Cousins and Strangers: America, Britain, and Europe in a New Century

Chris Patten

February 7, 2006

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Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Public Affairs Programs. Today we are enormously pleased to welcome back one of Europe's most distinguished statesmen. Since his last visit to the Carnegie Council in November 2001, Chris Patten has been an eyewitness to history and has continued to play a role in shaping international politics across the globe.

Our speaker is the former External Relations Commissioner for the European Union. He was the last British governor of Hong Kong. He once served as Member of Parliament for Bath and was chairman of the Conservative Party. Currently, Mr. Patten is the Chancellor of Oxford and Newcastle universities. His book, *Cousins and Strangers: America, Britain, and Europe in a New Century,* is the subject of his lecture this morning.

To introduce Mr. Patten, I am delighted to turn the microphone over to Edward Mortimer, a person who, as many of you know, is no stranger to the Carnegie Council. As a one-time foreign correspondent and foreign affairs columnist for *The Financial Times,* Edward is currently the Director of Communications in the Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations. He has himself been an eyewitness to history on many occasions, influencing and recording it with his elegant prose.

As someone who has known our guest for a very long time and has shared many experiences with him, including a road trip in a Dodge Dart which they took together in the 1960s across America, I know Edward will introduce our speaker with his signature eloquence and the intimacy of an insider. This combination is something that only a very special and lifelong friend can do.

EDWARD MORTIMER: Thank you very much, Joanne.

I apologize for intruding myself on the Books for Breakfast ritual, and particularly curtailing what is very often, I know, the highlight of the program, which is the Joanne Myers introduction. But it does enable her to do a little variation on that, which is the introduction to the introduction. As you noticed, she's even more flattering and charming when she does that.

Last time I introduced a speaker here, it was the late Lord Jenkins, when he came to speak about his biography of Churchill. That, I felt, gave me a kind of prescriptive right: When chancellors of Oxford University come to these hallowed halls, I am the person who introduces them. That's why I asked Joanne if I could say a few words.

In the United Nations, you probably know, there is a new principle called the Bolton Principle, which is that there is no such thing as geographical rotation; the next secretary general will be the best person for the job; and if that person happens to come from Asia, well, that's fine. I doubt the United Nations will

follow this principle, but Oxford does. Although there might be a theory that the chancellor should come from different colleges of the university, to reflect their geographical distance—and other kinds of distance—from each other, we always go for the best man—I'm sorry to say, so far, it has always been the best man, but I'm sure the next one will be the best woman—for the job. It just happens that the best man always comes from a certain college, called Balliol. We had Harold Macmillan, we had Roy Jenkins, and now we have Chris Patten.

That's where I come in, because Chris and I, as Joanne just said, were, as the French say, *condisciples* [fellow students] at Balliol, and we were fellow beneficiaries of a great American benefaction, one of the most imaginative I have ever heard of, which was given by Bill Coolidge—sad to say, now the late Bill Coolidge—of Cambridge, Massachusetts—strictly, of Topsfield, Massachusetts, but he had his laboratories and offices in Cambridge—who used to pay for, I think it was, eight people who had just finished their Balliol courses to spend the vacations in the United States. As you heard, Chris and I went on the road together in 1965, when, probably nobody except us in this room is old enough to remember, Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction" was topping the charts. It wasn't always a Dodge Dart. We changed with our Hertz credit card, and sometimes it was a Mustang. But we always had Barry McGuire on the radio wherever we went.

The difference was that I came back to England after this and started on a rather mediocre academic career and then wandered into journalism. Chris, who actually had in mind to go and work for the BBC, didn't have an immediate rendezvous with them, so he went on to candidate Lindsay's staff in the 1965 mayoral election in this city. It was discovered that he could do an absolutely perfect imitation of Bill Buckley, and this made him invaluable to the campaign. That is the way his political career started.

There is a little bit of a discrepancy in the historical record here, because I think I remember him telling me that he was so excited by this that he wrote to both the leading political parties in Britain telling him about his experience and asking if they had a job. His version—which must be right, because he's the primary source and I'm only the secondary source—is that he had actually been a lifelong Conservative, albeit of a moderate One Nation type.

Anyway, the rest is, as they say, history. You heard it in abbreviated form from Joanne. He rose, I think by 1974, to be head of the Conservative Research Department, appointed to that position by Edward Heath. Margaret Thatcher then came in and fired everybody in the party except the one person on whom it obviously depended, and that was the head of the Research Department. So he remained in that role until the 1979 election.

