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President Clinton and the Trans-Atlantic Relationship

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The early 1990s were a time of great hope in the world: The end of apartheid in South Africa, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and a growing respect for the United Nations all combined to create what former British Prime Minister John Major referred to as, *"an optimistic moment in international affairs."*[1] With the end of the Cold War many in Europe believed that the time had come to finally take command of their own affairs, to end the reliance on the United States, a relationship that some had long viewed with disdain. With the transition from the European Union to the new European Community, the 1990s therefore heralded a rebirth for the continent. This new entity would unify the continent into a single economic zone and eventually perhaps, *"a political and military entity as well, one with great potential for the future of the worlds' collective security."*[2]

However this optimism was tempered by underlying concerns. German unification was a causing internal strife, recession was rife in much of Europe and no one knew quite what Saddam Hussein would do following his eviction from Kuwait. There were also concerns over growing isolationist tendencies in the United States that had emerged during the 1992 Presidential Election. The candidacy of Pat Buchanan had pulled the Republican Party to the right and it was felt that the need to placate the powerful trade unions would drive the eventual Democratic candidate to endorse more protectionist policies towards foreign trade. Despite the euphoria of the moment therefore, *"nothing was settled. Everything was restless."*[3]

When Bill Clinton of Arkansas emerged as the Democratic nominee, many concluded that as the governor of a small state, he would have little interest in foreign affairs and would be inclined to concentrate on domestic issues. Indeed, such conceptions were reinforced during Clinton's campaign, when he repeatedly branded Bush as a foreign policy present who was ignoring deep-seated domestic issues and failing to feel the pain of America.

Whilst Bill Clinton did not seek the Presidency of the United States to dwell on foreign affairs, his campaign team realised the importance of advocating their candidate as a potential world leader who could navigate America through the changing global situation. Therefore Clinton's campaign gurus, James Carville and George Stephanopoulos, convinced the candidate to stress his grasp of foreign affairs, gained during his time at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar. Alas his attempts to address foreign policy issues demonstrate how one may gain domestic support whilst alienating long-standing allies.

On St. Patrick's Day 1992, President Bush declared he was not in a position to tell the British how to solve the Irish question that had haunted successive governments. Governor Clinton responded to these remarks in an address to an Irish-American group during the New York Primary, backing calls for a special envoy to Ireland: *"Sometimes we are too reluctant to engage ourselves in a positive way because of our longstanding relationship with Great Britain."*[4] In keeping with the campaign's multilateral approach to foreign affairs, Clinton added that the United Nations could help bring peace to Ireland.

The British government vehemently protested *"Clinton's cynical playing to the green Irish vote,"*[5] but Clinton's entourage were far more interested in gaining the support of the many Irish-Americans who had defected to the Republican's under Ronald Reagan. George Stephanopoulos declared, *"It obviously ticks off the Brits but equally obviously that is acceptable to a lot of us."*[6] Whilst Clinton was criticised for posing a risk to Anglo-American relations, he realised he would not suffer domestically for advancing his new activism. In 1992, Irish Americans accounted for a constituency of 40 million people, whom Clinton desperately needed to reclaim in order to win the presidency. Prime Minister John Major's anger was simply not a matter of great concern to the Clinton team, who like most observers, were expecting a Labour victory in the British elections of spring 1992. This decision began a series of events that culminated in the Major government's efforts to assist the Bush campaign in the 1992 Presidential election.

The role played by the Major government in attempting to manipulate the outcome of the 1992 Presidential Election is well documented. James Carville and Mary Matalin reference the events in their book on the campaign, and former US Ambassador to Great Britain, Raymond Seitz refers to it in his 1998 work, *Over Here*. Indeed, the US diplomat was the first to admit that the incumbent President and the British Prime Minister *"were too close."*[7] Sir John Lacy, the Conservative campaign director, and his deputy, Mark Fulbrook, travelled to America to advise

the Bush campaign on how to defeat Governor Clinton, using the same tactics recently employed against the British Labour Party. As Ambassador Seitz admits, *"they were too obvious and too smug in doing so."*[8] At the same time Home Office files were searched to ascertain whether Clinton had attempted to renounce his US citizenship to avoid the Vietnam War. Such efforts would haunt the Special Relationship for the next four years.

