

Dreaming of Europe

by Dominique Moïsi

Just as the world of the nineteenth century came to a close with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the war in Kosovo—Europe's first major war since 1945—sadly marks the continent's entrance into the twenty-first century. This new era begins not only in the same way as the previous one, but more or less in the same place, as if Europe were doomed to reenact one tragic, cursed plot.

The war in Kosovo, which is taking place a mere two-hour flight away for most Europeans, is a most unsettling and humiliating reality. The return of war to the European continent—even if it is in the Balkans and not in our civilized, democratic, united realm—makes the fall of the European Commission in March seem like a minor incident. How can Europe present itself to the world as the harbinger of a universal message, a forward-looking “European dream,” amid the eerily familiar scenes of terrified refugees fleeing Kosovo and the wail of air raid sirens over Belgrade? Some progress has been made: The members of the European Union (EU) are much closer to each other than they were eight years ago, when war first broke out in the former Yugoslavia. And the West is presenting a united front in Kosovo under the umbrella of NATO. Nevertheless, it is difficult to speak of Europe's progress and be enthusiastic about the quasi-miraculous launching of the euro when Europe is once again a continent at war with itself.

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Even as the Cold War has given way to the age of globalization, Europeans have continued to think about themselves and the future of the EU in ways better suited to the past. Their self-image seems frozen in a Cold War-era mindset, when European unity had value only as a defensive hedge against the looming threat of Soviet aggression and the preeminence of the American dollar. European politicians have been much slower to grasp the rules of globalization than their counterparts in business and finance, who understand well the new limits of national power. The idea of a "United States of Europe" may be laughable, but no more so than the idea of a divided Europe prospering in the global age.

And so, in addition to the three ambitious internal goals that the EU has set for itself—monetary union, institutional reform, and enlargement—Europe faces more fundamental challenges. Against the complex and sometimes chaotic backdrop of globalization, Europe must rethink its notions of sovereignty, space, and perhaps most importantly, of identity. This task has enormous implications not only for how Europeans perceive the EU but also for how they understand their relationship with the United States.