He wrote many, if not all, of Margaret Thatcher's speeches, as leader of the opposition, which just shows you what a cautious and moderate kind of Conservative she was, until she got elected. He then became Member of Parliament for Bath, a very beautiful city in the west of England. It was his first serious mistake, because a party which I later became a member of—it was called the Liberals—had quite a strong showing there. It's very bad in British politics to be a member for a marginal seat. America has dealt with this. You don't have marginal seats anymore.

But although he rose rapidly through the party and held various important ministerial offices, eventually became party chairman, and won the Conservatives the 1992 election by his shrewd tactics and unscrupulous advertising, he managed to lose his own seat, and therefore was sent into exile as the last governor of Britain's last significant colony. You saw him, I think, on the front of *Time* magazine. You may have lost sight of him since. After a brief period in the wilderness, he became the European Commissioner, and that's what he is going to talk to you about now. I will not delay that any longer. I think you will find that he's a person well worth listening to.

Remarks

CHRIS PATTEN: Thank you very much indeed for that, on the whole, courteous obituary. [Laughter]

It's quite something when you realize that your speech after the introduction is going to be an anticlimax. But it was interesting to hear that Edward has become the ceremonial introducer to chancellors of Oxford

University, albeit shortly before their permanent departure from the post.

I should perhaps explain a little about the elected post of chancellor of Oxford University. Harold Macmillan, my predecessor but one, on one occasion, asked what the chancellor did. They said, "Well, as you know, the vice chancellor actually runs the university; and if you didn't have a chancellor, you couldn't have a vice chancellor." [Laughter]

Roy Jenkins, with his own inimitable command of the language, described the post as one of "impotence assuaged by magnificence." [Laughter] It's not something I mentioned to my wife before I agreed to allow my name to go forward. Enough of that Balliol frivolity.

Let me say one or two things about this excellent book. Groucho Marx, you may recall, said, "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." [Laughter]

Three anecdotes, which, in a way, frame what I have tried to write about in the book:

First of all, the first international political event that I can remember was the British and French invasion of Egypt, the attempt to get rid of somebody described by Harold Macmillan in his diaries as "an Asiatic Mussolini"[Gamal Abdel Nasser]; yet another doomed lesson from Munich which was got wrong. The invasion of Egypt by Britain and France, the two colonial powers, on their last colonial outing, was stopped in its tracks by the United States.

Macmillan had said, "I know Ike. He'll lie doggo." Far from lying doggo, he went with John Foster Dulles to the UN, and a combination of that diplomacy and threatening to pull the plug on the rather emaciated British economy stopped the invasion there and then. President Eisenhower and his senior colleagues were deeply concerned lest there should be too serious an impact on opinion in the Arab world as a result of the invasion. As President Chirac might say if he were with us this morning, "*Autre temps, autre moeurs.*" [Other times, other customs]

The second anecdote: In my second year at Balliol, we were addressed at the annual college dinner by the same Harold Macmillan, who had retired the previous year as prime minister—or, rather, been retired by his doctors. He always subsequently believed that they had given him the wrong health warning, something that prime ministers often feel. He came to Balliol and gave, for the first time, a speech which I and many others heard on numerous occasions. I don't think there's any reason why a politician shouldn't repeat the same speech over and over again when it's a good one. We have all heard Pavarotti singing "*Nessun Dorma*" endless times.

Certainly, the Macmillan speech was extraordinarily powerful. It was about the reasons why he believed that Britain should be a member of the European Union. It pretty well began and ended with the long, hot summer of 1914 and the Edwardian youths who left the study of classical literature and civilization at Oxford, Cambridge, elsewhere, and went off to what Siegfried Sassoon called "the Gethsemane of Flanders."

From my college, in the First World War, 800 young men joined the armed forces, and I think 220 were killed. There were three Victoria Crosses, two posthumous, and two Iron Crosses. That was part of Macmillan's point, that this was a European civil war. My wife's father was killed in the Battle of the Falaise Gap in the Second World War, shortly before she was born. On the memorial plaque at his college, Pembroke, where he had been a great athlete—he was one of the post Chariots of Fire" athletes; he ran in the 1936 Olympics, came fifth to Jessie Owens— on the memorial plaque in his college there are British names and American names and what we used to quaintly call "Dominion" names—Australia, New Zealand, South Africa—and German names.