Changing The Guard

Following his victory in the 1992 Presidential Election, Bill Clinton was in a position to determine the new priorities of the United States, and despite his pledge of essential continuity in US foreign policy, changes became apparent immediately. On the morning after the election world leaders calling to offer their congratulations to the President-Elect received the same message: "*The next President of the United States was not available, call back tomorrow."*[9] This was a calculated decision to declare to the American people and to foreign leaders, that President Clinton would not afford foreign affairs the same priority that George Bush had. For Bush, foreign policy was pre-eminent, for Clinton it threatened to distract him from his primary objective of domestic renewal: *"Foreign policy issues subtracted from the limited power he had, which to be used for domestic programmes. Foreign policy must be minimised, and if at all possible, kept on the back burner."*[10]

However one of Clinton's first dilemmas was whether to meet John Major as President-Elect. Major was paying a farewell visit to President Bush in Washington during December 1992 and the timing of the visit made a meeting with the President-Elect not only possible but also convenient. Major had congratulated Clinton on his victory and remained *"confident the cornerstones of US foreign and defence policy will remain firmly in place and that the close partnership between Britain and the US will continue."*[11] Moreover, he realised the importance of an early meeting to cement the continuing Special Relationship between the United States and Great Britain.

However Clinton's team was keen to avoid foreign policy issues until after the inauguration and this included meeting foreign heads of state. Therefore Major would have to wait. Had Clinton agreed to meet Major, he would have come under increasing pressure to see both the German Chancellor and the Japanese Prime Minister. Clinton did however, meet with President Salinas de Gortari of Mexico in Texas to discuss the North American Free Trade Treaty, designed to eliminate tariffs and trade restrictions between the United States, Canada and Mexico, and which would require Congress ratification during Clinton's first year in office.

In spite of lingering concerns over the Conservative Party's actions in the campaign, and the President-Elect's decision not to see Major during the Interregnum, there was relief in London that at least the new President had attended Oxford as a Rhodes scholar and as such had a knowledge of world affairs. Clinton appointed over 20 fellow Rhodes scholars to posts within his administration: Robert Reich became Secretary of Labour; Ira Magaziner became the main architect of America's health reforms; Strobe Talbott became Deputy Secretary of State; Jim Woolsey became head of the CIA; Joseph Nye became Chairman of the National Intelligence Committee; Bruce Reed became Clinton's domestic policy adviser. Even Clinton's personal lawyer was a Rhode scholar. In addition Bruce Babbitt, the Secretary of the Interior, went to Newcastle University, whilst Anthony Lake, the National Security Adviser, went to Cambridge. However despite having the highest number of Rhodes scholars in an administration since the scholarship was founded in 1902, the administration did not feel any great sentiment towards Great Britain. As a result Clinton's election precluded the development of a particularly close 'Special Relationship' during the early 1990s.

The inauguration of President Clinton therefore symbolized the transition to a new era of international politics, as the Cold War passed into history. It was not only a time of change in America, but also in the history of the transatlantic alliance. With the end of the Cold War, the transatlantic relationship had *lost "the sobering structure and rehearsed vocabulary that two generations of presidents had inherited with the job,"*[12] as America faced a world in which it had no life-threatening enemy, a world it could neither dominate nor withdraw from.

