

SCUSA 60 THEME:
MEASURING PROGRESS AND DEFINING NEW CHALLENGES

WESTERN EUROPE

Western Europe's place in the World has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. No longer is it at the geostrategic center of global concerns and the nexus of confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. However, it is still critically important because of our extensive ties in all domains. It is home to several of the world's largest economies and the EU taken together is considerably larger in population and GDP than the United States. By some it is seen as one of the main poles in an emerging multipolar world. Others believe that its governance issues are too difficult to solve and the burden of its social expenditures will prevent it from ever again being a first-class military power.

Thematically, we need to look back at Western Europe's recent history in order to both define and determine "progress." We can use this definition of progress to chart a course for the future, as it should give us appropriate metaphors and analogies by which we can direct our thinking and build a framework for the future.¹ As this is the 60th annual SCUSA, we need to start our considerations with postwar Europe.

The European Social Welfare Model (Economy)

In the immediate years following World War II, Europe appeared to be in terminal decline. By 1947, however, there was reason for hope. The dramatic European Recovery Plan proposed by Secretary of State George Marshall (more popularly known as the Marshall Plan) at Harvard University's commencement of that year became a rare example of sacrificing short-term interest in favor of a long-term solution. The sum of the aid from 1948-52 was enormous, nearly 0.5 % of US GDP during those years (or more than \$200 billion in year 2000 dollars).²

It is important to remember, though, that Communism was seen as a viable alternative to democracy and capitalism in the eyes of many Europeans. It was the perceived and real failures of both democracy and capitalism in the interwar period that led in part to WW II, as the alternatives appeared to offer the "progress" that millions did not see in the global Depression that helped precipitate the war that laid waste to Europe. The death of one of those competitors to democracy and capitalism—National Socialism—served to strengthen the claim of Communism and its chief proponent, the Soviet Union, that its primary role in destroying the Nazi threat was *prima facie* evidence of its power and inevitability. Communism's claim on the future seemed to be strong.

Yet the stark dichotomy between capitalism and Communism could be bridged economically, according to many Europeans. While firmly anchored in the American camp, the major nations of Western Europe became aware of the need to reduce the worst excesses of the free market via government intervention, echoing what would eventually form the basis of contemporary European socialism. Political parties advocating extensive social welfare policies came to power in Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the Scandinavian countries in the postwar period. The varying degrees of success for these parties do not undercut the strength of European socialism, but rather highlight its

nature as a “Third Way” in which the potential dynamism of a free market is diminished in favor of ensuring that all members of society have a safety net. The effective end of Communism in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union served both those who attacked this European socialist model and those who defended the model as proof of its viability.

While this model appeared to have put aside economic growth as its primary concern, Europe did grow miraculously throughout the 1950s and 1960s. While many read the 1968 student riots in France, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere as a sign of the strength of leftist radicalism in Europe, others have said that the turmoil was “a product in many ways of the very prosperity the students were attacking.”³ The very prosperity and full employment that Europe experienced in that time period allowed Western European labor unions to bargain for the benefits they enjoy today – shorter work weeks, five weeks paid vacation, early retirement, comprehensive healthcare etc.

Can this strengthening of the claim of the labor force on the economy be fairly labeled as “progress”? If so, is this model economically sustainable? Do the current structural realities of the global economy prevent future progress or will European labor continue to cling to its hard-won privileges? Will the long-term stability of Europe be threatened by a lack of progress or a regression in the concessions to European labor?

Race and Immigration (society)

The Nazi campaign to create a racially homogenous Europe failed, but the accompanying orgy of destruction and its aftermath helped to bring the issue of ethnic minorities to the fore. Starting in the 1950’s, partly in response to decolonization, foreign or “guest” workers, many of whom were Muslims, were increasingly relied upon to fuel the economic growth of Western Europe. The host European countries signed accords with the countries from which these guest workers came, which encouraged them to take employment in Europe and remit payments back to their families at home. The expectation was that the vast majority would eventually return to their countries of origin.