There was, for Macmillan, for Jenkins, my predecessor who fought in the Second World War, a terrible blasphemy about bringing young men and young women together, to study the humanities at Europe's great universities—to study in what Cardinal Newman called "the umbrageous groves"; what Roy Jenkins used to call "the umbwageous gwoves"—and then they went home and were taught to kill one another.

The third anecdote which frames what I have written in this book draws on my experiences to make some general points about the world we live in. I had just become an MP, and I went off with three others to visit Hong Kong in the summer of 1979. In Hong Kong we were taken up to the border at Lo Wu and looked over the fence at China, and looked at the little village of Shenzhen, a scene which looked as though it came off a Willow Pattern plate—slow-moving barges, duck ponds, peasants up to their knees in water and rice fields. Now you go to look over the border at Shenzhen and, as someone once wrote—actually, I think it was me—it's "Adam Smith out of Hieronymus Bosch."

We then went on to Shanghai. I can remember picking my way down the Bund—I'm keen on traditional jazz, and I wanted to hear the even then elderly jazz band at the Peace Hotel—we picked our way down the Bund in Shanghai at 8:30 at night, literally from one electric bulb that was more or less working to the next. A lot of you will know what Shanghai is like today.

Let me fill in some of the cracks between those anecdotes.

The first reflects the world in which I grew up, in which most of us lived, the world of the *Pax Americana.* Unfortunately, Woodrow Wilson didn't get his own way after the First World War, partly because, I guess, of his own personality; partly because of domestic politics. So it took the Second World War for Europe to be turned away from the sort of 19th-century nationalism which had caused such misery and mayhem in the first half of the 20th century.

Wilsonianism was, I guess, the agenda which Truman and Marshall and Acheson and that extraordinary group of talented and wise, visionary diplomats and political leaders implemented in the years after the Second World War: Wilson's Fourteen Points, America's answer to Lenin and Stalin. It led to the establishment of institutions of global governance and to an attitude to global leadership from which all of us benefited—the establishment of the UN, of the Bretton Woods institutions; the drafting of the UN Declaration of Human Rights; in a way, the first steps towards the establishment of the International Criminal Court. It was an approach to leadership which rested on a number of simple principles.

First of all, we needed a system of rules-based global governance in which, even though it was the case that the United States would play the most prominent part in drawing up the rules, the rules would—usually—apply to the United States, as well as to everyone else. For domestic reasons, there are exceptions—the Genocide Convention and one or two others. But by and large that was true.

There was a second principle, enunciated by George C. Marshall in his famous Harvard commencement address in 1947: The recognition that while capitalism and the rule of law in participative democracy made the best recipe for governing individual countries, it was difficult to preach those values to people who had empty stomachs. That is what the United States recognized, particularly, with the reconstruction from the rubble of post-war Europe.

There was a third recognition as well: Even the greatest power in the world needs partners. But partners, unfortunately, have a tendency to develop opinions of their own, and sometimes you are obliged to listen to those opinions. I think it was a system of governance and an approach to leadership which not only did the rest of us a power of good—so that by the end of the century the world was six times richer than it had been at the middle of the century, and most people in the world lived in democracies of one sort or another—it not only did the rest of us proud, but it was pretty good for America, too. Among other things, it legitimized America's power and shielded America from the world's envy and fear.

At the height of the British Empire, just before we lost you, Edmund Burke, the greatest of all English conservative political philosophers, said, "I dread above all to be dreaded." America wasn't dreaded. America was the "city on a hill." What has been perhaps over-described as American soft power was quite as important as hard power—look at the Helsinki Accords—in destroying Soviet communism and in encouraging the rest of the world to recognize the validity of America's ethical and political argument.

I think it was a surprise for many of us to see that idea assaulted in the 1990s by some who are described as assertive nationalists and others who are described as neoconservatives—though, in my

judgment, there's nothing conservative about trying to throw over a world order which suits you very nicely, thank you. It was sad that they seemed to dominate the agenda in the first term of President Bush's presidency. We must hope that that is behind us, that we haven't seen a movement of the tectonic plates under the Atlantic, and that we will see a restoration of a more traditional approach to global leadership. I think that is enormously important.

