

US and EU Differences in the Use of Military Force

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“European and American Differences Towards the Employment of Military Force in the Post-Cold War Era has Reflected the Gulf in their Strategic Capabilities”. Discuss.

In the decades since the Cold War we have witnessed diverging attitudes towards the use of military force on either side of the Atlantic. Though the transatlantic partners have historically shared differences on the role of hard power, changing threat perceptions after 1991 and the aftermath of 9/11 have demonstrated increasingly divergent perspectives. Nothing showed this more clearly than the Iraq War, where allied differences ‘produced the gravest crisis in the Atlantic Alliance since its creation’.[1] An understanding of the causes of these differing perspectives is crucial in order to react to this divergence and determine the future of transatlantic relations.

International relations scholars have long sought to understand state behaviour and the narrative of transatlantic ‘divergence’ has provided good opportunity to employ theory. Robert Kagan’s *Paradise and Power* offered one take on European and American attitudes towards force. Drawing on neorealist thought, Kagan concludes that the differences result from the power disparity between the two continents, arguing that to be powerful is to have an inherently different worldview to the weak. Others however, such as Forsberg and Herd,[2] reject an explanation based solely upon power, also employing constructivism to explain the disparity through socially constructed norms, cultures and historical experience.

After beginning with an examination of the capabilities imbalance and an appraisal of Euro-Atlantic attitudes towards military power, this essay will analyse the differences within the broad theoretical framework that these two perspectives provide. In contrasting realist and constructivist perspectives on this issue, this essay acknowledges that all theories have their limitations,[3] and that to rely on a single perspective is to understand only part of the debate. Instead, the aim is to achieve a more rounded assessment of the causes of the divergence between European and American attitudes to force by contrasting state-based, power-focused perspectives with others that look deeper into the states’ identities, histories and domestic politics, whilst using empirical evidence in support of the argument.

A Capabilities Gulf?

The idea of a capabilities gap existed throughout the Cold War,[4] with Europe strategically dependent upon America and its nuclear deterrent.[5] After 1990 America increased both its relative power, with the Soviet collapse,[6] and its absolute power, through an overall increase in military expenditure,[7] resulting in an ‘extraordinary capabilities gap [...] between the United States and the Europeans’.[8]

This gap is observed clearly in the objective format of expenditure. In 2005, for example, the United States defence budget stood at US\$495bn, in comparison with spending of US\$244bn by EU-27 states.[9] The difference becomes even starker when expressed as a percentage of GDP: European expenditure of 1.8% of GDP pales in comparison to America’s 4.2%.[10]

However, it is not just the amount of expenditure that plays a role in the capabilities gap, but also the use it is put to. Generally, European budgets fund personnel, at the expense of research and development[11] and equipment

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procurement.[12] Moreover, the fragmented nature of European spending means that resources are often wastefully and inefficiently duplicated.[13] Consequently, European militaries are poorly suited to expeditionary warfare[14] and lack the RMA capabilities of their American counterparts. Glaring differences exist regarding strategic airlift—where the US possesses 222 Boeing C-17s in comparison to just four in Europe, all owned by Britain[15]—and precision guided missiles, but also extend to air-to-air refuelling and intelligence, amongst others.[16] If the 1991 Gulf War 'harshly demonstrated the degree of American superiority in "out-of-area" operations',[17] the 1999 Kosovo War put this beyond doubt: US forces flew 60% of all sorties, delivered 80% of PGMs, and provided 95% of the intelligence.[18]

European deployments reflect their limited capabilities. During the First Gulf War, for example, Britain and France contributed 42,000 and 20,000 troops respectively, with other European states contributing mainly non-combat personnel, whereas America mobilised more than 500,000.[19] Similarly, 'the overwhelming majority of the military missions during [Operation Enduring Freedom] [...] were undertaken by the United States', with Great Britain and France deploying more limited numbers.[20]

In addition to demonstrating Europe's relative weakness, these figures also demonstrate *internal* European imbalances. Though the French and British deployments pale in comparison to America's, other European states are weaker still. France and the UK make up 45% of EU defence spending,[21] with the rest of the EU having largely resigned itself to "'peace support"' roles.[22] Germany's entire defence budget, for example, is eclipsed by US intelligence spending alone.[23] Europe is aware of its weaknesses, but has made little progress in addressing them: many initiatives have been missed and subsequently reduced in scope, such as the 2010 Headline Goals.[24]

It is clear that Europe lags behind America in its military capabilities. As a result of lower spending, European militaries can deploy fewer troops and, above all, are unable to compete in terms of post-RMA technology. A significant proportion of European power is concentrated in Great Britain and France, with the remaining European states further behind.

