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The Future of Transatlantic Relations

John Collins

By John Collins.

Recent events in Libya, and the Middle-East more broadly, reflect a rapidly changing international geopolitical landscape. The transatlantic relationship seems set (in the short-term at least) to be imbued with a new vigor as the US and NATO search for a desirable conclusion to their police action in Libya and hammer out a workable exit strategy. Meanwhile, as events play out in other states across the region, Europe and America seem likely to be pushed towards greater levels of cooperation.

Against this background of extreme short-term fluidity, it is perhaps important to step back and evaluate the medium to long-term trends playing out within Transatlantia. In particular it seems pertinent to question whether the current events represent a re-emergence of the European cleavage within American Foreign policy making; or whether they are a mere blip in a longer process of American decline and/or an ever growing Sino-Pacific foreign policy focus in Washington.

A series of short, incisive articles published in the [March](#) edition of [European Political Science](#) offer a compelling set of responses to many of these questions.

[Professor Michael Cox](#), Co-Director of LSE IDEAS, offers the opening salvo by giving the [Introduction](#). In this he questions the continued efficacy of 'the marriage' and offers a brief introduction to the ensuing pieces.

Next, [Dr. Lisa Aronsson](#), of the RUSI and a Fellow at LSE IDEAS, takes a detailed look at one of the transatlantic fault lines: the International Criminal Court. [This article](#) suggests that, despite a recent softening of the American tone, the two actors are 'still worlds apart on the ICC and the international legal order that it represents.'

[Dr. Cristina Barrios](#), researcher at FRIDE and Fellow at LSE IDEAS, then takes a look at the role of the differing European and American universalisms. [The article](#) suggests that these conceptions create a rivalry between U.S. and European approaches to International Relations, one that widens the transatlantic gulf.

In a more optimistic take on the future of the relationship, [Dr. John Robert Kelley](#), Assistant Professor at American University and current associate at LSE IDEAS, focuses on the 'Obama effect' and the flourishing economic relationship as evidence of a 'resilient' relationship. [This article](#) suggests that 'this vital relationship will evolve not on the fringes but instead in moderation and into something more complete.'

[Dr. Nicholas Kitchen](#), also a fellow of LSE IDEAS, argues that a wait and see attitude is required when assessing the future of the relationship. [This article](#) highlights the (often 'underrated') grand strategy pursued by Bill Clinton and its continued implications on the current Obama policy of D tente, pursued in response to the 'damaging' unilateralism of Bush II.

In the final installment in this series [Dr. Amr Yossef](#) of the University of Trento, Italy, and [Professor Sergio Fabbrini](#) of the Luiss in Rome, focus on the importance of Europe to American middle east policy. [This article](#) suggests that the opening of a 'new era' in this region is contingent on active pressure from other international actors, 'starting with the EU.' Furthermore the authors argue that 'the Middle East might be the site for testing a new transatlantic relationship.'

The current events playing out will no doubt spawn a renewed interest in this field. These articles mark a rigorous and timely reappraisal of contemporary understandings of this important international relationship.

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