At home, Americans were seeking a peace dividend following the end of the Cold War, but Clinton could not ignore the outside world. The new president would need to do what the outgoing Bush Administration had failed to do: implement a sweeping foreign policy that could manage a defunct USSR, an emboldened Asia, and an evolving Europe. President Bush had spoken of a New World Order, but this had not yet materialised. Indeed, the New York Times felt that Bush *"let a lot of difficult issues simmer throughout the election year, to be inherited by the new administration. Clinton is a novice, but the so-called experts left him a plate full of problems."* [13]

The Special Relationship

In the evolving world of 1993, one of the few certainties that Clinton could count on, if he chose to do so, was the Special Relationship between America and Great Britain. Whilst the UK was not the power she once was, she retained a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Yet Great Britain was under constant pressure to decide whether she would be an Atlantic power or a European power. Such a choice was unpopular in the country as the British people saw themselves as a part of Europe, but not particularly European. Such sentiments were reflected in the leadership of the country, with successive Prime Ministers seeking to be bridge-builders between their American cousins and their European brothers.

Such a role had existed for over five decades, as Great Britain enjoyed a partnership of unparalleled trust with the United States, referred to by successive generations of politicians as the Special Relationship. Winston Churchill first brought the term to prominence during his 'Iron Curtain' speech of March 1946. With Major and Clinton there was none of the intimacy of previous years, but the relationship had changed since the 1980s as economic links, rather than common security interests became paramount.

Despite the furore caused by interference in the election process, it was arranged for John Major to be the first European leader to visit the White House after Clinton's inauguration. However the February 1993 trip was poorly received: The Los Angeles Times referred to Major as *"a flawed partner in an uncertain transatlantic partnership."* **[14]** Whilst the Washington Post assessed him as someone who *"seems to have an uncanny instinct for making a beeline to the brink of political disaster."* **[15]** However the President went out of his way to make Major welcome, assuring the media that *"The relationship is special to me personally and will be special to the United States as long as I am serving here."* [16]

Beyond this initial attempt to sooth relations with Great Britain however, the President's priority for his first year in office lay not with Europe, but with Asia. Clinton hoped to alleviate the trade rows that had developed with Japan by transforming the 1993 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference into a genuine summit. Secretary of State Warren Christopher infuriated Europeans by suggesting that American foreign policy had been *"too Euro-centric."* **[17]**

Whilst Europe where digesting this they received another shock as Christopher announced plans for structural changes at the Security Council, advocating Japanese and German membership of the permanent Security Council, without any consultation with America's Security Council partners, France and Great Britain. Adding Germany and Japan to the Permanent Members of the Security Council would dilute the influence of the existing members and by opening the debate

on the structure of the Security Council, it was suggested that the entire European Community should have a single seat with member states rotating who sat and when.

The logic in the American proposal was brought into question when the issue of UN peacekeeping operations was raised: Japan claimed that her constitution bared her from sending troops abroad, whilst Germany's constitutional court had only recently cleared a small number of German troops to serve in Somalia. This was far from clearance to send troops world wide on UN missions and no German troops were offered for service in Bosnia despite the presence of British and French contingents. Whilst the Clinton Administration may have been legitimately attempting to bring the United Nations up to date and to deal with the world as it was in 1992, their actions appeared to be insensitive to the needs and wishes of long-standing friends and allies.

Of all the issues at stake however, it was trade that most threatened the transatlantic relationship. Whatever influence European powers wished to think they had in Washington disappeared when the debate turned to American jobs. On this issue, Europe and America were to spend much of the 1990s and beyond not as strategic allies, but as trading rivals and economic competitors. In February 1993, President Clinton informed Europe that the United States would not allow the American air industry to continue to be penetrated by the European consortium Airbus, which had won 41% of new orders in 1992. [18] In a speech to Boeing workers, Clinton blamed the European countries for causing the loss of 28,000 jobs at Boeing plants due to unfair foreign subsidies.

