

New or Larger?

JFK's Diverging Visions of Europe

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We believe that a united Europe will be capable of playing a greater role. . . . We see in such a Europe a partner with whom we can deal on a basis of full equality.

JOHN KENNEDY, 4 JULY 1962¹

Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was “civis Romanus sum.” Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is “Ich bin ein Berliner.”

JOHN KENNEDY, 26 JUNE 1963²

During his one thousand days in the White House, US President John F. Kennedy hardly spent a week without addressing publicly some “European” issue. It was during his time in office that Berlin saw the high drama of the construction of the Wall. It was during his time in office that discussions and negotiations took place across the Atlantic, about the Multilateral Force plan for nuclear weapons sharing (MLF), and the GATT’s “Kennedy

1 John Kennedy, “Address at Independence Hall, Philadelphia,” 4 July 1962. If not differently specified, the full texts of all the presidential public speeches cited in this essay are available in *American Presidency Project*.

2 John Kennedy, “Remarks in the Rudolph Wilde Platz, Berlin,” 26 June 1963.

round” of tariff reductions. It was also during his time in office that the US government actively sponsored Britain’s entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), only to suffer the shock of the application’s rejection at the hand of French President Charles de Gaulle in January 1963.³

Understandably, an engaging body of work has addressed the US President’s foreign policy with regard to areas and institutions conventionally connected to the notion of “Europe,” with an emphasis on the origins and aftermath of Kennedy’s “declaration of interdependence” speech of 4 July 1962, quoted in the epigraph to this essay.⁴ The speech offered “Europe” a partnership with the United States, that is, a cooperative relationship between two roughly equal actors—the two weights of a dumbbell, with the Atlantic Ocean as the connecting bar.⁵ This all came to be popularized as a *Grand Design* in the highly successful 1962 pamphlet bearing the same title and written by reporter Joseph Kraft.⁶

The special link between Kennedy and Europe has also been stressed by his biographers. In the very first lines of *JFK*, historian Robert Dallek describes Kennedy as “a European.”⁷ Indeed, in his youth Kennedy had traveled extensively in what was then generally considered Europe. After taking economics classes at the London School of Economics in 1935, the young Harvard student made his first “European grand tour” in 1937, at the age of twenty, with his friend Lem Billings. They visited France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Britain. Following his father’s appointment as ambassador to Britain by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in December 1937, John Kennedy’s contacts with Europe only became closer: often visiting Britain, France and Germany, between 1938 and 1939 he also went skiing in Switzerland, and visited Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, Bucharest, Ankara, Warsaw, Prague, and Athens. During these sojourns, Kennedy gathered information for his graduation thesis on Britain’s appeasement policy toward Nazi Germany, published in 1940 with the title *While England Slept*. In

3 For a general treatment of these relations, see Lundestad, *United States*, 111–42.

4 Costigliola, “Failed Design”; Winand, *Eisenhower*; Brinkley and Griffiths, *John Kennedy and Europe*; Bozo, *Two Strategies*.

5 For “dumbbellism,” see Weisbrode, *Atlantic Century*, 159–77.

6 Kraft, *Grand Design*.

7 Dallek, *JFK*, 13.

1947, after serving in the Pacific during World War II, he finally visited his ancestral homeland in Ireland.⁸

The study of the way US administrations form and present to the public their visions of foreign lands helps addressing both the general theme of the relations between ideology and foreign policy, and the more specific themes of the relations between mental maps and foreign policy, and national identity and foreign policy.⁹ Based on Kennedy's public speeches as well as on declassified documents from his administration, this essay will analyze Kennedy's image of Europe.