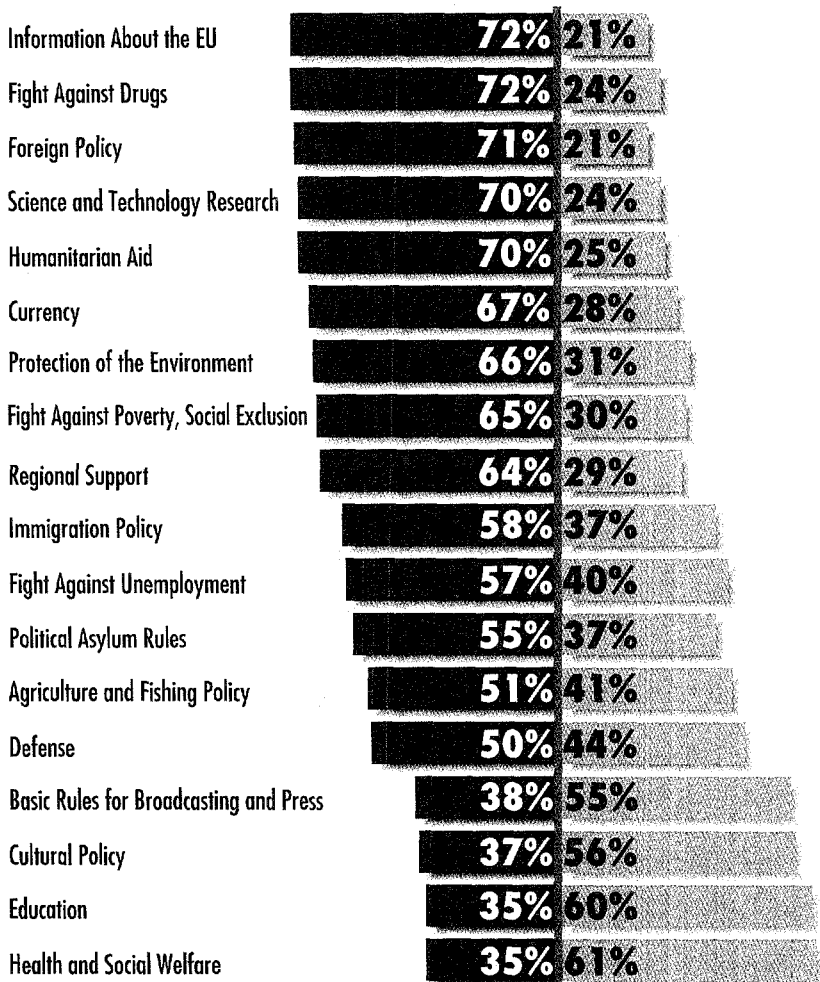
SOUL SEARCHING

Can national sovereignty still have meaning in a globalized, interdependent world? Europe may dream of becoming a world power in traditional terms, but it cannot go back to what it was at the outbreak of the First World War. Exponential population growth in other parts of the world is shrinking Europe, decreasing the percentage of the global population that calls itself European. And the very notion of power has been ineluctably transformed. As entrepreneurs and civil society have taken on new and important roles, the role of the state has declined; in fiscal terms, for instance, Europe's national governments have had to accept that they are no longer in control of monetary flux. Of course, not all countries have been transformed in the same way and according to the same time line—a major obstacle the EU will have to confront. Countries may be eager to surrender elements of their sovereignty that have already been compromised, but they will likely cling to those that have proved resistant to globalization. Germany, for example, the most monetarily sovereign of all the European nations, showed enormous initial reluctance to abandoning its national currency.

Tug of War

Should the EU or national governments working jointly with the EU be responsible for decision making on...

■ EU ■ National and EU



Source: Eurobarometer 50.

Note: Percentage of respondents who answered "don't know" not shown.

In terms of security, the traditional notion of sovereignty does not fully correspond to the reality of a Europe whose main guarantor of peace and stability remains the United States through NATO, as seen in both Bosnia and Kosovo. What kind of sovereignty has Europe achieved when that sovereignty is not accompanied by ultimate responsibility? When someone else is in command of the control room, it often creates frustration and encourages irresponsibility; if the war in Kosovo continues, the question remains whether Europeans will ultimately resent an American imposition on their territory. The irony is that the Europeans would be perfectly capable of dealing with a conflict such as Kosovo, both militarily and diplomatically, if only they had the guts and the will to do so and did not espouse the American concept of zero casualties.

The second major challenge confronting Europe is that of reconceiving its sense of space. Like a rapidly growing child, Europe does not know where its own body begins and ends. Accordingly, the continent can often seem heavy and even clumsy, gracelessly overthrowing objects—such as potential EU applicants—in its path. The EU's dismissive dealings with Turkey are a prime example. Not only did the EU reject the Turkish bid for membership, but it classified Turkey in a dunce-like category of its own, behind weaker applicants such as Bulgaria and Slovakia. The snub only furthered the unfortunate impression first seen in Bosnia, and now in Kosovo, that Islam is not welcome on the European continent. Turkey's desperate and futile attempt to cling to its Kemalist political model, which is neither sufficiently democratic nor religiously tolerant enough for European tastes, combined with its questionable human rights record and chronic political instability, makes it a less-than-desirable potential addition to the EU. But alienating Turkey is an even less-satisfactory option. Turkey is not only Western, it is wholly European; Europe seems to have forgotten that Turkey has long been a key player in its history, especially in the nineteenth century.

Europe has also had difficulty accommodating Russia, a country that is undeniably part of the European space, both historically and culturally. When Russia became a modern state, it chose to be Western. Long before that, Russia was the third Rome of Christianity and the last rampart of Europe at the frontiers of Asia and Islam. But despite these obvious links, Europe maintains a relationship with Russia that is dialectical at best and has become even more ambiguous since Russia's descent into chaos.

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, the West saw only two alternatives in dealing with Russia: "Engage if we can, contain if we must." Today, as NATO expands eastward, Russia is in no condition to be engaged, but it should not be simply contained or ignored. Europe, and indeed, the West at large, must define a firm political course toward Russia that will create a more open and stable nation. Nothing would be more dangerous for Europe than to add lazy and anachronistic Cold War reflexes to genuine and selfish indifference.