Although the agreements originally made the guest workers’ status “temporary,” the reality was that many of these workers became a permanent presence. These guest workers—to include North Africans from former French colonies in the Magreb, Turks in Germany, Indians and Pakistanis in the U.K.—often formed ethnic and religious enclaves apart from mainstream European societies, frequently because these guest workers were “ghettoized” through a variety of different mechanisms, including obstacles on the path to citizenship. However, in the era of almost full employment prior to the first oil crisis in 1973 their presence was mostly tolerated.⁴

This mass immigration to Europe was also a result of nationalist movements in the Muslim world and economic conditions that encouraged labor to leave to find jobs. With the secularization of modern Turkey, for instance, this meant that many of the Muslim immigrants to Europe were not religiously radicalized.⁵ However, the conditions for radicalization were created by the very conditions for peace in the postwar period. Beginning with the 1973 Arab oil embargo and its attendant economic dislocations throughout Europe, many Muslim guest workers became increasingly disaffected with their host governments.

The high unemployment that followed the double-digit inflation of the mid 70's caused European governments to restrict immigration in anticipation that the guest workers would go home, all in the hope of boosting the employment prospects of their existing citizens. The actions limiting immigration did not have the desired effect—unemployment in Europe, despite the lack of citizenship, was preferable to unemployment in the home country. The subsequent choice to settle down with wives brought over from the host country meant that a rapidly growing new generation of immigrants was being created, often with the same legal status of their parents, which served to turn some of this new generation to radical Islam.⁶ The Yugoslav wars in the mid-1990s involving Bosnian Muslims only further served to inflame the wider Muslim world and European Muslims, as it was believed by many Muslims that the cultural and linguistic commonality of the Bosnian Muslims with their Serbian and Croatian oppressors demonstrated the futility of the efforts of immigrant Muslims to try to integrate into European culture.⁷

Does the existence of culturally and linguistically different populations in the midst of a relatively homogenous Europe serve as a “Third Column” which threatens Europe's political and social stability? If so, are there means available to ameliorate this potential threat? Is the very nature of European society and culture compatible with peaceful and smooth integration of Muslim communities - and vice versa?

Is the Cold War over yet? (security)

Within a few years of the beginning of the postwar period, the security of Europe and the world hung in the balance between the states that would be the genesis for NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In the showdown that followed, each side fielded large conventional forces and thousands of nuclear warheads at the height of the arms race. The apparent viability of both the United States and the Soviet Union made this showdown seem indefinite.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 90's triggered claims of the “end of history” and the ushering in of a new era in which the politico-economic-cultural systems of the winners had prevailed and would be adopted worldwide, including in the former Soviet Union itself.⁸ While elements of these early notions at the end of the Cold War have come to pass, the theoretically apocalyptic threat that nuclear weapons pose has not. Despite the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT I and SALT II), the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the Fukuyama notion of the end of history, today there are still over ten thousand nuclear warheads in existence between both Russia and the United States.⁹

The expansion of NATO into former Warsaw Pact countries was another event that would have nearly impossible to foresee even at the end of the Cold War. However, the expansion of NATO into territories that had been the preserve of the Soviet Union has been an ongoing trend since the admission of many of the key Warsaw Pact members in the late 1990s, to include Poland.

The apparent economic, political, and military weakness of Russia in the 1990's seemed to indicate the ineluctable decline of what was once one of the world's greatest empires. The sharp rise in energy prices beginning after 2003, combined with aggressiveness in their political leadership towards the West, appear to herald a potential

new Cold War, one in which a resurgent Russia will reemerge as a counterweight to the United States in Europe and elsewhere.

Is this apparent resurgence of Russia a temporary phenomenon, or does it threaten to settle into a long-term condition similar to the Cold War? Can Russia be brought into NATO, or at least be convinced to stay on the sideline as NATO expands to the former members of the Soviet Union? Is the prospect of total nuclear war still realistic? With thousands of nuclear warheads in the former Soviet Union, is a real danger posed by the loose accountability for these weapons?