PRE-KENNEDY VISIONS OF "EUROPE" IN THE US

When Kennedy became President, "Europe" had just been recast in a fundamental way in US political discourse, through the notion of it being part of the "Atlantic Community." This was a brand new entity successfully "imagined" by the influential reporter and public intellectual Walter Lippmann in support of intervention in World War II. In a 1943 pamphlet, Lippmann explained that "the Atlantic Ocean is not the frontier between Europe and the Americas. It is the inland sea of a community of nations allied with one another by geography, history, and vital necessity."¹⁰ Lippmann's Atlantic Community included a "Europe" made of Britain, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway.¹¹ In the immediate postwar years, the Truman administration managed to adjust the borders of this Europe to meet the necessities of its anti-Soviet Cold

8 Ibid., 60–77.

9 Harper, *American Visions*; Mariano, *Defining the Atlantic Community*; Balis and Serfaty, *Visions of America and Europe*; Preston, "John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson." According to political scientist Alan Henrikson, a mental map can be understood as "an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind by reference to which a person acquires, codes, stores, recalls, reorganizes, and applies, in thought or in action, information about his or her large-scale geographical environment, in part or in its entirety." See Henrikson, "Geographical 'Mental Maps,'" 498. Henrikson's definition is largely inspired by the work by Gould and White, *Mental Maps*.

10 Cited in Mariano, "US Discovers Europe," 161–85. Also see Steel, "How Europe Became Atlantic," and Mariano "Re-mapping America." On "imagined communities," see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

11 Mariano, "US Discovers Europe," 166.

War, including (West) Germany in the picture, as well as Italy, Greece, and Turkey.¹²

As noted by Marco Mariano, to present “Europe” as part of a wider Atlantic Community was an extremely subtle ideological operation: in fact, if the Atlantic was now seen as a bridge, for almost two centuries it had not been perceived in this way. On the contrary, there is wide agreement among historians that “Europe” had been rather the main “external other” in comparison to which the US defined its identity.¹³ To be sure, US intellectuals in the early 1960s did not miss the point, even when they were inviting their fellow countrymen to look at Europe with new eyes. For example, in a pamphlet published in 1960, historian Daniel Boorstin arrayed references from Thomas Jefferson to Sinclair Lewis and beyond in order to stress the “tendency to discover ourselves as a kind of non-Europe.”¹⁴ Three years later, Cornell University historian Cushing Strout confirmed that, for much of their history, “whether they condemned Europe’s vices or yearned for its virtues, Americans agreed that it was a polar opposite of the New World.”¹⁵

Interestingly enough, both authors admitted that for “Americans” the concept of Europe reflected more a cultural construct than a clear geographical area. It goes without saying that conceiving of Europe in these terms was not a prerogative of US intellectuals and policymakers only. The definition of Europe’s borders has been—and still is—an ancient ambition of mankind, practiced both by those who aspired to define themselves “Europeans” and by those who searched in “Europe” for something different from themselves.¹⁶ As a consequence, ever since the word first appeared in classical Greece (in latent opposition to Persian “Asia”), “Europe” has had shifting borders. In imperial Rome, it appeared rarely to indicate some vague portion, north of the Mediterranean, of the much denser concept of *romanitas*. By the ninth century of the Christian era, the geographical content of the term had actually moved to the North and to the West, and was briefly used by Charlemagne to indicate his Holy Roman Empire (which, ironically, now meant excluding Greece). After virtually disappearing again from the maps, the term experienced an impressive comeback during the

12 Steel, “How Europe,” 22–26.

13 Bonazzi, “Constructing and Reconstructing Europe,” 11–26.

14 Boorstin, *Image of Europe*, 20.

15 Strout, *American Image*, ix.

16 For a general discussion, see Balestracci, *Ai confini dell'Europa medievale*.

fifteenth century, beginning with Pope Enea Silvio Piccolomini's use of it to encompass the entire Christian world (now in opposition to the Muslim Turks who were about to vanquish Constantinople). New adaptations came during the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Industrial Revolution, with two powers traditionally thought of as "Asian," as Russia and the Ottoman Empire, playing at various levels an important role in "European" politics and, to an extent, proclaiming themselves "Europeans."¹⁷