But if you're a European, you can't simply contract out of the argument between what I understand are called neorealists and neoconservatives, because, to borrow from Secretary Baker, talking about the Balkans in the 1990s, we actually have a dog in this fight. It's important to us, in Europe and the rest of the world, who actually wins this argument. It's important that what happened from time to time in the early 2000s looks in retrospect like an aberration rather than a new direction for American leadership and policy.

How does Europe fit into all this? How can Europe best assist the United States in the responsibilities that it carries? It's important, I think, to remember that the process of European integration has been for fifty years an American strategic objective. It is very often suggested that the establishment of NATO was on American insistence, and the establishment of the Common Market, which became the European Union, was largely a European creation. Well, it's not quite true to say that that is almost the reverse of the truth, but it's not far from correct to say that. Europeans did want America to stay behind and provide a security shield after the Second World War, but the price on which Americans insisted was that Europe should avoid yet another civil war, that Europe should integrate economically—and therefore, eventually, politically—to prevent another outbreak of 19th-century xenophobic hostility. Monnet and Schuman were always better received in Washington than they were in London.

The reconciliation of France and Germany, lashed together at the heart of this project, gave it its initial moral impulse. I think what has happened in Europe since then has been extraordinary. We haven't been creating a "United States of Europe." The constitutional convention under President Giscard's—how can I put it?—occasionally more than humble or less than humble leadership was not like the Philadelphia Convention. We're not in the process of creating a superpower. We have a falling population, falling share of world trade, falling share of world output, and unless we pull our socks up, a falling underlying growth rate.

But what we have done in Europe is remarkable. The extent to which we have shared sovereignty over practical areas of policy making—trade, economics, commerce, the environment, and so on—is a unique sharing of sovereignty, which enables us to, in my judgment, provide a sort of paradigm for how nation-states have to work together in order to cope with the problems that we face in this century. In order to deal, for example, with the hazards of the dark side of globalization, as well as to make the most of the better side, the opportunities presented by globalization.

It is, like all human creations, imperfect. It has suffered for the last few years from pretty inadequate political leadership. Fortunately, Chancellor Schröder has now moved on to better-paid employment, and President Chirac will not be with us for much longer, not because Edward's going to introduce him, but because I don't think the electorate will take another round.

So I don't think we face in Europe an institutional crisis, but we do need rather more positive political leadership. And what we need is to make it clear to our American friends and allies that we are not rivals of America, that we want to be partners of America; partners who won't always agree, but partners who are prepared to give one another the benefit of the doubt and partners who recognize that the world is better served, and we are better served, when we can work together. Most of the things we want to do as Europeans we are more likely to be able to accomplish if we work with America, and the reverse is almost as true.

The last point. For most of the last half-century, we have taken it for granted in America and Europe that we set the global agenda. The reason for my anecdote about China is that, in my view, we (America and Europe) have to recognize today that that is no longer the case; that we need to work with and through the rising powers in Asia, the great democracy of India, and China, if we are to tackle almost any of the

problems that confront us, from nuclear proliferation to environmental degradation, to the continued opening of markets for trade, and so on.

People sometimes, I think, have been inclined to overlook the importance of India. India is starting to grow much more rapidly. It hasn't done as well as China. The Indian Congress Party have the ill fortune that they have to depend on the Communist Party for their majority and the Indian Communist Party, unlike the Communist Party in China, still believes in communism.

But the Indians are never going to have to make the sort of big political adjustment which, sooner or later, will be necessary in China. China has been the largest economy in the world for eighteen out of the last twenty centuries. It will be again in this century, but it will never be as rich as America or Europe in terms of wealth per head, and anyway, it's going to get old before it gets that rich.

But China is going to be a big player. I don't, myself, believe that we should regard China as a threat. I think China is only a threat if things go wrong in China rather than if they continue to go reasonably well—though, I repeat, sooner or later there will need to be political change in China.

So that's what this book, *Cousins and Strangers,* tries to set out, with a wealth of prejudiced opinions about those I have worked with over the years. Let me just say in passing that sales to the ?lysee Palace and the Kremlin have not been high. [Laughter]

JOANNE MYERS: Thank you very much for that engaging discussion. I would like to open the floor to questions. I just ask that you identify yourself and just wait until the microphone comes.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Chris, I'm not sure you deal with this in your book, but something that is on the minds of a lot of us here who watch Europe and care about Europe is the absorption of immigrants, of the largely Muslim population, across the continent and the difficulties that seem to be there, and how different the experience is in Europe than it has been in this country, which, of course, is a country settled by immigrants. I'm not quite sure what the question is, but I would be interested to hear your views on how that is going and how Europeans might deal with this very volatile situation that confronts them.