Perspectives on Force

The 'transatlantic divergence' extends not just to capabilities, but also to attitudes towards military power, where 'a wide gap has opened, especially between the United States on one hand, and France and Germany on the other'.[25] This section will examine this divergence, looking at attitudes towards hard and soft power, multilateralism and the role of international law.

Threat responses since 1991—whether in rhetoric, security doctrine or troop deployment—demonstrate a US preference for hard power that is at odds with Europe's soft power focus. In this period, America has taken the lead on the exercise of hard power, as shown in Bosnia,[26] Kosovo[27] and Iraq.[28] In Kosovo, for example, 'it was always the Americans who pushed for the escalation to new, more sensitive targets [...] and always some of the Allies who expressed doubts and reservations'.[29] By contrast, Europe has been reluctant to employ force of its own accord, generally 'deploy[ing] only as part of larger missions, led by either the USA or the UN'.[30] Indeed, European forces have frequently taken on purely peacekeeping roles, after the US had 'carried out the decisive phases of [...] missions'.[31] This reluctance is evidenced even in 'softer' examples of coercive power: whereas Europe called for relaxed sanctions on Iraq in the 1990s, America pursued a harder line, culminating in Operation Desert Fox, with British support.[32]

In contrast, Europe has preferred soft power and 'attraction'.[33] Even where it has deployed personnel beyond its borders, operations have generally been civilian, rather than military. Of the 22 CSDP missions between 1999 and 2009, only 6 were military, with the majority comprising police, rule-of-law and monitoring operations.[34] In place of force projection, Europe generally prefers to address challenges through 'political cooperation and the allocation of resources',[35] as seen in the policy of 'critical dialogue [towards Iran, which] [...] aims at persuading moderates [...] that a change in policy is in Iran's basic self-interest'.[36] Europe largely prefers a policy of 'getting others to want what you want';[37] using co-optive methods such as development aid[38] and economic ties for long-term influence, alongside civilian missions to defuse crises in the short term.

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These differences are paralleled in attitudes towards multilateralism. For America, Kosovo demonstrated the weaknesses of 'war by committee'.^[39] Part of an increasingly unilateralist foreign policy, US responses to 9/11 signalled a state that was 'increasingly wary of being constrained by multilateral institutions and alliances',^[40] culminating in the 'coalition of the willing' in Iraq. Despite acknowledging the need for its allies after failures in Afghanistan,^[41] Donald Rumsfeld's notion that 'the mission must determine the coalition'^[42] largely still embodies America's desire for its power to go unlimited by other actors. Conversely, this principle was ill-received in Europe.^[43] Whereas the 2002 US National Security Strategy demonstrated an increasingly 'utilitarian approach to multilateral cooperation',^[44] Europeans continued to look to multilateral institutions and alliances—the UN, NATO and EU—to resolve security challenges.^[45]

A significant part of Europe's multilateralism is due to the value it attributes to international law in sanctioning military force. For Europe, multilateralism means formal, legal sanction from the UN before military power can be deployed.^[46] In the words of Dominique de Villepin, "it is from the United Nations alone that the legal and moral authority [for intervention] can come"^[47]; a standpoint that is reflected in European reluctance to act without a UNSC resolution in Kosovo^[48] and more recently, albeit to a lesser degree, in Libya.^[49] In contrast, America has been frustrated by European "legal issues" over Kosovo and Afghanistan,^[50] and showed willingness to use force without UN sanction in the 1998 joint US-UK bombing of Iraq.^[51]

It is important not to overstate the extent of this attitude gap. The US has used soft power, providing fuel oil and light-water reactors in an attempt to encourage North Korea to abandon its nuclear programme,^[52] and some scholars have noted that differences regarding multilateralism have been overplayed.^[53] Neither must we mistake Europe's attitudes for 'a deliberate, coherent approach [when it] [...] is, in fact, a story of muddled seeking and national differences'.^[54] European splits over the use of force between 'New' and 'Old' Europe have been highlighted by the Letter of the Eight^[55] and the Vilnius Letter,^[56] and whilst British forces have deployed alongside American troops on every occasion bar one since 1991,^[57] 'Core Europe', and Germany in particular, has been reluctant to move beyond civilian power.^[58]

Overwhelmingly, however, Kagan's Mars-Venus dynamic is true. Despite the similar threat perceptions evidenced by the American and European Security Strategies,^[59] the two exhibit different attitudes towards the use of force. Whilst Europe is largely a 'civilian power'—projecting power through international law, multilateralism, global governance and conflict prevention^[60]—the US prefers command power and is reluctant to be encumbered by multilateralism and international law. In a literal sense then, European and American attitudes 'reflect' the strategic chasm between them. But is the power disparity the direct and sole cause of these perspectives on force? The sections that follow will examine this question.

