



Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych
Center for International Relations

Crisis or cooperation?

The transatlantic relationship at a watershed.

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Contribution to the panel discussion on
"Europe and the US – common values, common interests?"
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The initial question as to whether transatlantic relations à la Charles Kupchan are heading towards an "amicable divorce" matches similar questions which a growing number of skeptics on both sides of the Atlantic have been asking recently.

I would like to counter this view with the following basic argument: I believe that transatlantic relations are just as important to Germany now as they were in the past, and this applies even more so to Europe. None of the major problems facing the world could be easier resolved if Europe and the US were to oppose each other. Incidentally, that goes not only for military and economic issues but, ultimately, also for those related to our democratic culture and even environmental protection. If Europe and the US were to oppose each other, this would jeopardize the chance of achieving security and democracy in many parts of the world. I foresee neither an end to the West nor an end to the transatlantic alliance. Those who, in agreement with Oswald Spengler, predict the "decline and fall of the West", will be proved wrong. However, we find ourselves in the midst of a phase of adjustment and reorientation. Whenever facts and thinking changed in the past, the West was forced to redefine itself time and again, too.

Even more than during the Cold War, we – the West – represent a challenge to other parts of the world, indeed the West prompts them to question how they think and act. The impact of Western ideas and our way of life has never been limited in geographical terms but, rather, has always been global in scale. Democracy, human rights and enlightenment are ideas for the world. I support these ideas and their impact. I am thus opposed to cultural and value relativism. And that also means that dictators, those who commit genocide, as well as religious and political fundamentalists, rightly feel that our Western ideas and policies cast doubt on the legitimacy of their actions.

In view of the development which Europe has undergone in the last few years and decades, it is understandable if there is growing concern, particularly in the US, that Europe is transforming itself into a second rival pole within the West. In the final analysis, I do not believe there is any real danger that Europe will endeavor to define itself in opposition to the US. There will be no majority for this following the enlargement of the European Union. Defining Europe in opposition to the US would not be in Germany's interests. However, I would also like to contradict those in the US who believe that Europe's increased strength in the sphere of foreign and security policy is a negative development. The opposite is true! Europe's lack of effectiveness is one of the central problems in transatlantic relations. A Europe incapable of taking effective action would have little global influence and would be of little interest to the US as a partner. The US would lose interest in a weak Europe. A weak Europe would also weaken transatlantic ties and thus, in the long run, undermine the standing of the US as a

global power. A Europe which, as a result of its weakness, sees no hope of exerting influence on the US would, out of a sense of frustration, turn either away from or even against the US. Comments from the US implying that Germany is irrelevant have diminished rather than increased the readiness of the German public to support American initiatives.

It is because I want to strengthen the basis for a joint transatlantic future that I am in favor of making Europe more effective. That also goes for the military sphere. In keeping with the sentiment expressed by Joe Nye of Harvard University, I would like to add: the US is the only true global power in the military sphere. In the economic field, it is one power among many. In economic terms, however, the European Union is almost equal in weight, while in terms of population and its share in world trade it is more important. At the level of societal and non-state players, the US used to be more attractive than any other country in the world. Not military power but, rather, its attractiveness was its strongest advantage. After all, "soft power" is also a form of power. In the light of current developments in the US, Joe Nye has warned America that it must not lose its social and political appeal by flexing its military muscle too much, thus objectively also losing power, which is more than just military might. I share this concern.

The idea that the world is by nature invariably a place in which states have to be rivals, in which for that reason a state's security dilemma can only be lessened by increasing its power and cannot be resolved by an alliance of different states linked by a common legal order or values, has a long history. I consider this idea, which has many advocates in the US today, to have been largely proved wrong by Europe's post-war development even if the traditional logic of power still holds sway over many parts of the world. In common with American realists and in contrast to many Europeans, I am convinced that the deployment of military power is sometimes unavoidable. However, unlike these American realists, I am also convinced that, with the prospect of a new reality in line with post-war developments in Europe, we can change our world. Indeed, we should not abandon hope of being able to change the world. Otherwise, politics would be reduced to meaningless action without the goal of creating a better world. It will take generations until fundamental changes can be brought about in other parts of the world. However, acceptance of the reality of power and the pursuit of the rule of law, realism and teleological action do not exclude one another.

The transatlantic relationship is changing. I would ask everyone not to regard changes as negative from the outset, or as a sign of crisis. For example, the shift in Germany's geostrategic location after 1989 has given rise to unavoidable changes. If we were to hold on to the modes of conduct and ideas which reflected Germany's geostrategic location during the Cold War despite these geostrategic changes, we would undermine rather than strengthen the

partnership across the Atlantic. I would therefore like to see a new Atlanticism established by reforming transatlantic policies and transatlantic institutions (in particular, NATO).

November 9, 1989 and September 11, 2001 changed Europe, transatlantic relations and, ultimately, the world as a whole. The peaceful revolution of 1989 transformed Europe, which had been divided for many decades, and reunited Germany. The second key date is September 11, 2001. The acts of terrorism committed that day accelerated and changed international developments. New threats were recognized. The experience of September 11 led to a new view of the world, first in the US and then in Europe, too. The altered awareness in the US following September 11 was underestimated by many Europeans at first.

What has changed strategically? I want to mention just a few points and then conclusions. Firstly, before 1989 Germany had been at the heart of a global conflict for fifty years. It was therefore only logical for J.F. Kennedy, as the representative of a global power which was also a local protecting power in Berlin, to say that he was proud to be a citizen of Berlin. Now that the Cold War is over, Germany is fortunately no longer at the center of a global conflict. What is more, the centuries-old German question has been resolved by united Germany's membership of the EU and NATO in a stable European peaceful order. Both sides of the Atlantic should rejoice that Germany is no longer a source and cause of crisis. Seen in this context, comments by representatives of the US Administration that Germany has become less relevant lose some of their original polemic harshness.

For the British and French, America's new strategic orientation does not require the same fundamental change in thinking and actions as it does for us. Until 1989, German soldiers were not deployed in military missions outside German territory. I believe that Germany should think increasingly in global terms when it comes to foreign and security policy and that it should also act globally on a selective basis. However, we must decide when we want to act and when not. In view of our limited resources we will have to consider this very carefully and we will only be able to take military action very selectively. Unfortunately, we will also often have to weigh up interests against morality whenever our limited resources and influence prevent us from combining them in an ideal fashion. After all, we must also decide whether, like some of our NATO partners, we want to make decisions on military deployment primarily at national level or whether we always want to make missions dependent on a UN vote, on an EU or NATO context or on transatlantic consensus. I am certain that, on the basis of its interests as well as commonsense, Germany will continue to decide against giving precedence to decisions at national level.

However, the change in Germany's strategic situation and the reorientation of the US has presented German policy, as well as the political thinking of most Germans, with new challenges. The military dimension of German foreign policy will have to be further developed. Ultimately, there is agreement on this in the Bundestag and the German Government. However, the question of the framework within which we Germans want and have to act will keep on arising. And due to its geostrategic location, its integration in NATO and the EU, as well as its history, multilateralism and international law play a greater role for Germany than for the US when it comes to weighing up interests and objectives rationally. For us, multilateralism is a must, while for the US it is one of many options. This difference in perspective is not new but it was cast in high relief by the Iraq war.

The new challenges and Germany's new situation will influence and change our foreign and security policy culture, as well as the decisions our country makes. Through its actions, the US can have either a positive or a negative influence on this process of creating a new security culture in Germany. It is also crucial now that we ourselves constructively influence the process of adjusting to the new realities by engaging in an even more intensive transatlantic dialogue.

Thank you very much.

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