Beyond the challenges of redefining sovereignty and space lies the crucial issue of forging a new European identity. Europe has become a complex, hybrid construction—federal (or at least federalist) when it comes to monetary policy, but national (or at best intergovernmental) in its foreign and security policies. It is easier to say with assurance that Europe will have a common currency in 2002 than to assume it will ever have a common Middle East policy. If the EU creates a European identity, it does so largely in spite of itself; neither the charisma of the European Commission nor the vibrant democratic nature of Europe's institutions inspire citizens. The increased self-confidence of the European Parliament is welcome news, but it has yet to be tested; the parliamentary elections of June 1999 should prove telling.

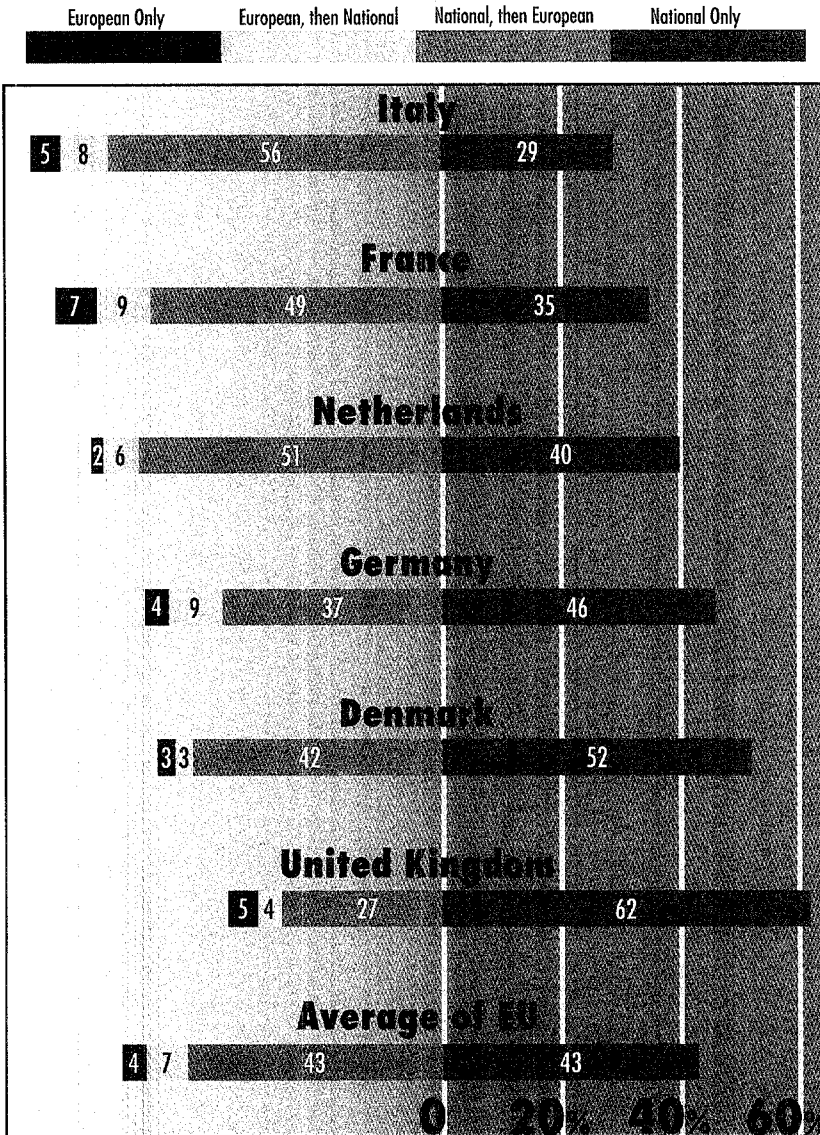
So how will Europeans progress toward a common identity? The process can only begin once each country agrees to sacrifice part of its individuality on the altar of Europe. The Germans, for example, must get beyond their reluctance to use force and become comfortable with the notion that military power is an essential ingredient of national strength. For the French and British, such sacrifice means adopting new attitudes toward the United States that go beyond reflexive criticism from Paris and knee-jerk support from London.

At the same time that it struggles to balance elements of federalism and nationalism, Europe will see its regions take on increased responsibility for issues such as finance and education. This multi-layered construct will have a major impact on Europeans: Like the union they live in, they, too, will possess local, national, and continental identities. In the Europe of tomorrow, one will be simultaneously Scottish, British, and European; Breton, French, and European; or Catalan, Spanish, and European.

