

Transatlantic Partnership – Renew, do not Dissolve

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The forthcoming, almost simultaneous EU and NATO enlargements are not simply a coincidence. They both mark the end of the Cold War and the division of Europe, and they are both parts of the same successful strategy for Europe. One of the major political questions, however, is what the relation between the two organizations will be and if and how the two are going to cooperate in the future. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the NATO was the only organization able to guarantee security in Europe. Furthermore, for the young democracies in the Middle and Eastern Europe it was also a warrant of balance of power in Europe. Obviously, the basis of this equilibrium was the EU itself, an ingenious system, which every country, independent of its size, could identify with. The actual role of NATO in this balanced system was to prevent the security policy in Europe from being nationalized again. This reason for American presence in Europe is definitely losing its priority. Nevertheless, Europe still needs stable security policy but a reorganized one. The threats facing Europe have to be redefined as well. The war on the Balkans showed the weakness of the European security system and triggered the discussion on the new security policy in Europe that would reduce the shameful dependence of the USA. However, the European Union faces a dilemma; it can either act as individual national states and let the security policy provoke new rivalries, or it can stop acting at all and thus gradually lose its authority. There is still another alternative, namely the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The Iraq war showed fundamental differences between American and European understanding of foreign policy, which, however, did not have to lead to a political conflict. Especially the German diplomacy could have done more to prevent it. Instead, both Germany and France seemed to want to use the conflict situation to create a new, independent, European identity. Another question is whether Washington did not force its European partners to make this hard decision. The Iraq conflict made also the differences among the European countries themselves visible. Poland belongs to those countries, which define their security policy in a different way than Germany and France. Who knows Polish history should be aware of the fact that it is not wise to put Poland before the choice between Europe and America in the matter of security policy. Poland acts according to its bitter historical and geographical experience in the past, which should find understanding among the Western European countries. Polish diplomacy, on the other hand, made a mistake not explaining its

position and particularly its reasons for supporting America in Iraq, and thus giving an impression that it simply followed an anti-European reflex.

Although the transatlantic conflict has already lost its sharpness, it is still not resolved. All parties have solely got the chance to reconsider their positions and draw consequences for the future. The cultural differences will not disappear even after the new presidential elections. Nevertheless, America and Europe have common interests in different parts of the world. Ukraine, the Caucasian Region, the Central Asia as well as the Greater Middle East, to name only a few, are regions where the NATO and the EU can complement their efforts in order to ensure democracy and peace. The common Iran-initiative of Great Britain, France and Germany is a proof that the Europeans can and want to take on more responsibility. In order to make it possible a German Diplomat, Karsten Voigt, suggests reconciling the two principles of power and law. The Americans should consider making their security policy a subject to legislation, the Europeans, on the other hand, could add a particle of power into theirs.

Iraq does not have to remain the site of conflict between America and Europe, it can also create an opportunity for reconciliation and cooperation. The NATO involvement in Iraq should not be perceived as a rescue mission for the coalition powers, but as an international responsibility for the stabilization of Iraq and other regions in the world.

The transatlantic relations must be readjusted to the new conditions, however, the NATO should remain the security alliance for both America and Europe. In this context, the European attempts to play a more independent role in the world politics should not be perceived as a destructive power. On the other hand, the European independence must not be reduced to an immature desire of emancipation. America and Europe do not only have common values, they also have common enemies, which can be best fought against by means of common efforts in the security policy.