CHRIS PATTEN: I think that the politics of immigration are very different in Europe than they are in America, for one reason more than others, and that is population density. If you compare, for example, population densities in my own country with those in the five most populous states in the Union, the figures in England—for example, in the southeast of England—are far higher than they are in even the most densely populated part of the United States. That undoubtedly has an effect.

Perhaps I can say a word or two about this, because it provides a context. I mentioned the demographic factors in Europe earlier. It's interesting that the last pope had a spectacular impact on the political geography of Europe, but hardly any discernible impact on the choices people make as families, particularly in the most Catholic countries. So we see in Europe what you see everywhere in the world, from Catholic Brazil to secular Muslim Turkey to Shi'ite Iran: Wherever there is economic progress, female literacy, and easy access to reasonably cheap contraceptives without moral opprobrium, there is a fall in the fertility rate.

In Europe, the fall is particularly steep in Italy, Poland, and Spain, so that by mid-century, the Italian population will probably be 22 percent lower than it is today; in Poland, 15 percent lower; in Spain, 8 percent lower.

Now, at the same time as that is happening, we are living longer, and there is, I'm told, no reason to suppose that, for health-care reasons or for biological reasons, that tendency is likely to stop. The projection is that Europeans will live 11.8 years longer by mid-century than today, on average. That means that we have an aging workforce, with fewer people in work supporting more people out of work. The number in work will fall by 20 percent by mid-century.

That's the background to the economic issue of immigration. But you could only deal with the economic

effects of demographic change in Italy through immigration by immigration on a scale which would be completely impossible socially and politically. The figures are scores of millions, if you were to try to reconfigure the Italian economy so as to have the same proportion of workforce to retired-from-work that you have today. So while it is true that selective immigration has to be welcomed in Europe, it is not true to say that immigration is the answer to our problems, because we couldn't manage the sort of immigration that we would need economically.

The population of the United States is going to go on growing, largely because of, for the first time in history, not immigration from Europe, but immigration from the Hispanic south and from Asia. Your immigration is going to mean that you will go on growing at about 1 percent more than Europe, whatever the economics and whatever the productivity figures. But we're not in that situation.

What about the immigrants who are in Europe already? Many of them, as you said, are Muslims. There are probably between 12 million and 14 million Muslims in Europe, the largest concentrations in Germany, France, and Britain, all of whom have a slightly different approach to the relationship between citizenship and immigration. In my own country, more people go to mosque on Friday than go to the Church of England on Sunday. Of course, if you add in the other Christian churches, the figures are rather different. But that is what Mr. Rumsfeld would call a "known known."

I was particularly proud of the fact that after the London bombings last summer by a group of young men, at least two of whom seemed to be extraordinarily integrated into the community, into society—I was proud of the fact that after those terrible atrocities, life simply went on, very quickly, as before. There was no huge and pained debate about whether we were getting things right with our migrant community, and there was certainly no targeting of the migrant community as a result of the bombings. I think that, by and large, our approach, in which we have welcomed cultural diversity while declining to give up, quite properly, our own standards of tolerance, has been the right one. It's where the debate about the Danish cartoons comes, I think, at the moment.

France has taken a different view. France assumes that as soon as you arrive in France, you are a French citizen and have to behave like every other French citizen. I am not sure the difference between Britain and France is what accounts for the riots in the French suburbs before Christmas. I think that the most persuasive reason for those riots was French economic policy, and particularly French labor-market inflexibility. If you are called Pierre and you leave school in Paris at 15 or 16 without any qualifications, 20 percent of you won't get a job; if you're called Ishmael, 45 percent of you won't get a job - *quod erat demonstrandum,* as we say at Oxford.

So there are, I think, economic reasons, as much as, if not more than, cultural reasons for social tensions. What, finally—and I could go on about this forever—do we learn from the Danish row at the moment—though it's perhaps unfair to call it the Danish row?

If a British newspaper published cartoons of Jesus dropping bombs on Iraq, I would think it was extraordinarily tasteless. If a British paper published cartoons making fun of the Holocaust, I would think it was spectacularly tasteless. I would not, however, expect the British government to apologize for them, because we live in a tolerant society in which we largely assume that people will know how to behave. We largely assume, to go back to Burke, that people recognize that there is a difference between liberty and license, that liberty must be limited in order to be possessed.