Acknowledging these multiple identities could be a source of strength and creativity for Europeans. To negate them in favor of a monolithic identity, as do those in France who cling to the sanctity

Who's Who?

Do respondents identify more closely with their European or national heritage?



Source: Eurobarometer 50.

Note: Percentage of respondents who answered "don't know" not shown.

of the republic, is to fight a losing battle. Diversity has always been a key element of Europe's greatness, and in today's global world that diversity should be enlarged, reinforced, and celebrated. The movie *Elizabeth*, which was made in England by a director of Indian origins, proves that a confluence of cultures can make for an extraordinarily original and profound artistic vision. Similarly, an Algerian actor named Smaim has transformed the way Molière is being performed in France. One day, no doubt, a French director from the Maghreb will create a movie about the French Revolution that transforms the way the French look at their past and themselves.

The euro will doubtless contribute to the evolution of European identity, although the change may be slower to materialize than its proponents would like. The impact of the euro goes far deeper than that of mere currency; it has powerful psychological and emotional dimensions as well, particularly for the younger generation. Young people, who are already traveling from country to country without having to show identification, are impatiently awaiting the euro, wondering why they must continue to change money in a borderless continent. In France, very young children understood the value of the new currency in relation to the franc as soon as it was introduced, despite the complex calculations necessary to convert from one to the other. They knew instinctively that this was to be their currency as Europeans, a realization prompted in part by an effective school-based campaign. Their parents, however, are proving to be much slower at getting used to the idea. To the older generation, the euro remains too abstract and distant to be meaningful.

THREE'S COMPANY

It would probably take a Pirandello to do justice to the question of what the EU really means to its various members. Any attempt at such analysis risks falling prey to clichéd stereotypes and prejudices. Perhaps the most interesting dimension is the evolutionary one: How have Europe's "Big Three" (England, France, and Germany) changed in their approaches toward and perceptions of Europe?

In the eyes of the French, it is Germany that has changed most radically. For 40 years or so, Europe and NATO protected Germans from both themselves and the ghosts of their past. Much like the Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s, the Germans were traditionally

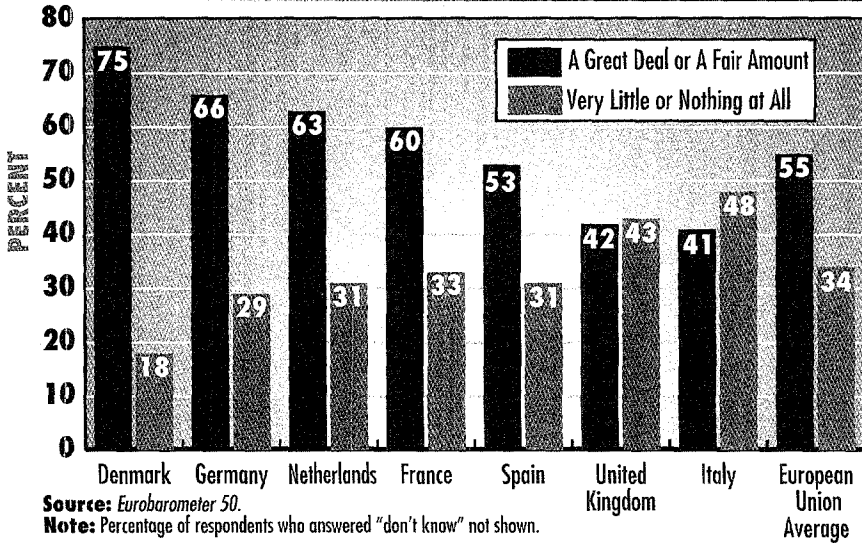
proud of their economic performance but insecure about their national character and consequently eager to be enveloped into the European fold. Today, however, Germans are less satisfied with their performance but, with the coming to power of a new generation that has not known the horrors of the Second World War, they are much happier and more secure with who they are. Europe is no longer a protection against their past but rather a natural extension of themselves. They have learned that by being more German, they will not become less European, but rather more normal and natural Europeans. "Agenda 2000," which details the main challenges facing the EU, will doubtless contribute to the creation of a Germany that actively asserts its self-interests, much like France does.

