's roads?

Together, China and India have a combined population of over 2.25 billion. As their economies surge ahead, they burn ever more fossil fuel. If we want them to do something to ensure that their *future* growth is more environmentally friendly than was the developed world's *past* growth, how can we persuade them to act differently? Is the best way of doing this for America, the world's greatest emitter of damaging gases, to tell them 'don't do as we do, but do as we say'? Or does Washington contend that the problem does not really exist, or that it is exaggerated? Is the American administration in denial? America is by a very long way the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases – per head of population as well as absolutely. The average American produces each year about 12,000 pounds of CO_2 emissions. These American emissions contribute mightily to what the UK's chief scientific adviser, Sir David King, has called a bigger threat to the world than terrorism. While a tiny minority of scientists deny the evidence, there is an overwhelming consensus – backed by a number of the main

private energy companies – that the phenomenon first observed in the early nineteenth century of gases in the environment trapping heat close to the earth, has grown steadily with industrialization, and is changing our climate and threatening the survival of some communities.

The United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization established in 1988 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to assess the evidence of what was happening. Their work led directly to the drafting of a convention on climate change agreed at the world's Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and signed by the first President Bush. That led in turn to the negotiation of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that committed developed countries, which have after all created most of the problems, to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a first period for 2008–12 to at least 5 per cent below the 1990 levels. During this stage of the agreement, developing countries are not expected to make cuts in carbon emissions, but in later stages (which still have to be negotiated) they will have to play a part in combating what is, after all, a global threat.

The threat is real and immediate. In my own city, London, the evidence grows each year. Before 1990 the barrier across the Thames below Greenwich, which prevents serious flooding of the city, used to be raised once or twice a year. The average has now risen to four times a year and is predicted to rise to thirty times a year by 2030. Indeed, it is predicted that later in the century the barrier will fail altogether. This would put Westminster under six feet of water and presumably be bad for property prices except for those living in Hampstead and Highgate. We are not unaccustomed to rain in London, but freak weather conditions (as predicted by the intergovernmental panel), brought the storms in 2004 that caused flooding and the killing of thousands of fish as 600,000 tonnes of raw sewage were discharged into the Thames. So even in my own country, global warming has started to exact a toll, with more flooding and coastal erosion forecast by the government's experts. The problems in poorer, developing countries are far greater, with warnings about health risks, the sabotaging of economic development and the extinction of species.

President Bush's broadside against the Kyoto Protocol in 2001

appeared to be based on three arguments. First, America faced an energy crisis. What crisis? Presumably the President was not referring to the badly botched deregulation of the power industry in California. If there actually is a crisis, or the makings of one, it is surely the result of America's incontinent consumption of oil. This should argue for using the price mechanism to reduce demand for a product that more than ever America has to import. It is still cheaper to fill up the tank in America than anywhere else; bottled water costs more than cans of petrol. America is a vast country; many Americans live in suburbs; public transport is bad; the car is king. So no American politician wants to make an enemy of motorists. But should not leadership consist in trying, even at the margins, to get people to be more responsible about their use of energy? And if as a conservative you believe in markets, is there any better way of doing this than through more realistic pricing? Is it now impossible for any American politician to get elected on a policy that would serve his or her country's strategic, economic and environmental interests?

Second, the President argued that if America was to reduce its emissions too sharply, growth would be cut back and the whole world would suffer. The immediate impact of Kyoto compliance on economic growth is exaggerated, but most of the rest of us have in any case started to discuss growth in terms of its sustainability. It may be that a greater present-day threat to sustainable growth in America is the heavy dependence of its economy on the savings of Chinese peasants; but a longer-term and growing threat is surely excessive dependence on fossil fuels.