I do think that in the present row over those cartoons it is imperative that Europe assert both a respect for other cultures and religions and a respect for its own principles of tolerance. I don't think we should be asserting in this debate something called "Christian" standards. I think we should be asserting Enlightenment standards and values. I don't think we can give those up without doing our own society enormous, irretrievable damage.

For me—you may think this paradoxical—it all argues even more strongly for something which is going to be even more difficult to achieve in the future—that is, Turkish membership in the European Union. I think Turkish membership in the European Union, provided Turkey does all the things that are required of it—economic and political reform, recognizing its history, the atrocities against the Armenians, the

atrocities against Kurds—provided Turkey recognizes those things, I think Turkey should be a member of the European Union. But it's going to be very difficult to argue that case, and particularly difficult now. I think Turkish membership would help to define and put in a new context our values of tolerance in the European Union and would give us, if you like, a new narrative to replace the narrative which I heard from Harold Macmillan forty years ago.

QUESTION: You have alluded to China's changing role on the world stage, but here in New York, and especially at the United Nations, China's role in recent years has occasionally been pernicious from a human-rights point of view, particularly on crises like Darfur or, more recently, Iran. What prospect do you see for a more responsible, mature, less oil-focused approach from China on the diplomatic stage?

CHRIS PATTEN: It is perfectly true that China's diplomacy has been commodity-driven, particularly energy-driven, in the last few years. I don't say, "parenthetically, completely unlike ours, of course," but I could do so. I think we have to do two things.

First of all, I think we have to draw China and India into sharing in the responsibilities for making the world a more comfortable and decent place. I happen to think that if you are trying to persuade the Chinese to accept a rules-based economic system, it doesn't help for the European Union, after the implementation of the Multifiber Agreement, to suddenly slap curbs on Chinese exports of bras. I think it sends terrible signals. I found myself not very long ago on the receiving end of a lecture on free trade from a Chinese official, which was uncomfortable.

Secondly, if I may say so, I thought that the political decisions here to block the Chinese takeover of Unocal were completely crazy, if you want China to be a responsible partner in discussing how we share out commodities and oil in the future. So I think you have to involve China and India, and not just assume that they will take whatever we decide at the table.

In addition, we have to persuade the Chinese, in particular—though the Indians, too—that failed or failing states are as much of a threat to them as they are to the rest of us. We know that what has blocked progress in Sudan at the UN is largely the threat of a Chinese veto. Why—Because of Chinese oil imports from Sudan, where there are, I think—or there were—4,000 Chinese, quote, security, unquote, officials actually guarding their pipeline. China and India have thrown a blanket of protection over Burma/Myanmar. But these are states whose implosion threatens China and India as much as any of the rest of us. That is something of which we have to persuade those countries.

The immediate test is, of course, in Iran, but there we have to persuade not only China and India to be onside, but a lot of other countries around the world who do not have the same interpretation of Article IV of the Nonproliferation Treaty that we have.

QUESTION: You were just speaking about global governance. I recently read a speech by Kofi Annan, which probably the gentleman at the table wrote, saying that the Security Council needed to be reformed. That was a speech given in London quite recently. Could I have your views on what you think would be necessary reforms, from a European standpoint?

CHRIS PATTEN: There isn't a European standpoint on reform of the Security Council, because France and Britain are both permanent members with a veto and aren't going to give it up. I'm sorry to sound so—I think I was asked this question the last time I was here, and I wasn't able to be quite that honest. But that's the truth of the matter.

It is an area where there isn't a European policy, and a reminder of a blunt truth which I offer, without, I hope, shocking anyone here from any of the twenty-two Member states of the European Union that I don't mention. There is not a European policy on a serious issue unless France, Britain, and Germany agree. When France, Britain, and Germany are all over the place, as was the case on Iraq, there is not a policy. There is a policy on Iran, where France, Britain, and Germany agree, thank God, though that agreement is going to be tested over the coming weeks and months, when we find, in my judgment, that we can't find a solution within the present box.

But on the Security Council, Germany would like a permanent seat on the Security Council, Japan would, and India would, and for a variety of regional and global reasons, nothing is shifting; nothing is happening. I think there were a lot of other changes to the UN which could and should have been made last autumn. But I think that expecting an early change to the Security Council is pursuit of the Holy Grail.