A Neorealist Perspective – Power as a Determinant

Power has long been viewed as the driving force of international relations and the neorealist perspective, based upon rational choices by unitary actors, continues to be important post-Cold War. According to scholars such as Kagan, power considerations have caused the transatlantic divergence over military force. The premise of *Paradise and Power*—that powerful states choose strategies of power and weak states strategies of weakness—is a crucial argument in this debate.

Kagan posits that Europe and America's divergent behaviour is due to power and the *psychology* of power; i.e. that 'powerful states and weak states see the world differently because of their very power or weakness'.^[61] Kagan claims that 'those with great military power are more likely to consider force a useful tool of international relations than those who have less military power'.^[62] Weakness makes threats inherently more tolerable, whilst strength makes the use of force to deal with them more attractive an option.

Ample evidence exists to bear out this theory. Kagan himself cites the *volte-face* by Europe and America during the twentieth century.^[63] The powerful Europe of old played by the rules of *Machtpolitik*, whilst the US abhorred European power politics; in a matter of decades, the two traded places as the power balance inverted. A similar perception gap can be observed today regarding 'rogue states'. Whereas the US has placed such states within an

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'axis of evil' inseparably linked to terrorism and nuclear proliferation,[64] Europe prefers to view them as 'victims', engaging through dialogue and multilateralism rather than punishing them.[65] States react differently to threats based upon their power, because the tools at their disposal define their perceptions: because of its weakness, Europe has 'embarked on a Kantian path towards peace based on law and treaties, whereas the United States continues to see the world according to Thomas Hobbes, where order is based on power'[66], employing it as a result.

Power not only influences perception, but also facilitates reaction. The capabilities gap means that exercising military power is more straightforward for America, with its vast quantity of troops,[67] post-RMA capabilities[68] and two-war strategy,[69] than for weaker European states that draw on US resources through the Berlin Plus structure.[70] Even in purely logistical terms, the US-led Afghanistan War was a tremendous undertaking. The war depended on American military power and diplomatic sway to 'project force thousands of kilometers away from the sea, gaining bases and access by working with new allies [...], something only a superpower can do with such speed and success.'[71] America's global focus is facilitated by its might[72] but Europe, lacking the same ability, focuses locally.[73]

Similarly, Europe's lack of military power means it must achieve influence through soft power, where it enjoys a comparative advantage over America.[74] In this light, the EU focus on civilian power can be viewed as both logical and necessary. What it lacks in command power, it makes up in its economic strength as a trading bloc[75] and the near-universal appeal of its law-based approach that permits it to intervene where US or NATO-led operations would be inappropriate.[76] In this sense, it is precisely Europe's lack of command power that leads it to play to its (non-military) strengths, focusing on civilian operations and soft power. As a result, the EU takes the lead globally on developmental aid,[77] deploys (largely) civilian CSDP missions, and engages in peacekeeping after US-led military interventions, such as those in the Balkans and Afghanistan.[78]

Therefore, the transatlantic power imbalance causes Europe and America to see the world through different lenses, and makes hard power projection comparatively easier for the United States and more problematic for the EU. However, there is another aspect to the dynamic between power and use of force: the *need* to deploy it, as opposed to the *perception* of need or *ability* to do so. As a result of the power differential, Europe has objectively less need to employ force than America. The source of this is twofold: the threat to the United States is higher and Europe can often duck the need to employ force by 'free-riding' on American security provision.