Third, like other American politicians – and indeed like the government in Australia, a country that is itself a big and irresponsible energy guzzler – President Bush declined to sign up to an agreement that for the time being let developing countries off the hook. This is both curious and worrying. The notion of common but differentiated responsibilities was enshrined in the 1992 Rio treaty and passed unanimously by the American Senate. It is that principle that Kyoto repeats. We face a common threat; the developed countries have done the most to create it; the rich should bear initially the largest share of responsibility for tackling it. In time, we shall need developing countries to join the effort. That will require persuasion. How do rich

countries persuade poor ones to act, if the richest country of all refuses to budge?

At this point relative politeness is strained beyond breaking point. US policy is not only selfish but foolish and self-destructive. Higher energy taxes reduce dependency on the Middle East; encourage people to start insulating their houses and businesses; promote more exploration; and help to fill the alarming revenue gap that has opened up since the Clinton era. US industry claims that there would be dire economic and employment consequences. That has not been the European experience (though we have made a good job of driving up unemployment and depressing our economies in many other ways – notably through labour market inflexibilities).

The irony is that we have had in the past to negotiate deals between developed and developing countries on the environment, which have recognized the difference in responsibilities. With America's forceful leadership we reached in the past a wholly successful conclusion. In the 1970s and 1980s, America was active and creative in environmental diplomacy. President Nixon supported the creation of an environment programme in the UN, and himself proposed the World Heritage Convention to protect areas of unique worth worldwide. In succeeding years, America was active in negotiating agreements on oceans, fisheries and endangered species. I was able myself to witness the most successful example of America's work for the environment when, as I mentioned earlier, I chaired in 1990 the London Conference that extended the provisions of the 1987 Montreal Protocol. This imposed constraints on the production and use of substances such as hairspray propellants and the chemicals in refrigerators, which were depleting the ozone layer above the earth's atmosphere. America had pressed for action and, despite scepticism and foot-dragging by several European countries, a series of tough and effective measures were demanded and taken.

The Reagan administration got Europeans to accept the so-called 'precautionary principle'. This involved action to prevent what could be serious threats – in this case hazardous rays piercing the thinned ozone layer – even when the science was not totally proven. There was, however, a problem. It was very expensive for developing countries to comply with the terms of the protocol. They needed to invest in new

technologies and to buy new products. They thought it unfair that they would be penalized economically for a problem that other richer countries had been primarily responsible for creating. The Indian and Chinese ministers at our conference in London made it clear that, while recognizing that the threat we were discussing had global causes and global effects, they had no mandate to assume new burdens that would, for instance, make it more expensive for their own citizens to have a refrigerator. With America using charm, creativity, money and muscle, we drafted new rules giving India and China a period of ten years' grace to meet the targets for banning the production and use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons. We helped India and China with technology transfer and with financial assistance to enable them to comply with the protocol. It was a model of how, through sensible persuasion and generosity, to broker a global environmental agreement. No one – specifically, no Australian minister over whose country the most prominent hole in the ozone layer loomed – grumbled that the Indians and Chinese were being allowed to postpone their commitments. No American official suggested that others should combine to save the ozone layer but not them. No one argued that the world could meet its obligations through voluntary action – which is today's dangerous pitch by the Americans and Australians to India and China. No one argued that the 'precautionary principle' was too expensive, and that we should await a few hundred thousand more cases of skin cancer before we could be sure of the case for acting. What has happened to persuade America that this approach to environmental hazard is wrong?

Several American states are trying to take action on greenhouse gas emissions themselves. There are also bipartisan efforts, for example by Senators Lieberman and McCain, to build a coalition for a much stronger policy. Senator Lieberman clearly hopes that evangelical Christians may be encouraged to pray for a presidential conversion on this question. He notes wryly that, 'The earth is, after all, a faith-based initiative.' We all need a Bush conversion on the road to Delhi and Beijing. Unless America is prepared to accept its environmental responsibilities for the future, it is difficult to see how we will ever get India and China to do so.

