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Old and New Europe (February 2003)

U.S. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld's distinction between "Old Europe" (above all France and Germany) and "New Europe" (Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe) struck a nerve in "Old Europe." In drawing this distinction, Rumsfeld drew attention to weaknesses in the EU's common foreign policy.

Hawk, Rooster, Dove

Washington's Invective hits Europeans at the Moment of their Greatest Discord

How quickly a banality can turn into an insult! Donald Rumsfeld's apt expression "New Europe," meaning a Europe whose focus is shifting from Western to Central Europe, already enjoyed great popularity as a key geostrategic term years ago. This was especially true in Paris, the stronghold of "Old Europe," where, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, many worried about the role they would play.

Rumsfeld's invective hit Europeans at the moment of their greatest discord. The common foreign policy that they so readily invoke still remains a Cloud Cuckoo Land where everyone can build his or her own nest, whether he be a British hawk, a German dove, or a French rooster. This could be seen on Monday, when the EU foreign ministers were able to muster only a minimum of unity at their meeting in Brussels. The inspectors,¹ they demanded, should be given more time. But not even behind closed doors did they discuss what would happen when time ran out, or how Great Britain, France, Spain, and Germany – the four EU members on the UN Security Council – would vote: individually or (as virtually no one in Brussels believes) in concert for Europe?

Everything seems crystal clear from Rumsfeld's perspective. His reference to Old Europe is an attack on the insubordinate German-French entente. Spain, Portugal, and Italy, on the other hand, are being entered on the map of well-behaved New Europe by the Pentagon surveyor. But Rumsfeld might be mistaken: when it comes to Spanish support for an attack on Baghdad, Prime Minister José Maria Aznar (whose reputation is in danger of disappearing under an oil

¹ Reference to the UN weapons inspectors working in Iraq – eds.

slick at the moment) not only has the left wing opposition against him but public opinion as well. And in Italy the populist Silvio Berlusconi fears nothing more than the voice of the people (clearly antiwar) and the Pope, who has been preaching peace. Italians' enthusiasm for their liberators from Fascism is gradually waning; the same is happening with Germans. Spain has been critical of America for decades; the only ally there is named Aznar. The Dutch, otherwise spry Atlanticists, are wavering in a delicate domestic situation: Their foreign minister assures them that they will not obediently follow along behind the Americans. Their Belgian neighbor, home of NATO after all, is pressing – in keeping with its history – for diplomacy up to the very last moment.

Upon closer inspection, New Europe is smaller than it seems from a distance. Rumsfeld's anger with the obstinate friends France and Germany also awakens memories: When the two signed the Elysée Treaty² forty years ago, Americans and European Atlanticists alike were filled with horror. An alliance within an alliance in the middle of the Cold War – that was going too far! Which is why the Bundestag modified the treaty with a preamble. And now almost a remake on the treaty's fortieth anniversary!

Emancipation from Washington comes with a concept for Europe – one that not everyone between Helsinki and Lisbon would venture to pursue. Some would prefer a modest union, which *Le Monde* now criticizes from a very French perspective: “A large internal market with the protection of NATO. That is the image of the EU that people have in Prague, Warsaw, or, say, Budapest. That is opportune for the United States, since that's its idea of Europe as well.”

The governments in Paris and Berlin, on the other hand, are striving for a Europe that has more political weight and more scope for independent strategic action than it is permitted to have now as a nominal member of a withered NATO. In those places where unity among the many EU members is visibly struggling, according to calculations, the entente between Berlin and Paris could point to a way out. That would really be a New Europe. But things haven't come that far yet. Of course, all of this is already problematic for the worldview of the Bush administration. And for the self-image of some in the Old World.

Source: Joachim Fritz-Vannahme, “Falke, Hahn, Taube. Washingtons Schmähung trifft die Europäer im Augenblick der größten Uneinigkeit” [“Hawk, Rooster, Dove. Washington's Invective hits Europeans at the Moment of their Greatest Discord”], *Die Zeit*, February 2003, no. 6.

Translation: Allison Brown

² See vol. 9, chapter 2, document 4 – eds.