To be sure, most maps of Europe printed in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries stretched from the North Cape to the northern shores of the Mediterranean, and from Iceland to the Urals and the Bosphorus. These were most likely the maps with which John Kennedy grew up. However, some of the closest acquaintances of John's father saw the geography of the continent differently. For example, ardent anti-communist William Bullitt adamantly stated that "the eastern boundary of Europe is not the Ural Mountains but the swamps which extend from Finland, past Poland, to Romania."¹⁸ In the late 1930s, Bullitt was the US ambassador to Paris, where he often hosted young John Kennedy.¹⁹

Besides the perennial complexity of the theme, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there had perhaps been a further justification for the relative vagueness with which US culture thought about Europe's geographical content. Most of the key documents of US foreign policy—from George Washington's *Farewell Address* to the Monroe Doctrine—actually carried the message to beware of Europe. As Boorstin noted, it was only with the two world wars and the Great Depression in between that this attitude had slowly begun to change.²⁰

In the late 1940s and in the 1950s, to present "Europe" as part of the wider Atlantic Community was thus a viable way to conceal the traditional negative image of the "Old World" and provide ideological support to the Marshall Plan and to the continuing US military permanence across the ocean. The Atlanticists' definition of "Europe" as a shortcut to indicate the non-American countries of NATO also had a rather precise content in political terms (with anti-communism as the common denominator). Obviously,

17 Chabod, *Storia dell'idea di Europa*.

18 Cited in Harper, *American Visions*, 52.

19 Dallek, *JFK*, 70.

20 In general: Del Pero, *Libertà e impero*.

the entire operation came with two implications: on the one hand, besides the conventionally accepted notion of “Europe” extending to Russia, there came to life a much smaller “Europe”—often also referred to as “Western Europe.” As underlined by Ronald Steel, “with the Russians excluded [from the Marshall Plan] each side had ‘its’ Europe. . . . Rather than helping to unite Europe, the Marshall Plan served to divide it further.”²¹ On the other hand, the positive quality of this “Europe” in US eyes was not really its being European, but rather its being Atlantic.

KENNEDY’S “EUROPEAN PARTNER”

“Atlantic” was a crucial word also in Kennedy’s design for transoceanic interdependence. However, instead of thinking of the Atlantic community as a “community of values” with few distinctions between its various members, Kennedy articulated it as a two-pillar structure. This vision of “Europe” had been largely inspired by the thinking of George Ball, then the Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, and other like-minded officials in the administration who strongly supported the notion that a “united Europe,” of equal weight to the US, would be the optimal partner with which the US could hope to build a true Atlantic Community.²² These officials, often referred to as “Europeanists,” saw the EEC as the embryo of such a “Europe” and supported its strengthening both institutionally and in terms of membership. As Pascaline Winand has stressed, they did not differ much from the Atlanticists as to their final goal. However, while the latter aimed at merging the US and Canada with “Europe”—that is, NATO Europe—without intermediate passages, the former believed that only two senior equal partners could eventually delegate power to common institutions.²³

Typically, the image of the transatlantic partnership among equals depicted by the President in his 1962 “declaration of interdependence” speech was the term of comparison against which historians evaluated the achievements and failures of US policies toward “Europe” for most of the

21 Steel, “How Europe,” 25. Also see Winand, *Eisenhower*, 9.

22 Priest, “George W. Ball,” 172–91.

23 Winand, *Eisenhower*, 144.

1960s, including the Johnson administration (1963–68).²⁴ Indeed, that speech was not a collection of improvised remarks; given on US Independence Day, in Philadelphia’s Independence Hall, the speech had been carefully conceived as an exercise in symbolism and a major operation for the administration.