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The energy demands of India and China raise political as well as environmental issues. When I visited Kazakhstan in 2004 all the talk was about Chinese enthusiasm for building oil and gas pipelines eastwards from central Asia. The year before, in our gloomy hotel in Tehran, there were groups of visitors from India and China who were there to talk about oil and gas. Both countries have invested heavily in Iranian energy production, with the main Chinese oil and gas company – Sinopec – particularly prominent. So far as we know neither country has been sharing its nuclear military secrets with potential nuclear powers, though the Americans are suspicious about the activities in the field of weapons proliferation of some of Sinopec's subsidiaries. But there has been no suggestion of the existence of a Chinese or Indian illicit network to rival that of the Pakistani nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan.

Khan's activities demonstrated one of the most important threats the world faces, requiring greater and tighter cooperation. It will of necessity heavily involve China and India. It has already been possible, as the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed ElBaradei, has argued, to design nuclear components in one country, manufacture them in another, ship them through a third, and assemble them in a fourth, with the prospect of eventual turnkey use in a fifth. This threatens to destabilize our so far reasonably successful efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons. There are three dangers ahead. First, there is the chance of a terrorist organization getting hold of a nuclear weapon; second, it is likely that other countries will develop the capacity to enrich uranium or reproduce plutonium so that they could move fast, if they wished, towards becoming military nuclear powers; third, we should aim to prevent any more countries taking this route and joining the nuclear club of eight – America, Britain, France, Russia, China, Pakistan, India and Israel. China and India will be crucial to the accomplishment of these aims, not least because of the relationship they both have with Iran, and the fraught relationship that China has with North Korea, which claims that it already has nuclear weapons and could probably set itself up quite quickly as a weapons production line for others.

For thirty years the main instrument for dealing with this problem has been the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which came

into force in 1970 and provides the global framework for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, for stopping the development of nuclear energy for the purpose of producing weapons, and for promoting nuclear disarmament. The NPT, along with the strategic stand-off between the West and the Soviet Union, helped to avoid the worst predictions about proliferation coming true. For example, President Kennedy feared that by 1975 there could be between fifteen and twenty-five countries with nuclear weapons. We stopped that happening and, indeed, when some countries tried in the 1980s and 1990s to develop weapons in secret, intelligence, verification and diplomacy exposed their activities, and in the case of Libya and Iraq halted them in their tracks. Libya abandoned its efforts voluntarily and Iraq's programme was in effect dismantled by the IAEA in the 1990s – as their inspectors would probably have been able to confirm if given a little more time before the invasion of the country in 2003. That leaves Iran and North Korea, but forty other countries probably possess the intellectual and technical capacity to produce nuclear weapons. We depend heavily on their goodwill not to do so.

The seriousness of this issue is beyond dispute. It recalls Albert Einstein's observation: 'Since the advent of the nuclear age, everything has changed save our modes of thinking and we thus drift towards unparalleled catastrophe.' To avoid that, we need tougher international rules with more effective political backup and sanctions. It is not obvious that there is any better way of doing this than through the UN – principally the Security Council – and its specialized arm, the IAEA. We need a system that makes tough verification, to prevent clandestine activity, mandatory for every country that signs the NPT, with sanctions against non-compliance or withdrawal from the treaty. We require tighter controls over the export of sensitive material and technology. There should be limits on the production of new nuclear material through reprocessing and enrichment. We have to agree on how we can share the international responsibility for the management and disposal of spent nuclear fuel. We must get rid of the weapon-usable nuclear material that is already in existence, and we must help countries to halt the use of weapon-usable material in their civilian nuclear programmes.