Trade issues were at the heart of European concerns over the future direction of US policy. American trade with Asia exceeded $350 billion in 1993, leading many to speculate that America's economic future lay across the Pacific. The figures revealed that whilst America exported similar levels of goods and services to Asia and Europe,[19] America imported $241 billion from Asia and only $114 billion from Europe. So whilst US trade was increasing in Asia, she had a far more balanced relationship with European companies, who employed 3 million Americans and paid $20 billion American taxes, having invested $250 billion in the United States. Asian nations however paid only $7 billion in taxes, employed less than one million Americans and invested only $107 billion in the United States. *"It was clear to see that European-owned firms were far more integrated into the American economy."*[20]

Eventually the Clinton National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement would come to define domestic economic growth as a central tenet of foreign policy, with foreign trade being viewed as essential: *"Europe remains at the heart of our foreign policy agenda,"* Warren Christopher maintained. *"Europe is still our most important trading partnership. It provides sixty percent of the profits for U.S. companies operating abroad, over sixty percent of U.S. foreign investment in Europe, and Europeans provide sixty-five percent of all foreign investment in the United States."* [21]

To European leaders and political observers however, the fact that Clinton had visited Tokyo and had met with the Asian leaders in Seattle during his first year in office was seen as evidence that America was turning away from its European roots. So after dealing with Asia in 1993, it was felt that Clinton should spend 1994 re-establishing America's alliances in Europe, and visited the continent three times that year. The first visit was to a NATO summit in January, then a visit to Great Britain and France in June to mark the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, before returning again for a final time in July for the G7 summit in Italy and a brisk tour of Eastern Europe. With its new focus on European affairs, the Clinton Administration initiated a major reshuffle at the National Security Council and the State Department. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke was brought back from Germany to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for European affairs, whilst Russian expert Alexander Vershbow joined the European desk at the NSC in a move that *"came as a relief to European diplomats in Washington."* [22]

Historically European trips have been good for American Presidents. The occasions inevitably produce wonderful material to impress American voters: historic settings, impressive receptions, and imagery for political consultants to manipulate shamelessly at election time. However, President Clinton's first trip to Europe made no stop in London, and instead began in Brussels. To British Euro-sceptics this was proof that Great Britain was loosing her status to an emerging Federal Super-state! There were also those that felt that this was a deliberate snub to John Major due to his support of President Bush, but Major was far from Bush's only ally in Europe. Helmut Kohl in particular had reason to be grateful for President Bush's efforts in securing the unification of Germany. The French, it was suggested, were more cynical, believing *"a new, inexperienced president might provide some manoeuvring room to advance France's ambitions in Europe and around the globe."* [23]

On the eve of Clinton's first trip to Europe as president, the New York Times suggested that the European, *"mood is compounded of many things: an apprehension about the unknown, an unsettling generational change, a sense that history may be flowing away from them."* [24] Such

sentiments were reflective of concerns that remained over the future direction of US foreign policy. With the end of the Cold War, many feared that America would withdraw her European presence. With his January 1994 visit to Europe, President Clinton sought to calm such fears, give direction to US foreign policy in Europe and launch the initiative that would become the most potent symbol of Clinton's time in office.

NATO Expansion

Clinton's solution to Europe's dilemma was to call for the expansion of NATO to the countries of Eastern Europe. However, rather than attempting to enlarge NATO immediately, the Clinton plan called for the creation of a temporary institution: the Partnership for Peace. This would be an organisation that nations could join in preparation for full NATO membership. Warren Christopher had already visited the nations of Western Europe in an effort to convince them that despite his earlier remarks, Europe remained central to American foreign policy and to assure nations in East Europe that despite not advocating an immediate expansion of NATO, the administration still maintained this as a long-term ambition.

This proposal, which was critiqued on all sides, for going too far or not far enough, was in keeping with Clinton's pragmatic approach to policy. In 1994 the great fear was the risk of provoking a revolution in Moscow that would herald a return to the days of the Cold War. As such Clinton was rightly hesitant to push NATO membership up to Russia's borders in a single stroke. Also, the nations to whom NATO membership was to be extended had yet to be determined. Ultimately Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic would become the first nations to sign up for Partnership for Peace, participating in NATO conferences, engaging in training and developing command structures.