Idealism, however, was only one of the various driving forces behind Kennedy’s design. According to Winand, the President himself was never committed to any particular notion of European integration. In fact, many of his closest and most influential advisers on European affairs perceived that, “although the President was not opposed to European integration, it was not a topic or an issue that preoccupied him greatly.”²⁵ It was not Europeanist idealism, to be sure, that bought the Atlantic partnership the approval of pragmatists like National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, or even Atlanticists like Christian Herter, the former Secretary of State who served as Kennedy’s Special Trade Representative. Rather, it was the careful observation of some general trends, in both the EEC and the United States, that suggested they search for a fresh approach. On the other shore of the Atlantic, de Gaulle was actively promoting the notion of a “European Europe,” one with fewer Atlantic connections.²⁶ Even those who mistrusted de Gaulle, however, often cultivated the notion that “Europe” should develop into a bigger player in order to maintain the Atlantic link. Jean Monnet, the French businessman and diplomat whose name was most easily associated with the concept of supranationalism, was actually among the main supporters of the Europeanist idea, and George Ball had been Monnet’s lawyer in the US.²⁷ In the US, by 1960 certain economic sectors were beginning to feel competition from the EEC, and the deteriorating balance of payments was judged by Kennedy to be a problem second only to a nuclear war.²⁸ Protectionist feelings were on the rise, with “the Europeans” accused of being free riders under the US nuclear umbrella.

It is a platitude that the Kennedy team saw a key to addressing these challenges in Britain’s entry into the EEC. London had a tradition of free

24 Guderzo, *Interesse nazionale e responsabilità globale*; Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe*; Colman, ‘*Special Relationship*’?

25 Winand, *Eisenhower*, 139.

26 Lundestad, *United States*, 111–13.

27 Weisbrode, *Atlantic Century*, 171.

28 See Barnett, *Allies*, 298.

trade and a tight, if not special, relationship with Washington.²⁹ When Britain's conservative government, adequately encouraged by Kennedy, finally applied for a full EEC membership in the summer of 1961, Kennedy felt 'gratified.'³⁰ However, it was unclear which other countries, if any, the US government had in mind for the building of its European partnership. Even though US officials made it known that they would possibly consider favorably a Danish or Norwegian application, Kennedy never clearly defined the issue in public.³¹ Kraft's pamphlet on the *Grand Design* counted up to ten prospective new members in the EEC, the most important of which was recognizedly Britain, but it also included all the neutrals from Sweden to Switzerland and Austria.³² In reality, most high officials in the administration, George Ball first among them, were clearly disturbed by the perspective of neutral countries joining the EEC, with only different shades of dislike to distinguish the abhorred cases of Sweden and Switzerland (neutrals by choice) from the tolerated case of Austria (neutral by an international treaty).³³ Rather, in broad intellectual terms, the map of Kennedy's "European partner" implicitly resembled that depicted by political scientist Ernst Haas in his 1958 volume on *The Uniting of Europe*, with the EEC and Britain clearly at the center of the scene.³⁴

The same vagueness applied to the institutional form of "Europe," an issue on which, the US President declared, "the Europeans" had to decide themselves. Christian Herter possibly best expressed the philosophy behind such ambiguity in a 1962 speech to the Atlantic Convention of NATO nations, where he declared that:

With very few exceptions, even among those who most enthusiastically support the idea of an Atlantic Community, no clear definition is given as to what nations are embraced within that Community. . . . As of this moment it is both natural and pru-

29 Bange, *EEC Crisis of 1963*, 40; Dobson, "Years of Transition," 239–58.

30 John Kennedy, "The President's News Conference," 10 August 1961.

31 Winand, *Eisenhower*, 281.

32 Kraft, *Grand Design*, 21.

33 Ball, *Past Has Another Pattern*, 208–22.

34 To be sure, in the preface to the 1958 edition of his work, Haas admitted that the concept of a "united Europe" was rather obscure even for those who most often made reference to it, being alternatively applied to "the Six of 'Schumania' or the Fifteen of the Council of Europe." See Haas, *Uniting of Europe*, xxxi.

dent to avoid a dogmatic approach, both as to the nations which should be included at the outset and as to the form of political institutions which should evolve.³⁵

