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How should Europe respond to the new America

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How should Europe respond to the new America

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Introduction

To many the crisis in Trans-Atlantic relations in connection with Iraq came as a great surprise. After sweeping changes in political landscape in '90s it seemed that the toughest problems were behind us. What's more – that no state in Europe was threatened by aggression from its neighbors, that any remaining conflicts were of a peripheral character (there remained certain unresolved disputes in the Balkans and the Caucasus); that the relations between NATO and Russia had been regulated (as reflected by the NATO-Russia Council); that all states had declared adherence to the same system of values (a political system based on democracy, market economy, rule of law, and respect for human and minority rights). And that apparently idyllic picture was complemented by the conclusion of the accession negotiations in Copenhagen, leading to enlargement of the Union by ten new members.

This picture was distorted by the US-driven decision to intervene in Iraq without the clear-cut UN Decision and with the strong opposition of some American allies in Europe. The reason is that the Iraq crisis was really only partly about Iraq. The Iraqi crisis in fact was and still is a catalyst. What was really at stake was a set of more fundamental questions that the crisis brought to the surface that stem from the evolving international system.

The emergence of new international system:

The issue of external enemy. For the first time in its history, the Atlantic Alliance does not have a clearly identified threat – such as the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Neither Iraq nor Al-Qaeda are perceived in Europe as anything approaching a classical aggressor.

New international security environment. The nature and source of security threats has changed. It is a paradox, but the greatest source of threat nowadays is uncertainty, unpredictability and instability. The enemy is hard to define and it significantly differs from the classical model. The international system of security is challenged not so much by powerful and aggressive states – but by an explosive combination of four components:

First – these are weak, declining or failed states, incapable of controlling the situation on their territories; at the heart of this problem is both bad governance, corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability which – as Javier Solana noted rightly in

his report on *A secure Europe in a better world* – corrode states from within and contribute to regional insecurity.

Second – these are non-state, but highly influential criminal structures conducting illegal activity (e.g. massive trafficking in humans, arms, narcotics etc.) and they are in position to finance international terrorism or to support aggressive separatist movements, thus undermining stability in various regions;

Third – there is a category of despotic dictatorial states, which possess weapons of mass destruction or are seeking to obtain them;

Fourth – a major new threat is posed by the growing danger of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other arms and weapons. Due to the erosion and gradual degradation of various multilateral structures - within the framework and also outside the UN system (e.g. the Geneva Disarmament Conference or the role of the OSCE in Vienna). There is a need to revitalize the effectiveness of the universal security bodies.

Economic, military and technological superiority of the United States. Never in history has a power attained such a global superiority over the other actors on the international scene (suffice to say that the United States accounts for more than forty per cent of the world's arms expenditures, and the planned annual increment of such spending exceeds the total military budget of Great Britain).

New position of Germany in Europe and the world. Over ten years after reunification, Germany – though feeling the adverse or counterproductive economic effects of unification – is a power without equal in Europe. Germany is governed by a generation of politicians who were actively involved in the “revolt of the young”, which left a deep imprint on the generation of 1968. The significance of that stems from the fact that the subordination of Western Europe to American policy during the Cold War was a necessity dictated by the real threat of Soviet expansion. Today, Europe and Germany want to replace subordination with an equal and competitive partnership. Europe fears the consequences of an American intervention in Iraq, not an invasion from the East. The leaders and societies of Western Europe were concerned that a military operation and American occupation of Iraq would be countered by a wave of terrorist attacks, primarily in the major urban centers of Germany and France. The presence of sizable Moslem minorities in both countries has obvious bearing on decisions concerning military involvement in the Middle East. And – last but not least – there is a different perception of the threats in Europe and the United States, especially after September 11, 2001.

Let me address now four fundamental issues that the Iraqi crisis brought to the fore:

The first has to do with the appropriate role of American power; the second – with the conditions under which the use of force is lawful and legitimate; the third – with the role and authority of international institutions and the fourth – with preferred instruments for pursuing common objectives.