Strengthening the NPT in this way would make the world a lot

safer, but it also represents what much of the world regards as an unfair bargain. So long as there are as many nuclear weapons in store as there are, threats to our safety clearly remain. Moreover, the non-nuclear countries question a bargain that is framed, so far as they are concerned, almost entirely in the interests of the existing nuclear club, the N8. Why should others – Brazil, South Africa, not to mention Iran – sign up to a treaty in which all the 'give' is on their side of the table, and all the 'take' on the other? They refuse to accept that it is morally acceptable for some countries to have nuclear weapons, while others are regarded as outlaws if they wish to retain the capacity to join that club. This will not be solved by pressing for a ban on all nuclear weapons and the destruction of all stockpiles. That will simply not happen before the the dawning of that, alas, improbable day when we base the world's security structure on our shared humanity. But the existing nuclear powers, led by America, must make *some* gestures to the others. They must be more open about the weapons they already have. They must get rid of many of them. They must verify and bring into force the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. They must abandon any further research and development to produce yet more advanced nuclear weapons. This last requirement is principally a matter for the United States. If we are going to draw the line more firmly and clearly around the existing possession of nuclear weapons, then the line cannot wobble and wiggle when it comes to the obligations of the N8.

American interest in the rise of India and China has grown and will grow exponentially as their weight of numbers and economic size constrain America's ability as the only superpower to do what she wants, when she wants, simply by an exercise of will. There are other and better ways of asserting the primacy of the values in which America has always believed than ultimate dependence on exceptionalism: doing whatever America wishes to do because she can get away with it. As we have seen, international agreements and the rule of law offer more effective ways of guiding the international community and protecting America's interest. This is presumably what Mr Rumsfeld meant, at least in part, when he hoped and prayed that 'China enters the civilized world.' It is a slightly odd turn of phrase given what has happened in China over the last three thousand

or so years. A millennium before the Periclean Golden Age in Athens preceding the Peloponnesian War, which laid that city state low, the Chinese were casting in bronze and weaving silk. I have a beautiful figure of a small sleeping dog of about that period, carved out of jade. Most of us would think that a country that could do those things was already an impressive civilization. We must assume that the American Secretary of Defense had other things in mind: the transformation of the last huge totalitarian state into a pluralist democracy; obeying the norms of what we associate with civilized behaviour at home; acting responsibly within an infrastructure of global rules and institutions abroad. How do we best secure such a transformation?

Here we arrive at the worrying consequence of current American behaviour. Around the world, America is seen more and more to contravene the principles that it enjoins others to follow. It appears too often to abjure its own ethos, to repudiate its own history. Time was when piazzas and parks, boulevards and buildings, were named after American presidents and public officials. Looking through the London street map, the A to Z Gazetteer, I can see a Roosevelt Way in Dagenham, a Truman Close in Edgware, an Eisenhower Drive in the East End and Kennedy Courts, Closes, Gardens and Houses all over the city. The same is true in other cities and other lands. Will we one day name our squares and streets after Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice?

America was founded on the rule of law; the heart of Britain's first Atlantic empire, it broke loose from the shackles of a dynastic state partly because of what it deemed to be the illegal actions of King George III and his ministers. America's Constitution and Bill of Rights removed from the new nation state's government those features of the old world that were deemed to be unjustifiable in the new. In more recent years, as we have noted, America has been a pioneer of international agreements and the rule of law. America pressed, for example, for the establishment of war crimes tribunals in Nuremburg and Tokyo, and then supported the establishment of the tribunals to deal with the atrocities committed in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In the countries of former Yugoslavia, America linked the provision of assistance to explicit compliance with the Hague Tribunal, and regu-

larly pressed me and others to take an equally firm line as far as Europe was concerned. Why then has America been so hostile and obstructive towards the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), an institution almost fifty years in the making?

American negotiators participated in the drafting of the statute that establishes a court to deal with war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights. The final outcome met some, though not all, of America's concerns: the ICC will only act if national authorities have failed to do so themselves; there are safeguards to prevent rogue prosecutions. But America did not secure the right of permanent members of the UN Security Council to veto investigations. This was a curious aim for America to assert given that it has always criticized the scope within the ICC for politicizing international justice, a point which also sits oddly with the politicization of judicial appointments in America. The Bush administration has not only refused to have anything to do with the court, but has campaigned actively to obstruct its establishment and undermine its ability to operate. In particular, the United States has pressed other countries to sign what amount to bilateral immunity agreements, under which these countries undertake not to surrender any American national to the court without American approval. Many of those who decline to endorse such agreements lose military aid as a result.