At the same time, while prudence counseled not to overplay the American hand, Kennedy's characterizations of the "European partner" were not less prescriptive for the fact of being vague. It might have been up to "the Europeans" to decide on the delicate "question of the federation versus confederation," as the President once declared.³⁶ But there was no question that Europe had to be supranational in institutions, liberal in international trade, and strongly connected to the US—"Atlantic"—in military affairs. As the President explained, he wanted "an outward-looking Europe with a strong connection to the United States."³⁷

AN ACTIVE NEW "EUROPE" FOR THE PARTNERSHIP

While the ambiguity of the contours of the "European partner" largely served Kennedy's need not to irritate "the Europeans," the President also needed to address rising concerns about "Europe" at home. Thus, Kennedy's European partner had a paradoxical characteristic: it was ambiguously defined in many ways, but also had a very clear personality. From this standpoint, Kennedy introduced two major novelties into US discourse about "Europe."

First of all, Kennedy's rhetoric allowed "Europe" to come back as an international player for the first time since the end of World War II. In basic grammar, Kennedy began to use "Europe" as the subject of his sentences. This first happened during the recordings of a speech for French radio in May 1961, when he declared that "a strong Europe strengthens freedom."³⁸ Such a use of the term then became extremely common during 1962, in the run-up to the "interdependence declaration" speech and in its

35 Herter, *Toward an Atlantic Community*, 64.

36 John Kennedy, "The President's News Conference," 17 May 1962.

37 Cited in Lundestad, *United States*, 120. In his 23 July 1962 news conference, the President declared: "We're asking Europe to make the Common Market an increasingly open institution."

38 John Kennedy, "Transcript of Interview With the President Recorded for French TV and Radio," 30 May 1961.

aftermath: Europe was often depicted as “free, growing, and expanding.”³⁹ In his 1963 State of the Union message, Kennedy credited Europe for “moving” toward interdependence.⁴⁰ Europe could even be conceptualized as having a will opposite to US proposals, as when the President declared that “Europe might decide that the MLF isn’t what they want.”⁴¹

The fact that in Kennedy’s speeches Europe became a political actor should not be taken lightly. President Harry Truman had given a very limited number of speeches in which Europeans actively did something—including “saving their continent” and “desiring European unity”—but in most cases they were simply the recipients of choices made by others.⁴² Throughout the entire Eisenhower administration, Europe was portrayed as a player of international affairs only on one occasion, in a June 1958 message about the signing of an agreement between the US and Euratom—with “Europe” then understood to be the Six members of the community that had just been created.⁴³ In all other instances, for Eisenhower “Europe” was always preceded by prepositions as “in,” “from,” or “to”; for all the administration’s encouragement to the fledgling European Communities, and possibly to Bismarck’s happiness, Europe largely remained a “mere geographical notion” in the golden years of Atlanticism.⁴⁴

The second innovation was an even deeper one. It came when Kennedy began to associate this active European partner with the idea of newness. The phrase “new Europe” first appeared in the President’s 1962 State of the Union message. This was a Europe that the US considered its main partner “in aid, trade, defense, diplomacy, and monetary affairs.”⁴⁵ On another oc-

39 John Kennedy, “Toasts of the President and Chancellor Adenauer,” 14 November 1962.

40 John Kennedy, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” 14 January 1962.

41 John Kennedy, “The President’s News Conference,” 6 March 1963.

42 See, for one of these rare exceptions, Harry Truman, “Statement by the President on German Steps Toward Acceptance of the European Defense Community Agreements,” 6 December 1952.

43 Dwight Eisenhower, “Special Message to the Congress Transmitting International Agreement Between the United States and Euratom,” 23 June 1958.

44 In the late 1870s, in a letter to the Russian Foreign minister, Prince Gortchakov, the Prussian Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck famously scribbled “*Europe. Notion géographique,*” adding a few lines lower down that “*Qui parle Europe a tort.*” Bismarck cited in Woodward, *Prelude to Modern Europe*, 57.