Recent shakeups on the political scene also point to a more confident, pro-European Germany. The very difficult start of the newly elected Schroeder government was reminiscent of the shaky beginnings of France's pink-red coalition in 1981, with its combination of inexperience, after 23 years in the opposition, and leftist ideology. The abrupt departure of Oskar Lafontaine, Schroeder's powerful—and fiercely leftist—minister of finance, worried some observers that a full-fledged crisis was imminent. But Lafontaine's resignation was an isolated incident that should not shake anyone's confidence in Germany's stability. The new Berlin Republic will be as democratic and European as the Republic of Bonn, if not more so.

Perhaps the most spectacular change in attitudes and policy toward Europe has taken place in Tony Blair's Great Britain. Blair's policies may still be unclear or superficial, his actions unfocused, and the timetable uncertain, but the direction is clear and irreversible: "Destination Europe," the EU's catchphrase for unification, represents a fundamental change in both the way the British perceive themselves in the world and in their relation to the continent. For nearly 50 years, the British saw in their special relationship with the United States what the French saw in Europe: a way to increase their influence. But now France and Great Britain have worked out a mutual surrender of sorts. The French have accepted that there is no good alternative to NATO. The British have realized that they have no choice but to embrace Europe. The devolution of Scotland will also push the British toward a more European orientation; a "disunited kingdom" needs Europe more than ever.

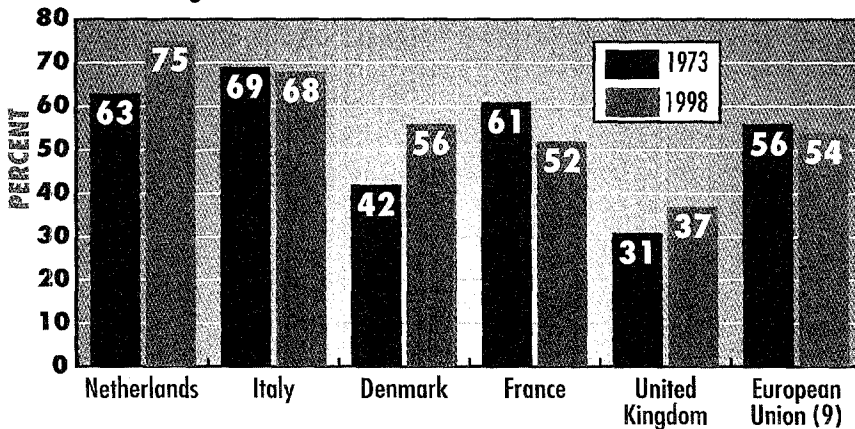
Coming Together

How much has European integration achieved during the past 50 years?



Satisfaction Guaranteed

Percent saying EEC/EU Membership Is "A Good Thing" in Autumn 1973 and Autumn 1998



Much like France and Germany, the British will slowly recognize that there is no essential contradiction between being English and being European. London has already crossed the Channel. Some British industrialists, such as John Weston, the head of British Aerospace, may be sending the wrong message by pitting shareholders' interests against those of the nation; Weston recently ruffled European feathers with his eleventh-hour decision to merge British Aerospace with British defense giant GEC-Marconi rather than with Dasa, the German arm of DaimlerChrysler. Yet public-opinion polls clearly indicate that with a combination of resignation and hope, the British are increasingly accepting that their future is in Europe and that the euro will one day be their currency.