This issue triggered some of the most heated arguments between America and Europe during my years at the European Commission. In the summer of 2002, one of the German commissioners, Günter Verheugen (responsible for our enlargement negotiations), and I heard that Washington was putting great pressure on the candidate countries – for example, Poland and the Baltic States – as well as the putative candidates in the Balkans to sign immunity agreements. This was unacceptable to us. The EU had been a strong supporter of the establishment of the ICC; we had worked for years to achieve its creation; we helped to fund organizations that themselves acted as advocates for the court. Europe had adopted a common position on this. Countries that wanted to join us should recognize that we had a clear policy and should not be bullied into taking a line hostile to that of organizations of which they hoped to become a member in 2004. Romania – a candidate for later EU membership in 2007 – had

buckled to American pressure by the time we heard what was going on. But we set out clearly for other countries exactly what the EU line was, and undertook to give them detailed legal advice on what sort of deals they could negotiate on this issue with America without in our view being in breach of the agreement they had all signed to set up the ICC and prescribe its jurisdiction. We just managed to hold the line, but not without some bruising telephone conversations with normally more affable colleagues in the State Department, who must have been under strong pressure from elsewhere in Washington. I recall setting off on holiday in July, and getting three calls from Washington on this subject within the space of the drive from Brussels to Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. It was one of many occasions when I have cursed the existence of mobile phones.

Of course, it is legitimate for the world's superpower, so often called on to stand in the front line to keep the peace, to prevent vexatious legal actions launched for political reasons against its soldiers, diplomats and leaders. The statute that establishes the court appears to others to provide such guarantees. They are sufficient to satisfy Britain and France, for example. The court does not have jurisdiction over wars of aggression, which is an issue left to be decided on the day, probably just this side of the Greek Kalends, when a common definition of aggression can be agreed. There is also more than a hint of double standards – indeed, they parade in dress uniform, bands playing and flags flying – about pressing international jurisdiction on Serbs and Croats but denying its legitimacy, even theoretically, for Americans.

This really is all about being able to get away with it, and to most of the world it does not look as though America wants to do this because it is different from and better than others, but because it is all too similar to the rest of fallen humanity. That is the heavy price that America pays for Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, equivocation over torture, and exporting suspects in secret so that others can torture them. There was a time when America might have been excused for saying, 'We won't sign up to all these international norms because we don't need to. The rest of you do; so sign on the dotted line.' No longer. It is not that America behaves worse than others in similar circumstances. Look at the record of Britain and France, as colonial

powers. Recent allegations of British abuse of human rights in colonial pre-independence Kenya during the Mau Mau emergency reminds us that our own colonial record has a seamy, unsavoury side. Torture and murder during the last years of French colonial rule in Algeria divided France then and still do today. The violence, the murder and the abuse of human rights extended to the streets of Paris with, for example, the savage repression of demonstrators there in 1961–62. So we in Europe even in the post-war years could ourselves say with Thomas Jefferson, 'I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.' But the public discovery that such scorching self-criticism has recently been so relevant to America's behaviour too does not buttress the case that America should be above the international rule of law.