Critics of NATO expansion argued that a better route to security in Eastern Europe would have been to improve the region's economies and democratic processes before confirming upon them membership of the European Community, but there was little appetite for such a move in a Europe suffering from the tail ends of a recession. It was also suggested that Clinton's decision was based in part in reaction to the gains made by Russian nationalists such as Zhirinovsky. However the administration's senior Russian expert, Strobe Talbott, had long been against an immediate expansion of NATO, concerned that "drawing a new line" between East and West could become a self-fulfilling prophecy of a future confrontation with Russia. NATO governments were generally supportive of Clinton's plan: The British and French both appreciated its measured pace, whilst the Germans were eager to end their role as a frontline state since Poland would become the buffer against Russia.

This however was but the first step in a process, which, in 1994, had no definitive conclusion. What mattered most for Clinton was how his performance was perceived in Europe and at home. *"His relaxed style was well received; both the European and American media concluded that the president's first outing in Europe could be considered a success."*[25] One of the President's key tasks in Europe was to establish relations with her leaders. As the first man of his generation to reach the White House, Clinton had to deal with the consequences of generational change overseas. In Europe, French President Francois Mitterrand was nearing the end of his time in power and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was coming under increasing pressure following reunification. British Prime Minister John Major, though only three years older than Clinton, *"belonged to the tag end of the older generation, playing George Bush to Margaret Thatcher's Ronald Reagan,"*[26] and all three would leave office during Clinton's time at the White House.

Clinton's growing sense of diplomacy was revealed in the visit of John Major in 1994. Despite their lack of common political philosophy, Bill Clinton entertained John Major like no other foreign dignitary during his visit to America. Major was granted to stay the night in the White House, an honour not granted a British prime minister since Churchill's trip in 1942. *"They are making a determined effort to say we love each other,"* said a Foreign Office source. *"And we do, except for the odd spat."* [27]

The spat this time round was over the President's efforts to arrange a cease-fire in Northern Ireland. So the White House upgraded the visit into a major media event to highlight the relationship between the two men, even though Clinton was said to have little time for Major. The media blitz was designed to convince the president's critics on both sides of the Atlantic that he continued to value Britain as America's most trusted and respected ally. Clinton and Major dined out at a restaurant before flying to Washington on board Air Force One, and taking Marine One back to the White House after a night time tour of the Capital. [28] Mr Clinton said it was *"a great mistake to overstate the occasional disagreement and understate the incredible depth and breadth of our shared interests and values. It is still a profoundly important relationship."*[29]

Bosnia

Of all the incidents to impact upon the transatlantic relationship during the Clinton years, the dilemma over the former Yugoslavia had perhaps the most serious impact. It was a situation without heroes, and an international crisis in which both sides of the Atlantic singularly failed to

redeem themselves, be it politically, diplomatically or militarily. To many, the breakdown in communications over the former Yugoslavia demonstrated the drift that was evident in the transatlantic relationship.

When Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence in June 1991 and the first serious fighting occurred, the Europeans were slow to recognise that President Milosevic sought to use the crisis to achieve a Greater Serbia. Despite threats to suspend a £600 million aid programme unless a ceasefire was achieved, European influence in the region was pitiful, a situation reinforced by the assertion of Luxembourg's foreign minister, Jacques Poos that, *'This is the hour of Europe, not of America.'* [30] Such declarations would not only highlight European impotence, but would also be used by Washington as a vehicle for avoiding the war.

With America remaining out of the conflict, the French took the issue to the United Nations Security Council where Resolution 713 imposed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia. By April 1992 the United States and the EC agreed to develop their organisation in the former Yugoslavia, but with the presidential election looming, no on in Washington was prepared to dispatch ground troops to what even the Europeans believed to be a local issue.