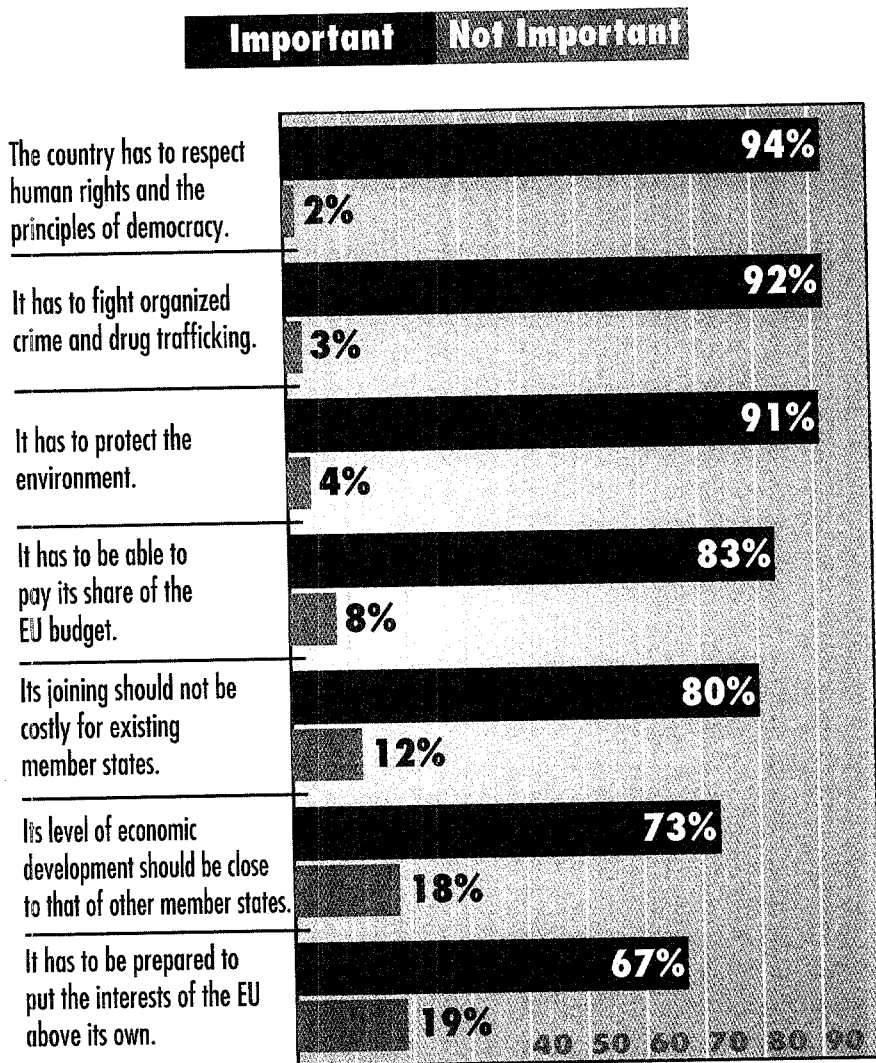
Of the Big Three, the country that has changed the least in its perception of Europe may be France. For Paris, Europe remains what it has always been: the ultimate yardstick by which to measure the success or the failure of a policy. France's connection to Europe is its only hope of one day escaping American dominance and building a multipolar world; it is also the best means of prompting domestic reform. Confronted with huge stumbling blocks and rigidity, France sees in Europe the unique opportunity to impose the kinds of long overdue political and economic reforms that are difficult to enact without some form of external pressure.

If something is slowly changing in the French attitude toward Europe, it is France's commitment to its marriage of convenience with Germany. Paris has begun to recognize that although there is no alternative to the Franco-German pairing, it is no longer a sure thing. It is too early to say whether a "Club of Three" with Great Britain will replace the traditional "Club of Two," but such an institutional dialogue, with its high-level networking, is in the making and is already starting to have an influence. The three key European players have rarely been so close to each other in their centrist, socioeconomic visions.

What about the other members of the European Club? For Italy, Europe remains a source of identity, legitimacy, and pride. Italy is proud of its economic performance and the vitality of its civil society, but uncertain of its political identity. Its position as a member of Europe's core group in monetary, economic, and political terms is therefore crucial and has had a calming effect on the Italian peninsula, reducing the temptation to make irrational socioeconomic choices. Former Italian prime minister Romano Prodi's accession to the presidency of the European Commission will only further reinforce Italy's European orientation.

Enlarged and in Charge

Importance of EU—Enlargement Criteria



Source: Eurobarometer 50.

Note: Percentage of respondents who answered "don't know" not shown.

In the case of more recent EU members, joining Europe was a symbol of a renewed democratic legitimacy. Today, no one would question the solidity, stability, or the vibrant modernity of a country such as Spain or, to a lesser degree, Portugal—an observation that would have been laughable 20 years ago. The system works. It is even working for countries that are not yet members of the EU, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Their accession calendar may be slowing down, but they already behave as if they were members of the club.