45 John Kennedy, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” 11 January 1962.

casion, Kennedy described this “new Europe” as a “Europe of equals instead of rivals— . . . born of common ideals, instead of the old Europe, torn by national and personal animosities.”⁴⁶ In short, this was “Europe” as a “vast new enterprise,” a “great new edifice,” a “new union now emerging,” and a “new house,” to which Kennedy offered his “declaration of interdependence” for the building of a stronger Atlantic partnership.⁴⁷ And, obviously, this was a “united Europe,” as the President declared in a highly publicized speech given at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt during his “European” tour of June 1963 (although, as usual, the President cared to make it clear that “the choice of paths to the unity of Europe is a choice which Europe must make”).⁴⁸

Indeed, the references to the newness of Europe were always accompanied by reminders of the Atlantic connection. As the President explained in the 1962 State of the Union message, “the emergence of the new Europe is being matched by the emergence of new ties across the Atlantic.”⁴⁹ When Kennedy began to make references to the newness of Europe, however, his language was almost revolutionary: for almost two centuries, Europe had been the “old world” by definition.⁵⁰

It was the perspective of European unity that made the passage from old to new possible, against a tradition that stretched back to some of the most sacred texts of US foreign policy, that had traditionally associated “Europe” with “wars and quarrels” (as in Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*), or with “frequent controversies” (as in George Washington’s *Farewell Address*).⁵¹ Understandably, the association of the two terms “new” and “Europe” had been dared only twice before in the history of US presidential speeches, by Truman in the early 1950s.⁵² When Truman spoke of “new Europe,” how-

46 John Kennedy, “Address Before the Conference on Trade Policy,” 17 May 1962.

47 John Kennedy, “Address at Independence Hall, Philadelphia,” 4 July 1962.

48 John Kennedy, “Address in the Assembly Hall at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt,” 25 June 1963.

49 John Kennedy, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” 11 January 1962.

50 Strout, *American Image*.

51 Del Pero, *Libertà*, 10–24.

52 Harry Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on the Mutual Security Program,” 6 March 1952; “Address in Springfield at the 32d Reunion of the 35th Division Association,” 7 June 1952.

ever, he always spoke in the future tense. In Kennedy's public speeches, this new Europe was a present reality.

KENNEDY'S "LARGER EUROPE"

In 1965, Henry Kissinger, a well-known Harvard professor who had briefly served as an adviser to Kennedy and who would later become the national security adviser and the Secretary of State of the Nixon and Ford administrations, wrote a harsh critique of Kennedy's approach to "Europe."⁵³ The biggest problem with the policies of the Kennedy administration, according to Kissinger, was not in the negotiating tactics or the diplomatic postures with which "Europe" had been approached. Rather, it was in the very conception of Europe that the administration had embraced. In short, Kissinger wrote, there was nothing across the ocean that really resembled the kind of actor Kennedy represented: indeed, there were several institutions symbolizing some form of European unity. But NATO was intergovernmental in nature, the OECD was a very loose economic transatlantic organization, the EEC was supranational only to a limited extent and, despite all its political ambitions, for the time being, the EEC Commission in Brussels dealt only with trade issues. And, obviously, Britain's application to the EEC did not equal Britain's membership in it.⁵⁴ In short, Kennedy's "new Europe" was a chimera.

In the mid-1960s, the imaginary elements of Kennedy's European partner had already been exposed by de Gaulle's rejection of Britain's entry.⁵⁵ Thus, it could be said that Kissinger was writing from a comfortable van-

53 Kissinger, *Troubled Partnership*.

54 *Ibid.*, 21.