QUESTION: Thank you for a wonderful presentation. Do you see any role for Japan in this current world order?

CHRIS PATTEN: Yes. I'm afraid that in a speech like the brief one I have just made, one tends not to mention Japan, because Japan is our easiest partner. When I was a European Commissioner we used to have twice yearly discussions with the Japanese. Since we had actually resolved most of our trade problems—there were one or two still outstanding on shoes and one or two other matters—we would sit and exchange amiable platitudes about the state of the world and get on terribly well together.

The one area which I think is most unnerving and of most concern for all of us is the tension between Japan and China. I can't, hand on heart, say that it is all China's fault. I still read serious diplomatic magazines containing articles by Japanese diplomats from the 1930s and 1940s, trying to explain away or justify some of the things that happened in China at that stage. I think that is extremely unfortunate.

Franco-German reconciliation, I mentioned earlier, is the cornerstone of European stability and prosperity. Unfortunately, one hasn't seen a similar reconciliation between Japan and China, which is why the United States still has to hold the reins in Asia, until there is that sort of reconciliation. It is important to remember the astonishing generosity and courage of Germany in facing up to its own immediate history. Until there is that sort of reconciliation in Asia, we are going to continue to find Chinese nationalism worrying.

QUESTION: What do you believe are the prospects of Britain adopting the euro, if not in the immediate future, in the foreseeable future?

CHRIS PATTEN: Nil in the immediate future. What is foreseeable? Britain will almost certainly join the Eurozone at just the wrong moment. That is the history of our engagements in Europe.

This is not a live debate in the U.K. at the moment, because the Eurozone economies have been doing badly. The Eurozone economies, partly because of the up-tick in Germany, will, many of them, look better than the British economy in the next two or three years, which is unfortunate for the chancellor of the exchequer [Gordon Brown], because it's at the moment when he hopes to be garlanded with flowers and enter No. 10 as prime minister.

But I guess that the argument will resurface when people start to compare British productivity rates with productivity rates in some other European countries, for example. But when this was a live debate, the opinion polls suggested that the majority didn't want to join the euro, but the majority thought it was inevitable that we would join the euro. I think that's probably still the case today.

QUESTION: The elephant in the living room has not been noticed. Where do we go from here on Iraq? That's an open question, but you know the implications.

CHRIS PATTEN: Yes. I have noted in my book that Iraq was the elephant in the room when we were discussing the evolution of a common European foreign policy, because even though there were frantic arguments taking place here and everywhere else, the one thing that European foreign ministers never, never talked about was policy on Iraq, by and large.

Where do we go from here? Whatever one's thoughts about the invasion of Iraq, whatever position you took on that adventure into what Winston Churchill called the "thankless deserts of Mesopotamia"—and he should know?whatever one's thoughts on all that?and we can draw some lessons, perhaps, for the future—we all have to live with the consequences. There isn't much point in indulging in too much "I told you so." Indeed, I'm quite impressed by the extent to which the critics of the invasion have avoided that.

Where are we today?

We are in a position, I suppose, in which the most we can hope for, devoutly to be wished, is a country which holds together, with, I guess, a pretty weak central government, sufficient to ensure what Sunnis and Kurds and Shi'as regard as a fair distribution of oil revenue, with a sufficient devolution of power for the Sunnis not to feel completely marginalized—in other words, a weak, rather loose federal structure in a polity which is held together.

Will it be a perfect working model of a liberal democracy? Will, for example, the role of women be enhanced? Will there be proper policing and safeguarding of civil liberties and human rights? Will we see the rule of law stamping its authority on the country? Forget it. But if it holds together, we should all thank our lucky stars.

I think that the danger is discovering that the price we have had to pay for getting rid of an extremely evil dictator—not the only one in the world, but one of the worst—is the implosion of the Iraq polity. But maybe I'm wrong. I hope that we can achieve a settlement, an outcome, which holds everything together.

What I can assure you is that whatever happens on the ground in Iraq, there will come a moment when your administration or the next administration will declare victory, and at that point, my own country, with a spectacular demonstration of its sovereignty, will agree that victory has been won, and that we can therefore withdraw our forces. Thus goes the debate on sovereignty in the United Kingdom.

JOANNE MYERS: I just would like to thank Edward for his brilliant introduction, and Mr. Patten, for your refreshingly candid presentation, which will challenge us to think about the issues in the world today. Thank you.