Views on these fundamental issues diverge not only between the US and Europe but also within Europe itself. Let me address them briefly:

The role of the US

Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, in an address at the National Defense University in Washington (Jan.13, 2003), said that the leadership of America is not being questioned, nor is the way it is being exercised. However, "...it should be clearly said that in order to be effective it has to be cooperative and based upon rules acceptable to all parties. If these rules are not applied, then leadership can be perceived as hegemony or domination. To avoid this – said President Kwaśniewski – one should talk with others, listen to them and learn their arguments..."

I would like to draw your attention to one worrisome feature. In the past the process of European integration has been strongly supported by the US. It is clear that without the US vision and assistance the founding fathers would have had enormous difficulties bringing their project about. There are some statements now signaling that in the US the scepticism and question-marks about the further progress of European political, military and economic integration is growing, particularly as far as the ESDP is concerned. Even more worrisome are opinions that the EU and its integration process is a threat to American power and interests as it could act more effectively to impose its preferences. This shall not be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Legitimate and lawful use of force

There is a need to develop an international legal framework allowing for quick and meaningful action to deal effectively with threats. It should be a compromise between an European desire for legitimate action with respect to international law and US desire to deal with threats effectively.

Javier Solana's paper "A Secure Europe in a better world" is an important step in this direction. He identifies in it terrorism, proliferation of WMD, failed states and organised crime as the main new challenges which Europe will face in the coming years. One can find the

same threats on the American top-five list. Common approach in this area will undoubtedly bear fruit for the benefit of both the EU and the US. First steps have already been taken, for example by anticipated co-operation in the field of non-proliferation of WMD and delivery systems (announced at the EU-US summit) discussed at the meetings in Madrid and recently in Brisbane and most recently in Paris as follow-up to the President Bush Proliferation Security Initiative presented in Cracow (30 May 2003).

The role and authority of international institutions

International institutions - in order to play a significant role have to reflect in its structures and functions - the real stakes of its members. Their functioning cannot be based exclusively on the legal framework without real monitoring and scrutiny mechanisms. They also have to provide answers to real challenges and threats. The Iraqi crisis showed the weakness of major global institutions and also an inadequate way to transform them, the UN being the most questioned.

The debate about the reform of the UN has a long history. However, there is a qualitatively new attempt developed by Poland to adapt the UN to the challenges of the XXIst century not through internal changes but through an external input. Poland proposed to elaborate a New Political Act of UN for the XXIst century, which will contain rules and principles of conduct for members and organisation, adequate for the challenges and threats of new century. It will be like the New Testament, that without replacing the Old Testament, introduced new norms and values.

Of particular importance in discussing the shape of a new political document are in my view the following questions:

- How to strengthen the United Nations as a community of shared values and how to ensure the strict observance and effective application on the part of the Member States, in that context we consider that the notion of the Community of democracies is one of the useful instruments promoting the shared values.
- How to adjust the United Nations to deal with totally new security challenges changing the paradigm of security, in particular international terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; we are frequently and increasingly confronted with a number of situations where traditional concepts turn from tool to the hindrance.
- The management of globalization is still a task where the UN would have to find new institutional and conceptual responses giving effect to the principle of solidarity.

- The emergence of new phenomena like “weak” and “failed” states exposed the lack of adequate mechanism on the part of the United Nations.
- The network of international organisations is much more dense than when the UN Charter was drafted; new guidelines for division of labour may be helpful; in addition the growing role of non-state actors including civil society is not yet duly reflected in the normative arrangements for the UN activities.

The EU and the United States

Let me start with a general observation: The EU-US dialogue has always been rather lightly institutionalised. This has been the paradox of the last decades. As the European Union itself pursued further integration and is it proposed new framework of co-operation to its immediate neighbours, the EU-US relations have followed a more flexible organisational pattern.

I think we should preserve that approach. There is a need to consult each other permanently; there is a need to explain each other's position and communicate before we form opinions. The draft European Security Strategy is an example where we should at an early stage continue to exchange views with our American partners. The dialogue cannot be confined to the governments and administrations but shall include both parliaments and broader public.