For example, the threat of terrorism in Europe is objectively lower than in America. As Shapiro and Byman note, 'with the possible exception of the United Kingdom, European countries are secondary targets of [terrorist] groups that advocate concentration on [America]'.[79] More tangibly, this is illustrated by Al Qaeda's offer of a 'truce' for Europe in April 2004 in return for withdrawing support for America's policy in the Middle East.[80] In terms of nuclear proliferation, too, threats are higher to the United States, which is 'the most likely target of WMD attack'.[81]

In addition, Europe benefits from 'free-riding' on US security provision. Security is a public good,[82] meaning Europe is able to benefit from 'free security' provided by America, as it knows that it is likely to deal with any international threats that arise.[83] Compounding this, European diplomacy and soft power projection are implicitly backed up by the threat of American military power in the event of failure, which often proscribes the need for Europe to take military action itself. For example, one reason for the success of the French diplomacy initiative during the 1997-8 Gulf Crisis was the credible threat of US military power which underpinned negotiations.[84]

The capabilities gap, then, plays an important role in determining attitudes towards military force. The possession, or otherwise, of strategic capabilities has influenced American and European threat perceptions, determining what they are willing to tolerate. In addition, the capabilities gap means that military deployment is comparatively more straightforward for America. Finally, there is an objectively greater need for America to deploy hard power; it is more likely to be targeted, whilst Europe can free-ride to some degree on its security. As a result of the greater sensitivity, relative ease of deployment and higher external threat that result from its military power, America favours command power, unilateralism and has fewer qualms about international law, whilst Europe, due to its relative weakness, prefers civilian power and maximises its strength through international law and multilateralism.

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A Constructivist Perspective – Looking Deeper Inside Transatlantic Behaviour

Power, though an important determinant, is not the only factor that influences decisions over military force. Rationalist theories such as neorealism ignore domestic variations between states, treating them as functionally similar units, distinguished only by their differing capabilities.[85] However, power cannot explain all aspects of state behaviour. The overwhelming European support for intervention in Afghanistan, for example, contrasts sharply with the ‘perfect storm’ over the Iraq War,[86] despite little, if any, change to the power balance in the intervening years. This section will explore the idea that ‘anarchy is what states make of it’—that states exhibit different reactions depending on their identities and interests[87]—looking at other influences on state behaviour, such as strategic culture, domestic politics and EU integration.

Recent history suggests capabilities offer only part of the explanation; attitudes have diverged not only over military force, but also over other forms of command power. The divide over sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq,[88] cited above, did not involve *military* force and so capability differences can only go so far towards explaining it. A more insightful approach in cases like these looks deeper inside the state at ‘strategic culture’, which comprises norms, identities and the historically-determined

‘philosophical, political, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of the state and its elites. Ahistorical or “objective” variables such as technology, polarity, or relative material capabilities are all of secondary importance. It is strategic culture [...] that gives meaning to these variables.’[89]

Although Europe does not share a single, communal strategic culture[90]—as reflected in the differences between ‘core’ and ‘Atlanticist’ Europe—the concept goes some way towards understanding transatlantic attitudes towards force.[91]

Europe’s strategic culture predisposes it towards non-military action. The experience of total war in the first half of the twentieth century fostered a ‘culture of restraint’ in Europe, and Germany in particular.[92] Both public sentiment and high politics—in the form of rejection of the Iraq War—illustrate the influence of this experience on German decision-making,[93] where soldiers are viewed as ‘citizens in uniform’.[94]

Strategic culture also explains the reluctance of other European states towards conflict. France’s attitude to the Iraq War, for example, reflected, more than power considerations, its historical relationship with the Gulf state and sizable Muslim population. France had enjoyed a ‘special relationship’ with Iraq,[95] with trade in excess of US\$1.5bn annually.[96] The presence of 6 million Muslims in France[97] also made the state regard intervention with extreme caution, for fear of domestic radicalisation.[98] The role of strategic culture is also visible in Italy’s approach more recently towards Libya. Historical ties and hydrocarbon trade with the Qaddafi regime meant that Italy opposed intervention until the final hour, when it bowed to international pressure.[99]

The utility of strategic culture and historical experience is perhaps best shown in explaining the ‘anomalies’ in Europe’s approach, such as the Central and Eastern European states’ military deployments. The on-going process of adoption into NATO and the EU[100] encouraged contributions to NATO-led missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. More telling was these states’ sympathy toward the aims of Operation Iraqi Freedom, in contrast to ‘core Europe’; having lived under authoritarian rule themselves, they were historically predisposed to assist with deposing Saddam Hussein.[101]

Strategic culture also influences American attitudes towards force. The US is, at least in part, inclined to use force due to ‘American exceptionalism’:[102] the idea that America has a specific mission to spread democracy and liberty throughout the world. The effects of this narrative are complemented by other aspects of US strategic culture. America was not founded along ethno-nationalist lines as with European states, but instead on a political identity, which leads its citizens to place higher value on their sovereignty and political institutions. As a result, America is less likely to choose multilateralism in pursuit of its goals, preferring unilateral force deployment instead.[103]

The impact of this contrasting historical experience is illustrated well in Euro-Atlantic counter-terrorism strategies.