What have we witnessed? There was the deliberate creation of a legal black hole down which 650 terrorist suspects were dropped in Guantánamo Bay. For how long will this legal outrage continue and how will it be ended? There were the awful degrading pictures from Abu Ghraib revealing porno-sadistic practices for which no one could be held responsible above the lowest ranks of the lumpen military. There was the logic-chopping, morality-mincing debate about what constitutes torture and how America could evade the explicit provisions of the Geneva Convention. Was it really torture to keep a suspect's head under water or to slip needles beneath his nails? Could hooding, the denial of painkillers to the injured, beatings and sleep deprivation not be justified? Was not the president in his role as commander-in-chief of America's military entitled to place himself above the quaint prohibitions of international law? Surely if an interrogator's primary purpose was trying to obtain information, not to cause pain, he could apply the pincers wherever he wanted? For me, it was this cool, bureaucratic argument about an issue that has been at the heart of almost every human rights agreement that caused most offence and, to be frank, surprise. I simply did not believe that America could behave like this – the America to whose lawyers, human rights organizations and politicians I tried to justify the investigative methods, transparency and conclusions of my police enquiry in Northern Ireland. We fought terrorism in the UK. Spain fought terrorism in Madrid and Bilbao. We knew that our democracies had to fight

terrorism with one hand tied behind our backs, because that was the only way in the long run we would win, because to act otherwise was to obliterate the moral gap between the state and the terrorists, because to behave like the terrorists was to deny all that we thought we were and wished to be. And who stood for that most resolutely, proudly, persuasively, openly in the world? America. But perhaps that was then.

America surely wants to help create a world again where her embassies do not all have to be replicas of Fort Apache. She must want to shrink the distance between the Statue of Liberty and how she behaves around the world. She should want the whole world as her friend and not much of it as a sullen vassal. She should be reminded to put her faith again in the sort of global order that she created over fifty years ago and will only abandon to her lasting cost – and to our cost as well, in Europe as in other continents. For it remains the case, in the words of General John Shalikashvili (former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) that without American leadership 'things still don't get put together right'. If Europe can only forget its prejudices and introverted preoccupations, it should see the importance of working to help America put things together in the right way. That sort of partnership should help restore American faith in her better self, in international cooperation and in the rule of law for all of us.

In 1994, the Bodleian Library in Oxford published a pamphlet first issued by the United States War Department in 1942. It had been prepared for the American servicemen who were going to Britain to prepare for the invasion of occupied Europe. As the librarian of Rhodes House (where the original copy is held) has written, it is a '"snapshot" of wartime Britain, as seen by a sympathetic outsider'. I was particularly struck by the good sense of some of the important do's and don'ts that the pamphlet lists:

> Be friendly – but don't intrude anywhere it seems you are not wanted . . . Don't show off or brag or bluster – 'swank' as the British say. If somebody looks in your direction and says 'He's chucking his weight about' you can be pretty sure you're off base. That's the time to pull in your ears . . . By your conduct you have great power to bring about a better understanding between the two countries . . .

It puts me in mind of the history book with which I began this chapter. Some time before Thucydides records the debate between the overbearing Athenian envoys and the Melians, he reports the famous funeral oration that Pericles gave at the end of the first year in that long war, which was to destroy the supremacy both of Athens and of those virtues with which Pericles was identified. The speech probably reflects what Thucydides thought Pericles should have said and would have meant rather than what he actually declaimed. It is trenchant, powerful, eloquent and relevant – to Athens then and to today's great power. Once the bones of the Athenian dead had been laid in their burial place, on the most beautiful approach to the walls of the city, Pericles mounted a high platform and addressed the mourners proclaiming the virtues of his city, a democracy in which he argued that everyone was equal before the law. Athens was a model for others to follow, he claimed. 'I declare that our city is an education to Greece.'

For so much of my lifetime America has been an education to the world – to every nation, every continent and every civilization. It has been a living lesson, a paradigm to which others could aspire, an example for others to follow. I hope that Europe can help America to be that again. When it is, it will not be America that triumphs but the ideas that, until recently, America has unequivocally represented. Then the century ahead would not be America's as was the last one. It would belong to mankind. It would be a century dominated by the values that American history enshrines and that American leadership at its best embodies and defends without bragging or blustering: democracy, pluralism, enterprise and the rule of law.

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