One of the key issues on the up-dated transatlantic agenda will be to develop ways and means to construct the effective multilateralism which the Solana paper rightly identifies as one of the EU's priorities. What has been observed in the last couple of years, is an attempt to re-define the international order, so as to address the contemporary challenges.

Unilateral definition of one's own policy does not suffice anymore. There is a lesson to be learnt. The US has to get used to the presence of the EU ever-assertive in the area of external relations and ever-active on the international arena, and consequently willing to share joint responsibility. Both American and European projects cannot be of unilateral nature as they are not realised in a political vacuum.

NATO and The Transatlantic Community

NATO is and should remain the key organisation responsible for the collective defence and security of the Euro-Atlantic community. It also has the best possible potential to conduct out-of-area operations. This is what we should remember in Europe. On the other hand, our American partners ought to recognise that the European Union's perspective on

security issues is evolving. The Union is becoming more and more prepared and capable of carrying out crisis management operations, including even pre-emptive engagement. There is no division of labour and I don't think it would be wise to define such a division of labour. These two structures have to be seen as mutually reinforcing, interlocking and supporting each other. There is a need to adapt them to the changing requirements of the day and the evolving new political and security environment.

We are ready to consider initiatives that will serve the objectives of the European Union and could help improve its military capabilities. We could consider certain flexibility in developing and improving capabilities. Since not all member states are ready and able to get engaged in all areas it should be possible to have recourse to different forms of closer co-operation with a limited number of partners. Nevertheless in our opinion this process should be based on the principle of inclusiveness and no-discrimination.

Having said that, we would be happy to consider initiatives that would improve SHAPE's ability to meet the EU need under "Berlin plus" while improving transparency between the two organisations. We welcome the Italian-British proposal that foresees the establishment of *EU integrated centre/EU planning cell* within SHAPE.

Those, who are mainly concerned with strengthening the position of Europe, should realise that gradual replacement of US capabilities in NATO with European capabilities, but nevertheless keeping NATO's structure, could be a more effective way of building a European security system, without the US leaving NATO.

In the view of the US democratic opposition "one of the most striking consequences of the Bush administration's foreign policy tenure has been the collapse of the Atlantic Alliance" (R. Asmus: *Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance*. "Foreign Affairs", Sept/Oct. 2003, p. 20). There is no need to say that this sharply critical, politically motivated evaluation is over-exaggerated beyond common sense. The author is right, however in his concluding comment: "if the United States and Europe can agree on a common strategy to meet the challenges of the new era, the world will be much better for it."

FINAL REMARKS

Finally let me address the question posed in the title. I am afraid it will be disappointing since I don't have a clear and simple answer on how to shape our policy towards our main partner. Alas, it would be a mistake to believe that anyone possesses such simple and magic formulas.

In seeking such answers, we should be guided by 3 rules, or criteria:

- taking into account the aspirations of those powers that want strong leadership and can back up their aspirations with their potential;

- taking into account the position of those states that fear domination of the big powers and oppose any form of directorate;
- being aware, that the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union are together the only multilateral institutions that can facilitate, in an optimum way peaceful development and prosperity while guaranteeing our security.

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The Center (Polish abbr. CSM) is an independent, non-government think tank providing advice and ideas on the Polish foreign policy and the key issues of international politics affecting Poland. CSM acts as a political consultant, permanently monitors government actions in foreign policy and reviews Poland's current international position. For this purpose, we bring forth reports and analyses, organise conferences and seminars, publish papers and books, run research projects and set up thematic working groups. In the many years of our activity, we have attracted an expert circle of regular contributors and have provided a foreign policy discussion forum for politicians, parliamentarians, central and local government officials, journalists, scholars, students and representatives of other NGOs. We believe that the challenges of Polish foreign policy justify our support for the public debate on international policy issues in Poland.

The founder and president of the Center for International Relations is Mr. Janusz Reiter.

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