



Europe and America: Fresh Starts in an Enduring Partnership Op-Ed

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The European Union has a new Commission. In the United States, President Bush has been inaugurated to a second term. The President will visit Germany on his first foreign trip following his inauguration. President Bush's visit in February will underscore his commitment to build on our shared values of freedom, democracy, and human rights and to work closely with European allies and partners on the 21st century challenges we face together. This is a good time for fresh starts, finding common ground and moving forward.

European friends want Americans to recognize the scale of Europe's recent accomplishments - a Constitution, a unified and stable currency, a European Parliament that is coming into its own, a prosperous single market with 450 million citizens and the successful embrace of Eastern European states, many of whom were once under Communist domination. Recently, leaders from EU countries helped mediate the electoral crisis in Ukraine, thus extending the benefits of democracy further to the east.

Americans want Europeans to recognize America's contributions to security, prosperity and development. Working through international organizations, the Bush Administration has mobilized the world to combat terror, helped salvage the Doha WTO negotiations and launched major development initiatives such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation and a \$15 billion global HIV/AIDS campaign. U.S. Official Development Assistance has increased 60% since 2000. In response to the Tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia, an immense human tragedy, the United States has committed 350 million dollars for disaster relief and reconstruction. In addition, the U.S. military has deployed countless assets to the region to assist in the recovery effort. Americans from all walks of life have generously contributed millions of dollars as well for disaster relief and reconstruction, joining the outpouring of generosity from around the world.

Meanwhile, the economic relationship between Europe and the United States is the deepest transoceanic partnership the world has ever known. It's hard to imagine addressing the challenges we will face without a strong U.S.-EU partnership - a partnership that must not be taken for granted. Let me suggest a few immediate areas of cooperation going forward:

To win the war on terror, we must work together like never before to disrupt terrorist financing and defuse security threats before they reach our shores. We need to forge new, closer patterns of cooperation on the movement of cargo and persons. We must make travel documents more secure and screen airline passenger lists for potential terrorists while respecting individual privacy rights.

To invigorate our economic partnership, we must complete the Doha WTO Round, including the elimination of agricultural export subsidies, the substantial reduction of trade-distorting domestic support and the improvement of market access.

Government leaders must also canvass fresh ideas from civil society and corporate stakeholders to help plot a course and a set of objectives for transatlantic economic relations for the year ahead, as we committed to doing at the June U.S.-EU Summit in Ireland. The U.S. and Europe have a \$2.5 trillion sales and investment relationship. We employ more than 12 million of each other's citizens. Clearly, too

much is at stake to look the other way.

To encourage homegrown reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa we must make good on the promise we made at the G-8 Summit in Sea Island, Georgia, this summer. We committed to launching a Forum for the Future whereby leaders from the region and the industrialized world would gather, not to lecture, but to talk about how best to promote opportunity and prosperity in the Middle East. Recently, Morocco hosted the first of what we hope will be many Forums in the region.

Meanwhile, we must remain focused on a just and peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on two democratic states - Israel and Palestine - living side-by-side in peace and security.

To ensure that political and economic reform in Afghanistan and Iraq do not wane, we must continue our reconstruction, security and election support. European and American forces, including NATO troops under a French commander, are on the ground in Afghanistan. Democracy used to be a distant dream to most Afghans, but in October more than eight million men and women turned out to cast ballots for a president. This spring, they are scheduled to vote on a new parliament. Going forward, we must continue the efforts of the international community to rid the country of narcotics, to place police on city streets, and to establish honest courts.

Nothing is gained by sugar coating the disagreements that America and parts of Europe have had over Iraq, but we should not let those differences distract us from tackling the tasks ahead. Europe and the United States share an interest in promoting a stable and democratic Iraq. We saw it in the recent discussions among 20 nations in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt. We saw it in November when the EU presented Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi with a 30 million euro package to support elections and an additional 200 million euros to promote reconstruction in 2005. And most significantly, we saw it when Paris Club creditors, many of whom are EU members, reached an historic agreement to write off 80% of Iraq's debt.

We can build on these successes. It is, indeed, a proper time for fresh starts, and it begins with America and Europe walking together. It's the best way that I know to ensure that peace and prosperity thrive. It's the only way to move forward.

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