55 It was also relatively easy for Kissinger to underline that de Gaulle's decisions hit Kennedy's European partner in two different but interconnected ways: institutionally, de Gaulle supported a Europe that was intergovernmental as opposed to supranational and moderately protectionist as opposed to liberal. Geographically, de Gaulle's Europe notoriously went from the "Atlantic to the Urals," as the French President had declared in 1960. Kissinger noted that de Gaulle's vision, though received in Washington with alarm, was of remote, unspecified future, especially in relation to the Eastern border; it was not an invitation to the communist Soviet Union to join "Europe." As for the Western border, however, the "Atlantic" placed Britain objectively in a limbo—if not entirely outside. Kissinger, *Troubled Partnership*, 57.

tage point.⁵⁶ However, not everyone in the US foreign policy establishment shared his judgment. On the contrary, it is well known that, after a reflective pause, the Kennedy administration opted for confirming the objectives of the Atlantic partnership and that, with minor emphasis, the Johnson administration also worked towards the same perspective, when it took over in late 1963 (at least until Ball's resignation in 1966).⁵⁷ As discussed above, the active and positive new Europe hinting at the enlarged and reformed EEC did not disappear from Kennedy's speeches. On the contrary, it remained a powerful image until the abrupt end of his Presidency.

At the same time, however, the administration began to nurture greater doubts as to the existence of that "Europe." For example, in a February 1963 press conference on the cumbersome negotiations for the MLF, Kennedy did refer to "Europe" as a single and active entity. But while in form this resembled his 1962 enthusiasm for the European partner, in substance the President was rather coming to the opposite conclusion. In fact, he declared the following:

It is a very difficult area because the weapons have to be fired in 5 minutes, and who is going to be delegated on behalf of Europe to make this judgment? . . . Somebody has to be delegated with that authority. If it isn't the President of the United States, in the case of the strategic force, it will have to be the President of France or the Prime Minister of Great Britain, or someone else. And that is an enormous responsibility.⁵⁸

According to historian Thomas Gijswijt, in the preparation of his 1963 trip to "Europe," Kennedy candidly admitted to one of his aides that "there isn't any Europe."⁵⁹ Four months after the President's assassination, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, by then serving under Johnson, came to a similar conclusion in a harsh reply to his own collaborators in Washington:

56 To be sure, Kissinger's understanding that "Europe" was not actually a single actor did not help him much in framing and managing his ill-fated 1973 "Year of Europe" initiative, for which he famously ended crying, out of frustration, "who do I call when I need to speak to Europe"? For a more general overview of Kissinger and "Europe," see Lundestad, *United States*, 181–85.

57 Winand, *Eisenhower*, 337.

58 John Kennedy, "The President's News Conference," 14 February 1963.

59 Gijswijt, "Running for President," 152–71.

I find it difficult to be patient in face of whining from various quarters across the Atlantic. Reftel should have broken down words Europe and Europeans into their component parts because on these matters there is no such thing as Europe.⁶⁰

In the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, Kennedy also undertook a gradual rethinking of US-Soviet relations. As Federico Romero has noted, this was a very contradictory process, as is well exemplified by the two speeches Kennedy gave in Berlin on 26 June of 1963. The extreme Cold War overtones of the “*Ich bin ein Berliner*” speech delivered in the morning in the Rudolph Wilde Platz were smoothed out in the afternoon, when the President hinted at the possibility of a frank dialogue with the Soviets in his remarks at the Free University.⁶¹

However, if one thing connected the two speeches, this was the vision of a different “Europe” from the “European partner” Kennedy had focused on in the previous year—and on which he was still focused despite his growing doubts. This was in many ways the Europe of his 1937 “grand tour.” This was the “great continent of Europe,” as he called it in his inflammatory morning speech. This was a “larger Europe,” that is “the commonly accepted geography of Europe—west of Asia,” as he explained in his afternoon remarks.⁶²

To be sure, in Kennedy’s public speeches there had always been references to this broader notion of Europe, next to the one aimed at strengthening rhetorically the Atlantic partnership. In a 1961 toast for Italy’s Prime Minister Fanfani, the President recognized that Italy had a “commanding position . . . in the Mediterranean, the southern part of Europe.”⁶³ While Kennedy’s 1962 remarks to Vice-President Johnson on his departure for “Southern Europe and the Near East” were not detailed enough to decipher whether Cyprus was in Europe or not, Turkey had its seat guaranteed in a 1961 speech where the President exalted the success of the “Truman doc-

60 “Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State Saigon, April 17, 1964,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, doc. 18. For similar judgments from the old guard of the Atlanticists, see Weisbrode, *Atlantic Century*, 161.