By August 1992 former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and former British Foreign Secretary Lord Owen attempted a new peace initiative and it was hoped that Vance's experience in Washington would encourage greater American interest in the issue. However when the Vance-Owen plan was released, American reaction was uncooperative, a reaction many put down to the forthcoming presidential election. Yet after Bush was defeated the only effort made to deploy American troops was to Somalia. This caused many to speculate why Bush did nothing to implement the US sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 770, authorizing the use of all measures necessary to ensure that food and medical supplies reached the starving of Bosnia.

Despite such misgivings, there was a sense of optimism in some quarters when President Clinton took office. During the campaign, Clinton had promised a more pro-active role in the Balkans and refused to rule out air strikes against Serb positions, or the lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnians. Candidate Clinton had declared, *"If the Serbs persist in violating the terms of the current ceasefire agreements, the United States should take the lead in seeking UN Security Council authorization for air strikes against those who are attacking the relief effort."* This sentiment appeared to be renewed in his inaugural address when Clinton said: *"When our vital*

interests challenged, or the will of the international community defied, we will act- with peaceful diplomacy when possible, with force when necessary." [31]

Once in office however, Clinton began to renege on this declaration, and protests over atrocities did not result in a willingness to commit ground troops, despite early suggestions that such a deployment was possible.[32] When it emerged that Clinton was considering air strikes against the Serbs and lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnians, the already strained transatlantic relations reached such a dangerous level of tension that Douglas Hurd signalled publicly his *"deep reservations"*[33] about the American proposals in the House of Commons. Such prevarication reinforced European opinion that the President was *"a smart but provincial Southern politician with a limited knowledge of the world."*[34]

In an effort to clarify his administration's position, Clinton made it clear that America would not act unilaterally: *"This problem is at the heart of Europe's future. Our efforts will be undertaken with our partners. We're ready to play our part, but others must be as well."* [35] A meeting of the president's national security advisers concluded that America had not gone through the Cold War, merely to emerge as the World's Policeman. Clinton felt that *"America's allies had to be encouraged to emerge from the shadow of Washington's tutelage, and take the lead in solving regional problems."*[36] The message from Washington was that from now on, America would be adopting a pragmatic approach to foreign policy. On some issues they would work with Russia, on some with the NATO allies, sometimes with the United Nations, and sometimes the US would simply choose not to get involved. *"The post-Cold War world was probably going to be a messy place, and from now on Washington was going to pick and choose its issues."*[37]

Clinton's international standing was not helped by Warren Christopher's efforts. Christopher announced that Clinton had chosen to pursue a multilateral approach *"because we believe that the interests of the United States and the international community are at stake."* [38] Whilst acknowledging the existence of the humanitarian issue, Christopher stressed, *"Fundamentally our actions are based upon the strategic interests of the United States."*[39] Many questioned how the situation was a threat to US national security. His attempts to promote the policy of lifting the arms embargo against the Muslims with threats of air strikes against those who opposed the re-arming were met with derision. "*It was a plan designed to satisfy Congress and mean America would step in to change the Bosnian situation without exposing itself to any of the consequences if things went wrong."*[40] Essentially, there would be no American ground troops, which appalled European leaders. *"Frankly, he didn't do a very good job of presenting his case,"* said one British official. The Europeans were expecting a plan, but Christopher

thought he had come to listen, not lead. *"At times, we weren't even sure what his case was."* [41] The comparison with Bush's Secretary of State was damning: *"I knew Jim Baker,"* said a senior European diplomat. *"Jim Baker was a friend of mine. Believe me, Warren Christopher is no Jim Baker."*[42]

However, Europe and the United States did not fundamentally disagree on their goals in Bosnia. Both sought the end of bloodshed, the return of confiscated land to the country's Muslims and Croats and both feared a widening conflict. The disagreements arose over tactics. Many European governments dismissed Clinton's plan to arm the Bosnian Muslims and conduct air raids against Serb targets as short sighted and ill conceived, especially considering the presence of peacekeeping troops working under the U.N. flag who would have been in the potential target zones. There were also differences in approach. Many in Europe felt that America had adopted a moralistic view of the conflict, of Serbs committing a holocaust against Muslims and Croats. This contrasted to what many European policymakers felt was their own *"nuanced approach, one in which multiple layers of animosities and historical complexities cloud the moral issue."*[43]

