

# The Trans-Atlantic Powerhouse

Stephen Walt asserts that the “American Era” has come to an end. Scholars and reporters are increasingly pointing towards what might prove to be the elephant in the room—perhaps America’s status as what Samuel Huntington deemed in 1999 to be the “lonely superpower” of a unipolar world has since begun to shrink, potentially to the level of a major power in a multipolar world. As China’s economy and subsequently its sphere of influence begin to expand, American influence in the region may face challenges. Same is the story elsewhere as Brazil, Turkey, and India are beginning to grow and enter the global economic radar. This growth abroad comes at a time when the United States is unable to exert monetary assistance nearly comparable to that which we have contributed in the past, e.g. the Marshall Plan of 1948, which has always been instrumental in American soft power.

The tides may slowly be shifting against the US in terms of economic and political dominance, but perhaps the more pertinent question is that which asks where we currently stand with our closest allies. After the United States’ revival of war-torn Europe, creation of a security blanket over European democracy and capitalism throughout the Cold War, continuous promotion of European integration, cultivation of successful cooperation in out-of-area campaigns such as the Gulf War and the Kosovo conflict, and then the entrance of the US into the controversial Global War on Terror largely without European support, where will become of the relationship between the United States and Europe?

Recent history has shown a divergence in the power, threat perception and political values of Europe and the United States. However, as challenges to our common ground arise in the form of the effects of Arab Spring or the Eurozone crisis, the transatlantic relationship may be restored through a joint effort to maintain the influential standing that together the United States and European Union have enjoyed—that is, should the United States rise to the occasion. The EU’s reaction to Libya provided an excellent example of European Union’s ability to pursue an objective, secure the cooperation of the United States, and see success through the utilization of each partner’s strengths. Such an effort on the side of the United States would prove the alliance to be highly effective.

What effect could a stronger transatlantic relationship have on the influential power of the United States, particularly in this changing age of international relations? While American and European interests do not always correspond perfectly, it is certainly in the best interest of each to have the political, economic and information-sharing commitment of the other. As our number one trade partner and ally in the UN and the world, the EU could play a role in the maintenance of US influence so long as American sway continues to be in the best interest of the Europeans. Working at British Consulates has given me an inside look at the British-American relationship and a better idea of where the United States stands with the European Union, and it seems as though there is a genuine desire for concurrence and cooperation in the wake of this turbulent past decade. The ball is in the United States’ court; to maintain its influence, the US must go deeper than the current superficiality of its alleged commitment to diplomacy and bilateralism and strive for a more personal, sincere bond with its longtime, vital European allies.