61 Romero, *Storia della Guerra Fredda*, 242.

62 John Kennedy, “Address at the Free University of Berlin,” 26 June 1963.

63 John Kennedy, “Toasts of the President and Prime Minister Fanfani of Italy,” 12 June 1961.

trine.”⁶⁴ Whereas the President never mentioned Iceland in any of his public speeches, in June 1963 he assured the Irish Parliament that “Ireland is part of Europe.”⁶⁵ Last but not least, the Soviet Union was explicitly mentioned as one of the “countries of Europe” in a May 1961 address to the National Association of Broadcasters.⁶⁶

However, this broader image of “Europe” was used as a vague geographical notion before 1963, to refer to things or processes that took place “in Europe.” With his speeches of 26 June, Kennedy began to indicate that “Europe” as a goal.⁶⁷ And yet, while broadening Europe in geographical terms, Kennedy also left Europe without any clearly defined personality: the equation between “*Ich bin ein Berliner*” and “*civis romanus sum*,” and Kennedy’s claim to be a proud citizen of Berlin, left little autonomy to Europe, squeezed at it was in a new version of the ancient opposition between *romanitas* (the Atlantic community) and *barbaritas* (the communist world).

CONCLUSION

While so far historians of transatlantic relations have mainly identified Kennedy’s Europe in that depicted for the purpose of pushing forward his design for a transatlantic partnership, by 1963 an alternative vision also began to emerge in the President’s rhetoric. Both images of Europe elaborated by the Kennedy administration—the “new Europe” and the “larger Europe”—generally carried a positive connotation. This added to a trend which had begun in the early 1940s and which broke with a long and consolidated US tradition. Besides this, however, there was little in common between the two. One was conceived—at least in principle—as an active

64 Respectively: John Kennedy, “Remarks to Vice President Johnson on His Departure for Southern Europe and the Near East,” 22 August 1962; and John Kennedy, “Remarks and Question and Answer Period at the Press Luncheon in Paris,” 2 June 1961.

65 John Kennedy, “Address Before the Irish Parliament in Dublin,” 28 June 1963.

66 John Kennedy, “Address at the 39th Annual Convention of the National Association of Broadcasters,” 8 May 1961.

67 In one case, the reunification of the “great continent” seemed a very distant objective. In the other case, the President claimed that it was “not too early to think once again in terms of all of Europe, for the winds of change are blowing across the curtain as well as the rest of the world.”

and autonomous player in international affairs. The other was a rather amorphous, albeit larger, entity. The former was supposed to serve ideologically the construction of a partnership between the two roughly equal members of the “Atlantic community.” The latter was supposed to serve Kennedy’s attempts at *détente* with the Soviet Union.

The President did try to show that there existed a potential link between these two alternative visions. In his words, it was the “new Europe of the West—dynamic, diverse, and democratic—[that] must exert an ever-increasing attraction to the people of the East.”⁶⁸ However, in practice, when he began using the image of Europe as the larger continent, the administration was undergoing a phase of growing doubts about the existence of the previously cherished “new Europe.” Kennedy’s—and later Johnson’s—failures in putting in practice the vision of an equal partnership between the United States and “Europe” have often been ascribed to the clash of his vision with the alternative vision supported by de Gaulle. Indeed, de Gaulle’s vision of Europe did represent a major obstacle on Kennedy’s road. However, the analysis carried out in this essay indicates that the Europe Kennedy conceived for the making of the Atlantic partnership was largely imaginary. The understanding of “Europe” was not unequivocal within the Kennedy administration, and old Atlanticist dreams tended to come back to the surface when the Europeanist approach suffered its first setbacks. However, the fact that both images were actually used by the administration during the year 1963, after de Gaulle’s traumatic rejection of Britain’s application to the EEC, seems more the symptom of a certain difficulty in dealing with the subject, than the astute ideological operation of someone who wants to play at multiple tables.

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