The strength of feeling in Europe emphasized how the transatlantic relation had deteriorated and reflected a distrust of American leadership. Despite European disdain, there was little or not public support for a massive US role in the Balkans. The American press were fundamentally opposed to any deployment in the region, with the Wall Street Journal fearing that committing US ground troops to enforce any settlement could lead to *"another Beirut, or even to Vietnam if larger powers begin to side with the Serbs."*[44] Charles Krauthammer, writing in the Washington Post, feared US troops could be sent to *"a swamp of historical grievances."*[45] Even the New York Times feared Clinton was on the *"slippery slope of military engagement,"* that could put 15,000 American servicemen into a *"cauldron of violence our European allies have refused to take on themselves."* [46]

Democratic Senator Joseph Biden was outraged at the British refusal to go along with US air strikes, condemning it *as "a discouraging mosaic of indifference, timidity, self-delusion and hypocrisy."* Republican Congresswoman Susan Molinari of New York called for the United States to lift the arms embargo regardless of European views: *"Let's get the people out of there who were allegedly trying to keep the peace and allow the people to fight their own wars."* Clinton's real regrets over the Bosnian Serbs' rejection of the Vance-Owen plan came out in an NBC television interview: *"I felt really badly because I don't want to have to spend more time on that than is absolutely necessary because what I got elected to do was to let America look at*

our own problems." [47] There was stalemate over what Warren Christopher wearily called *"the problem of Hell":* America refused to send ground troops until there was a peace agreement to monitor; Great Britain would not support the American twin-track strategy of lifting the arms embargo to arm the Moslems and using air strikes against the Serbs.[48]

The issue of the former Yugoslavia highlighted the fact that fifty years after World War Two, Europe was still unable to project power without America's support. As Gebhard Schweigler, of the Research Institute for International Affairs stated, *"We Europeans would like to think we can do things without the United States, but we know, at the same time, that we can't."*[49] Colonel Dewar of the IISS was a little more conciliatory. Rather than mock the White House as dithering, Europe might applaud it for not rushing into a course opposed by its allies. *"You could pat the president on the back for not falling into the trap of some ridiculous virility test,"* he said.[50]

With many in America questioning US vital interests in the Balkans and with the Europeans failing to act, it was little surprise that Clinton failed to prioritise the matter. The truth was that despite President Bush's assertion that the Vietnam Syndrome had been buried in the sands of the Persian Peninsula, many in Washington feared being sucked into another civil war as Lyndon Johnson had been twenty-five years previously. *"Like Johnson, Clinton was elected on a programme of domestic reform, and like Johnson, he finds a foreign war thrust up like a barrier on the road to renewal at home. The choice between the Great Society and the Vietnam War was a hellish one that eventually destroyed Johnson and his presidency."*[51] As a student of history, Bill Clinton had no intention of repeating Johnson's errors.

Beyond Bosnia

Despite the differences over Bosnia and Northern Ireland, by the time Bill Clinton returned to Europe at the end of 1995, he was a foreign policy president in his own right, enjoying *"a victory tour of diplomatic achievements that were to culminate in Paris at the formal signing of the Bosnian peace agreement."*[52] By the end of 1995 Clinton could take degrees of credit for the Northern Ireland cease-fire, the enforcement of peace in Bosnia, and the signing of a new deal with the European Union, designed to reinvigorate the transatlantic alliance. Clinton travelled looking like the man George Bush had wanted to be: *"a president visibly confident of re-election, facing a parade of unconvincing campaign rivals, presiding over the world's healthiest economy, and the very embodiment of global leadership."*[53]

Clinton's demeanour was improved even more on May 1, 1997 when his protégé was elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Having adopted many of Bill Clinton's speeches and policies, it was clear that Tony Blair saw Clinton as a role model, just as Harold Wilson once viewed President Kennedy in the 1960's. In an unprecedented move, Tony Blair invited Bill Clinton to become the first American President to address the British Cabinet at 10 Downing Street on May 29, 1997.