Sovereignty vs. Transnational Unity (choice)

The recent development of the euro as a major currency and a worthy competitor to the dollar was no more than a remote pipe dream in the late 40's. Even more astounding to Europeans of the postwar period would be the perception of the United States as a declining economic power and Europe as an emerging economic superpower with the ability to compete at all levels economically on the world stage, from consumer powerhouses such as Nokia and Vodafone (45% owner of Verizon Wireless) to commercial aviation such as Airbus.¹⁰ The Airbus example – a consortium of French, German, British and Spanish aviation companies - is a metaphor for what the European Union (EU) can accomplish.

The level of cooperation that we see today resulting in a common currency throughout most of Europe was not at all a “fait accompli” in the immediate postwar years. The center-periphery dynamic was and still is an issue of contention; the primary choices for Europeans lay in between a united European political body with real and enforceable political power versus a consultative body with the power to advise countries that could reject the advice based on sovereignty. Nonetheless, the prevailing historical trend suggests that the advocates of concentrating power have repeatedly won out over their opponents. Each successive transnational European organization—the Council of Europe, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Community (EC), and the European Union (EU)—has built upon the powers of the previous organization and goaded the member nations (now 27) into compliance through negotiating and conditioning. The powers of the EU are not limited to simply the issuing of a common currency; the EU has required commonality among its members for political and judicial issues, to include banning the death penalty and the promotion of gender and racial equality.

Is this growth in transnational unity and the diminution of national sovereignty a harbinger of Europe's future, one in which a common European culture transcends the fiercely provincial nature of European history? Or, is this movement to forge a common identity a minor historical footnote, as the traditional national frictions reemerge, as they did in the former Yugoslavia? Is a reduction of national sovereignty even desirable, considering that many of the political and cultural innovations of Europe can be traced to national competition among the European states? Can ever higher levels of integration be achieved in a manner that lowers the economic and social friction that accompanies the process (as in German unification)? Can they act together for a Common Foreign and Security Policy?

The EU confronts many challenges, not the least of which is their grand experiment to create a new entity out of historic nations and work together in ways that have never even been attempted before. Much has been achieved, but how far can they take the European project and will they really be able to create a coherent new pole in the 21st century.

¹ Gary Klein, *Sources of Power* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 213.

² Tony Judt, *Postwar* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 91.

³ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 319.

⁴ Judt, 337.

⁵ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 31.

⁶ Kepel, 192-198.

⁷ Kepel, 249.

⁸ Fukuyama, Francis, "The End of History." *National Interest* (Summer 1989): 3-28.

⁹ <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/npp>

¹⁰ Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 66.

Recommended Readings

Articles

Charlemagne. "A Worrying New World Order", The Economist, September 11, 2008

Charlemagne. "Bring Out Your Models", The Economist, July 31, 2008

Coonen, Steven J. "The Widening Military Capabilities Gap Between the United States and Europe: Does It Matter?" Parameters, Autumn 2006, pp. 67-84

EU Enlargement, Special Report, The Economist, May 31, 2008

"Europe: Minorities in Germany – the Integration Dilemma", The Economist, July 19, 2007

Giry, Stephanie. "France and its Muslims", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 85, No. 6, September/October 2006

"The European Union – Fit at 50?", Survey, The Economist, March 17, 2007

Books

Leonard, Mark. *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, Public Affairs, 2005

Sheehan, James J. *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe*, Houghton Mifflin, 2008

Web Resources

Europa – EU Official Website, <http://www.europa.eu.int/>

NATO Official Website, <http://www.nato.int/>

German Marshall Fund, "Transatlantic Trend, 2008", <http://www.transatlantic trends.org>

Asmus, Ronald "Nato's Hour", German Marshall Fund Website, August 18, 2008