PERCHANCE TO DREAM

One of the most difficult challenges facing the EU today, especially since the beginning of the war in Kosovo, is that of redefining itself in relation to the United States. America needs a more confident Europe; the more self-confident Europe is, the more balanced and healthy the transatlantic relationship will become. Much of the lingering anti-Americanism that exists in Europe, particularly in France, can be blamed on the continent's inferiority complex. Assuming Europe gets through the war in Kosovo without too much loss of self-esteem, the euro will ultimately play an important role in boosting the continent's self-image. But even if the euro eventually can challenge the preeminence of the dollar, it is by no means an immediate cure-all. We may all be feeling a bit more European since the euro debuted in January 1999. But the euro will not, for instance, enable the European film industry to compete with Hollywood.

In the past, Europe and the United States were united by a common nightmare: the Soviet Union. Today, they have to develop common dreams. For these, they might look to the world of science, where the quest to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge can be viewed in human, and not national, terms. Working together, Europe and the United States can explore both the infinitely vast—the reaches of space—and the infinitely small—the intricate universe of the human brain or the minute workings of subatomic particles. Such common dreams imply shared responsibilities and would force Europeans and Americans to work and think together in ways that could only cement their political bonds.

Europe and the United States will also have to find a new balance in their relationship. They each must understand that they have a lot to learn from the other beyond the stereotypes and prejudices they have developed as allies, partners, and rivals. Beginning with Alexis de Tocqueville, Europeans have traditionally seen one primary lesson to be

learned from America: that of democracy, with its unique equilibrium between the various branches of government and its model of transparency and accountability. Historically, America has also been Europe's savior and guarantor; many Europeans continue to look to America as an insurance policy against the uncertainties of the future, from the return of a xenophobic and authoritarian Russia and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to the violence of ethnic fragmentation. Although Washington is far from perfect, a world without America would no doubt be a much more dangerous and messy place.

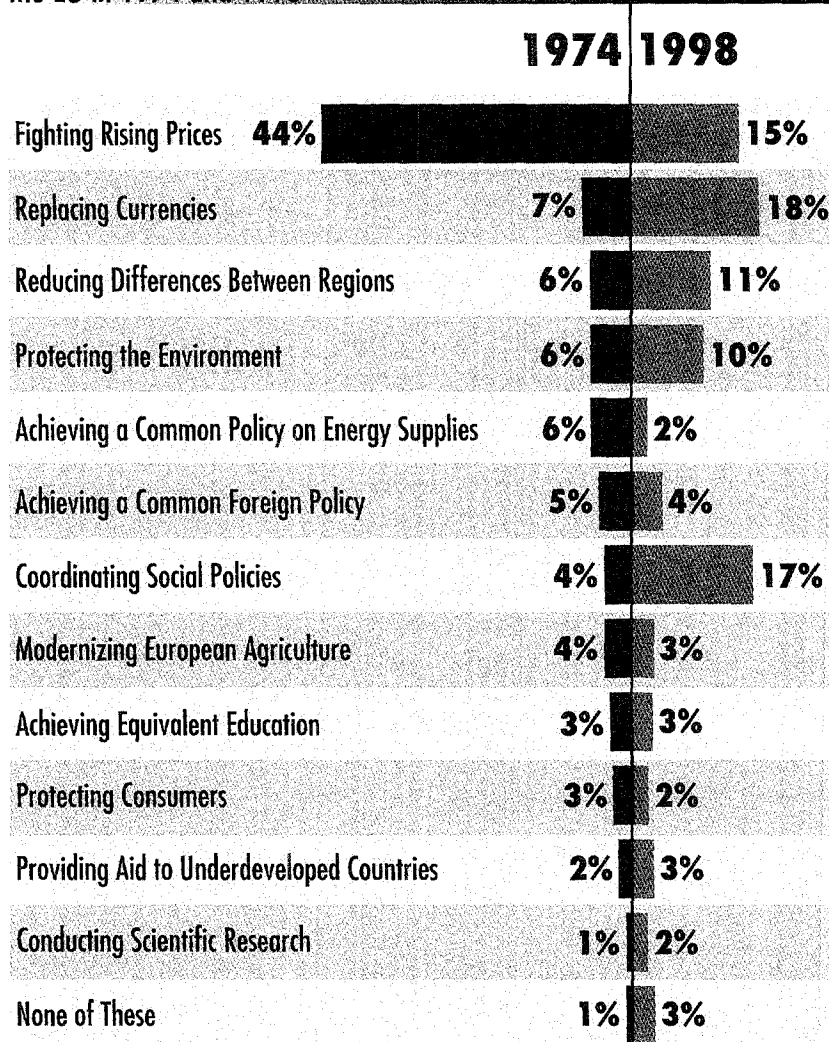
Beyond these traditional roles, however, America can provide valuable socioeconomic lessons to Europe, especially in terms of handling unemployment. The much-discussed Third Way is an attempt to combine America's free market traditions, with their emphasis on flexibility, inventiveness, and risk-taking, with European social-democratic principles.