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Broadly speaking, Europe prefers to characterise terrorism as a criminal issue, whilst America treats it as warfare.[104] Many European states have extensive experience of low-intensity domestic terrorism,[105] which has reinforced their belief that force is ineffective, leading them to seek political solutions. America, in contrast, has experienced comparatively few attacks, though on a larger scale.[106] This, coupled with America's geographically-inspired desire for 'perfect' security,[107] has led to a doctrine of military force against a nexus of terrorists, rogue states and proliferators.

Deudney and Ikenberry, who characterise the North Atlantic zone as a security community with 'common norms, public mores and political identities'[108] therefore overstate the situation. There are very real strategic culture divergences, which themselves lead to divergence over military force. These differing cultures are embodied not only in the examples above, but also in wider socio-political issues, such as the death penalty,[109] gun control,[110] the International Criminal Court[111] and the Kyoto Protocol,[112] which reflect not only attitudes to violence, in the cases of the former, but also multilateralism, in the latter. Taken as a whole, these opposing strategic cultures contribute to the attitudes observed towards military power between Europe and America.

Strategic culture, however, is not the only 'non-capability' determinant. 'Unit-level' constructivism, popularised by theorists such as Peter Katzenstein, emphasises the role of internal state interests and identities.[113] As such, it is prudent to examine domestic politics, a key determinant of state interests overlooked by the neorealist focus on power and the international system. Incumbent government policies have an undeniable influence on attitudes to force. 'The state' is not a static concept, whose preferences can be calculated from the size of its arsenal, but is instead a dynamic and non-unitary actor, for which a change in government can mean a shift in foreign policy. Though new governments are constrained by their predecessors and the opposition to some degree, changes in attitudes to force are certainly possible, as seen in the juxtaposition of US policy under Clinton and Bush. Clinton, for example, presided over an 'appeasement' with North Korea with the 1994 Agreed Framework, whereas Bush reversed this, moving to implement more hard-line policies, including the pre-emption doctrine.[114] Correspondingly, Bush's hard line has itself been rolled back to some degree with resurgent soft power under Obama.[115] Even a decision as crucial as participation in the Iraq War can be swayed by a change in government: 'many observers have argued that although Gerhard Schröder's Red-Green coalition opposed the US war on Iraq, a German government led by a CDU-CSU coalition would have backed it.'[116]

Electoral cycles also hold sway over attitudes towards hard power. European elections have played a part in decisions to both use, and refrain from using, military force. In Germany, upcoming elections played a role in Schröder's opposition to the Iraq War.[117] Similarly, German state elections in 2011 motivated non-intervention in Libya.[118] In contrast, the French decision in favour of Libya was motivated partly by Sarkozy's aim of 'enhancing his international profile' ahead of the 2012 presidential election.[119]

Domestic politics are therefore an important determinant of attitudes towards force which, far from being static, are liable to shift as governments change. In the case of Europe, however, another process has contributed to approaches towards military power: integration. Although not fully explaining the failure of European states to use force on an *individual* basis, integration dynamics go some way to clarify the EU's *collective* civilian power focus, where difficulties over decision-making and the reinforcement of international legal norms encourage co-optive, rather than coercive power.

The difficulties involved in reaching consensus make it harder for the EU to deploy troops than America: whereas the US can move with one voice, the EU is composed of 27 sovereign states with diverse strategic cultures, foreign policy preferences and—of course—military capabilities. The resulting differing attitudes between member states lead to 'lowest common denominator' operations,[120] meaning CSDP military operations have been small-scale,[121] or have failed to happen at all, as in Darfur (2004)[122] or more recently, Libya (2011).[123] Indeed, the EU's institutional architecture favours civilian missions over military; whereas civilian operations are funded from the CSDP budget, military deployments are largely paid for by states themselves.[124]

Integration has also reinforced Europe's commitment to multilateralism and international law, which acts as a further brake on the use of force. The EU 'is about institutionalizing tolerance between states'[125] and because its

