

POWER AND WEAKNESS BY ROBERT KAGAN [2002]

BACKGROUND

Robert Kagan is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a transatlantic fellow at the German Marshall Fund, and a columnist for *The Washington Post* (he writes a monthly column on international affairs). He is also a contributing editor at *The Weekly Standard* and *The New Republic*. He served in the U.S. State Department from 1984 to 1988 as a member of the Policy Planning Staff, as a principal speechwriter for Secretary of State George P. Shultz, and as deputy for policy in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. He is the author of several books, including *A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1977–1990*, and *of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order (2003)*. He is a graduate of Yale University and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and holds a PhD in American History from American University. He was born in Athens, Greece, in 1958 and is married to Victoria Nuland, the former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. [She was let go on January 27, 2017]. Robert Kagan has been described as a Neo-con and is an anti-trump conservative.

POWER AND WEAKNESS

In His Essay Power and Weakness, Robert Kagan tries to explain the nature of the growing transatlantic split between the nations of Europe and the U.S. specifically when dealing with international conflicts. The Europeans he argues, prefer to approach problems with more subtlety and patience. They acknowledge that solutions might not come quickly and would like to place greater emphasis on negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion rather than resort to force. They are also quicker to appeal to international law and want international bodies to solve disputes. The United States, he argues, has much less patience than Europe and will resort to force more quickly. Rather than persuading an adversary to adhere to international norms the U.S. likes to use coercion instead. Americans expect to see a finality: they want problems solved, threats eliminated and will act unilaterally to accomplish these goals. The U.S. is skeptical of the effectiveness of international bodies to solve conflicts and is more willing to operate outside of that structure when necessary.

- Points to the Clinton Administrations bombings of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan, Says European nations would not have done this.
 - Acknowledges that some Americans are more moderate and that some Europeans still value the use of power.
 - The differing strategic perspectives need to receive more attention.
 - The strategy now taken by Europe is one that has been evolving since WWI, as before then the Europeans were constantly engaged in War. Believed in *Machtpolitik*.
 - *Machtpolitik*- means power politics; specifically: a doctrine in political theory advocating the use of power and especially of physical force by a political state in the attainment of its objectives.
 - American foreign policy has also changed since our early days. Used to rely on commercial ties and international law.
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THE POWER GAP: PERCEPTION AND WEAKNESS

After WWII Europe had to come to terms with their inability to project force outside of its borders. With American backing and the realities of the Cold War, European influence was still largely intact but they now carried out a secondary role as the US led most global initiatives. With the creation of the European Union after

the fall of the Soviet Union, many in Europe had hoped to recapture their former glory and become the next 'superpower' but the opposite happened. They got weaker, while we got stronger and thus increasing the power gap between us.

- Europeans lose colonies.
- NATO keeps Europe relevant.
- Maastricht treaty 1992- Treaty of EU to integrate Europe.
- The U.S. invades countries to clear hostilities then the EU forces remain on peacekeeping missions. "As some Europeans put it, the real division of labor consisted of the United States 'making the dinner' and the Europeans 'doing the dishes'"
- Europe spent much less on their military than we did after the Cold War.
- Kosovo War- Clinton bombs Yugoslavia for ten weeks, kicks them out and sets up Kosovo. Fear that US action could decisively change governments with the support of rebels, without opposition. They lost thousands, we lost 2 pilots.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POWER AND WEAKNESS

The growing split in foreign policy views between Europe and the U.S. can be traced to the difference in military capability.

- Americans argue that they intervene to promote security and prosperity for the world, while Europe contends that such use of force and contempt for international solutions do nothing but delay the arrival of world order.
- Americans believe in advancing the principles of liberal civilization and free society and does not act unjustly or by *raison d'etat* as Europe did before WWII.
- *Raison d'etat*- a purely political reason for action on the part of a ruler or government, especially where a departure from openness, justice, or honesty is involved.
- Bear, man, knife, and rifle metaphor.
- Europe enjoys relative peace because the aggressors of the world are more concerned with targeting America and her interests than Europe.

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY

The evolution and transformation of European politics.

- Europe has different historical experience than us.
- The ambitions of European leaders from 1658-1945 had been formed on power politics and military force. Modern Europe is founded on a rejection of this former system.
- Modern Europe uses negotiation, diplomacy, commercial ties, multilateralism, patience, and incentives as a tool for resolving conflicts. Reject military power.
- The "German Problem" was finally solved.
- Europe's peace in modern times is due to "moral consciousness" and "self-enforced rules of behavior" that is only possible because of "the rejection of force".
- George F. Kennan still thought of Europeans as being war hungry, he called them "historically minded Machiavels".

- The Europeans doubted using military power to control the Soviet Union
 - The role the U.S plays in keeping peace in Europe. We have taken away their desire for military expansion.
 - The consequences of being non-confrontational.
 - Growing military defense spending in the U.S. vs E.U.
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THE U.S. RESPONSE

The commitment to a peaceful Europe.

- The new Europe is a blessing not a curse.
 - American foreign policy helped to set up the conditions that would allow for an integrated Europe.
 - The U.S. undermined Britain and France at the Suez crisis.
 - Created NATO to stabilize the region.
 - U.S. forces are indispensable to keeping Europe in its present state.
 - The U.S. solved the German Problem for Europe.
 - European hypocrisy and the irony of our military keeping Europe in peace despite their criticisms.
 - Europe must grow some teeth according to Robert Cooper.
 - If Europe will not solve the world's problems, then the Americans will. The cost of this is the U.S. must always be at war.
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AN ACCEPTABLE DIVISION?

The two sides need to reconcile their differences as the E.U. U.S partnership is crucial for the civilized world.

- The U.S. needs Europe less, and can continue to maintain global security on its own as it already does.
 - Europe must remain at peace, that is all the U.S. asks of them.
 - The effect of Vietnam and the 911 attacks on U.S. foreign policy.
 - Americans are idealists, they believe in world peace but they know that international institutions cannot be relied upon to solve major issues.
 - Many Europeans have come to consider the U.S. itself as an outlaw, or the main aggressor in the world.
 - As European criticisms grow louder, Americans become less inclined to listen.
 - Kagan would like to see a stronger Europe.
 - Kagan would like to see more respect for international law by the U.S.
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CONCLUSION

Despite the differences between the two nations on how to handle global conflicts, it is in their best interest to work together and find common understanding. They share a common set of Western beliefs and both see security and prosperity as the goal for the world. [See Paragraph 11, power and weakness.]

QUESTIONS:

1. If the United States is so powerful, why does it feel so threatened?
2. Are the Europeans ungrateful for all that we have done to protect them since WWII?
3. Does the United States need to enforce security around the world, what would happen if we stopped?

-Jordan Villanueva