America must also recognize what it can learn from Europe. Whatever the subtle differences between various Center-Left European governments, there is an enviable European model that combines economic growth with social concern. The Asian crisis put an end—at least for now—to the largely artificial debate between Western and Asian values by demonstrating the need for democratic accountability to ensure stable economic growth. Asia's fall from grace has reinforced the European notion that although the European system may not be the most dynamic, ultimately it remains the most fair and stable. The European model shows that even in a global age, the economic logic of the market alone cannot answer all the questions raised by globalization. In short, a world market does not create a world community. Ultimately, a new equilibrium needs to be forged between the individual and the community that may fundamentally transform the very concept of politics.

The United States will continue to be the only true global superpower as long as it possesses all the currencies of power, both hard and soft. Although America may be contested in its "hard" role as security benefactor, and derided in the person of its president, it has an unchallenged monopoly on the "soft" power of dreams. In Kosovo today, Slobodan Milosevic is not only fighting against NATO; he is implicitly fighting against Steven Spielberg. American war movies such as *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan* stir up collective memory and sound a call for action as powerful as that of the most vocal and persuasive hawk. In a world craving youth and modernity, the very people who

Bumps on the Road

Most Important Problem for
the EU in 1974 and 1998



Source: Eurobarometer 50.

Note: 1974 figures reflect survey of 9 nations comprising the European Economic Community;

1998 figures reflect survey of 15 nations comprising the European Union.

Percentage of respondents who answered "don't know" not shown.

denounce America's unilateral power still think and dream America. Walt Disney's famous maxim—"If you can dream it, you can do it"—may accurately reflect the philosophy behind the euro, but the euro alone does not and will not constitute a healthy European dream. And the return of war to the continent may do more to inspire nightmares than encourage dreaming.

The idea of Europe has long been sold to Europeans as their best protection against the ruinous ghosts of past wars or, during the Cold War, against the lurking Soviet threat. Today, Europe is still presented as a kind of protective shield, but now it is held up as a safeguard against future troubles. Nevertheless, one day, in a world made more balanced by the euro, Europeans will become secure enough that they no longer need to define themselves against the United States. They will instead define themselves with the United States, in a joint effort to make the world safer and better.

The new European identity is slowly emerging. The process will be slow and necessarily confused, and its success will depend in part on our ability to define a positive message—a new European dream—to replace the negative ones of the past. Europeans must adapt John F. Kennedy's lesson and ask not what Europe can do for them, but what Europe can do for the world. The first step may lie in our own Balkan backyard, where we are faced with a regional battle with universal stakes. Europe must stand up for common decency and make a unified statement against the unchecked use of violence to achieve political ends. It is only by taking this kind of decisive action—by articulating what we believe in and where we are headed together—that the contours of a new Europe will begin to take shape.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Begin by reading Elizabeth Pond's excellent book, *The Rebirth of Europe* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), which outlines a positive vision for the continent. Then, for a counterpoint, read Nicole Guesotto's powerful and sobering essay, *L'Europe et la puissance* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1998). For a discussion of the new Germany, see Michael Mertes' "Berliner Republik?" in *Politique étrangère* (Spring 1999). On the future of the European Union, consult François de la Serre's *Quelle union pour quelle Europe? L'après-traité*

d'Amsterdam (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1998). For a commentary on the benefits and costs of monetary union, see Jeffry Frieden's "The Euro: Who Wins, Who Loses?" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, Fall 1998). And for an appraisal of relations between Europe and the United States, see Robert Blackwill, ed., *The Future of Transatlantic Relations: Report of an Independent Task Force* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, February 1999).

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