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members have experienced ceding significant powers to a supranational body, they favour institutional and civilian power solutions. In other words, the EU's experience means that it 'follow[s] its own guiding principles when acting beyond its borders: integration, prevention, mediation, and persuasion.'^[126] This is reflected, for example, in European attitudes towards the Bush Administration's pre-emption doctrine, worrying that the potential for unilateral, pre-emptive strikes would undermine international laws and norms governing the use of force.^[127] Integration, then, reinforces Kagan's distinction between America's 'anarchic Hobbesian world' and the European state of Kantian 'perpetual peace'.^[128]

This perspective, that European and American attitudes to force differ for reasons other than power—such as strategic culture, domestic politics and European integration—is reinforced by the idea that Europe could acquire significantly greater strategic capabilities if it desired. This standpoint reverses the relationship between power and attitudes to force, viewing European pacifism and American bellicosity as choices: 'Europe is no longer Kantian because it is weak [...]; it is now weak because it is Kantian.'^[129] Several scholars^[130] have highlighted that Europe could increase its capabilities; the EU-27 has a larger GDP than America^[131] and could move towards matching its capabilities if the political will to exercise military power, and therefore need to increase them, were there.

By looking deeper inside state preferences, we are able to better understand transatlantic attitudes towards military power. It emerges that capabilities are only one of a range of influences including, but not limited to, strategic culture, domestic politics and the EU integration process; three factors which are linked and which in many ways influence and reinforce each other. Europe is led towards soft power, multilateralism and international law by its historical experience and strategic culture, whereas America's history has pulled it in the opposite direction. On the domestic political level, changes in government and electoral posturing can alter states' foreign policy and play a crucial role in transatlantic attitudes towards military force. Finally, Europe's qualitatively different experience to America through integration has simultaneously inhibited its ability to project hard power and led it to embrace institutional and legal solutions.

Conclusion and Implications

At the most basic level, the differing attitudes towards military force between Europe and America reflect the capabilities gap that has opened up between them, in the sense that militarily weak Europe opts for soft power, multilateralism and influence through international law, whereas hegemonic America employs hard power, unilateralism and is unafraid to act without higher mandate. To understand the causes of these preferences, however, one must look deeper than a purely power-based perspective.

The military power gap between the transatlantic partners certainly influences these preferences. The psychology of power predisposes America to use force where Europe prefers civilian power, playing to its own strengths. The capabilities gap means hard power projection is inherently easier for America than for Europe. Moreover, Europe is objectively less under threat, and at the same time able to enjoy a certain degree of free US security provision.

Concurrently, other factors influence the divergent attitudes towards military power. European and American strategic cultures presage differing perspectives on power projection, and domestic politics also feed in to these attitudes. Moreover, Europe has a unique influence on its power projection in the form of the European Union, whose integration process makes consensus over deployments difficult and reinforces commitments to multilateralism and international law on the continent, at the expense of military deployment.

The importance of these opposing perspectives becomes clear when considering potential implications for the future. The capability gap and differing attitudes to force have already created transatlantic tensions and hold the potential to do so again. By looking at the issues from two theoretical standpoints, it is possible to identify a fuller picture of future possibilities for divergence and convergence. The influence of the psychology of power means that European attitudes may increasingly come into line with America's if it continues along the capability development path that began in Lisbon and has led to the ESDP/CSDP and current discussions over 'smart' defence. In addition, part of the much-vaunted 'pivot to Asia' signifies an America that is less willing to tolerate Europe free-riding,^[132] and could lead to more assertive European foreign policy as a result. To a degree, steps have already been taken in this

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direction by Britain and France, after America's unwillingness to take the lead in the 2011 Libya intervention.[133]

The constructivist perspective offers further insight into potential implications. Crucially, strategic cultures are slow to change,[134] meaning that politico-military attitudes are likely to take significant time to alter and impact attitudes towards force. On the other hand, possibilities exist for quicker changes in the form of elections and changes in government on both sides of the Atlantic. Institutionally, experience suggests that decision-making difficulties will persist in the EU, though as seen since Lisbon, potential exists for a reformed institutional structure to make force deployment more practicable and achievable for Europe.

The gulf in strategic capabilities across the Atlantic undeniably influences attitudes towards the employment of military force in Europe and America. To view it as the only factor, however, is a mistake. American and European perspectives on force are also the result of historical and domestic factors, which must not be overlooked. It is only by taking this dual approach that we can correctly understand the transatlantic divergence over force and, as a result, appraise the future of transatlantic cooperation.

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