Coinciding with Blair's election came Clinton's conclusion that NATO enlargement would be the defining foreign policy issue of his second term. The president would attempt to define himself and his place in history by reconstructing Europe, "whole and free." To do so, Clinton moved to placate Russian fears over NATO expansion. First he confirmed that no nuclear weapons or foreign troops would be stationed in the new NATO territories, and secondly Russia would join a special NATO consultative council, giving Russia "a voice but not a veto." These concessions were then embodied in the new Russian-NATO Founding Act, signed in Paris in May 1997.[54]

The NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997 was a personal victory for Bill Clinton. The formal invitations to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were agreed upon and he was greeted as a hero in Poland. This was Europe's "second chance," an opportunity to rescind the divisions imposed at Yalta in 1945. Finally, Clinton could declare, *"Poland is coming home."*[55] Clinton's NATO initiative was one that could have seriously backfired, leading to a return to a cold War standoff. That it succeeded was due in part to the administration's careful planning and the acquiescence of the Russian leadership. It was however, President Clinton's most significant geopolitical accomplishment.

It also represented the high watermark of the administration. As the Monica Lewinsky scandal began to impact the administration, the President spent more and more of his time defending his actions and les and leas time dealing with the transatlantic relationship. By the end of his time in office the scandal had tainted all perceptions of his presidency. In retrospect however, and in contrast to his successor, it is clear that in William Jefferson Clinton was a president that was eager to see a new and expanded role for Europe, one who admittedly did so in terms of American self-interest, but also who recognised America's changing role in the world. Under Clinton the United States would refuse to play the role of World Policeman, and it was this decision that the world was slow to recognise.

Conclusion

In the early 1990s, it was suggested that "*Once the Berlin Wall came down the entire pattern of international relations changed. Nothing survived as it had been before, not even the Special Relationship. The problem that had to be addressed on both sides of the Atlantic was how to live with the reality of the end of the affair while the British public was still being deluded by rhetoric about the Special Relationship, which the politicians at Westminster were reluctant to eliminate from their vocabulary.*"[56] I believed that his statement is fundamentally flawed. One of the traits of the Special Relationship, and indeed any relationship, is its ability to endure the bad times and enjoy the good.

The 1990s were a time of adjustment for the world. Just as it had to deal with the end of the Soviet Union, so too did it need to adjust to an altered role in the world for the United States. One of the main areas to adjust to was the idea that the United States should work with its allies in consultation rather than be seen to be dictating a series of actions from afar. Unlike his predecessors, Bill Clinton was interested in negotiation, conciliation and empathising with his friends and adversaries. His natural inclination was to confer with allies, not to instruct. This however led to misunderstandings as to America's intentions in the world. In many ways, Clinton was reacting to America's changed position in the world, whilst the other nations lagged behind. Nowhere was this more evident than in the administration's dealings with her European allies over the crisis in the Balkans. This idea of a less imperial approach to foreign policy was one that took the rest of the world time to adjust to and in the meantime, the leaders of Europe continued to look to the White House to resolve what many in the United States took to be a European problem.

The end of the Cold War granted Europe the belief that it could find its own way, independent of the United States. The events in Bosnia proved to be a sobering reminder that this was not necessarily the case. 50 years after the end of the Second World War, Europe still lacked the military might to support its political aspirations. The 1990s revealed that Europe's aspirations of independence could not overcome the growing realities of interdependence.

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[1] John Major, *"The Autobiography,"* London: Harper Collins, 1999, 495

[2] David Halberstam, *"War In A Time Of Peace: Bush, Clinton and the Generals,"* New York; Scribner, 2002, 86

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