
Europe's Role in the World

By
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I have been asked to speak about “Europe’s Role in the World” and you have sought an outside perspective, albeit that of a close Ally. Now how close is that? Let me assure you that there is no closer partnership in the world than that between the United States (U.S.) and Europe. The U.S. and Europe do not constitute a single polity. But we do form a single community of values, interests, and responsibilities. Our roles in the world are not the same, but they are inextricably close, by choice but also by our very natures. We may play different positions, but we do play the same sport, and we are on the same team. Our identities are bound up by our commitments to human rights, rule of law, freedoms of religion and the press, and to market economics. The U.S. and Europe are centers of power, wealth and, have special responsibility to help our fellow human beings and, yes, help shape the world.

This is not simply altruism. An open, prospering world, increasingly characterized by the rule of law and deepening democracy, is better for us all, and far better than a closed world of hostile ideologies and spheres of influence. We have also learned the hard way, that events in far off corners of the world, in failed states, will affect us. There is little that we can do by ourselves. There is much we can do together. Where we cooperate and collaborate, we generally succeed. This is the case from Kosovo to Afghanistan. And I sleep better at night when I know America embarks on a mission with Europeans at our side.

This optimistic picture of transatlantic relations flies in the face of conventional wisdom about transatlantic rifts. But there is more popular support for the transatlantic alliance than the punditry in Europe and America often realize or are willing to admit. Poll after poll reveals a popular mandate for Europe and America to work together on the major issues confronting our societies.

Let me cite a German poll, that of the Bertelsmann Foundation, that has just come out, which shows that vast majorities on both sides of the Atlantic want transatlantic cooperation on issues as far ranging as democracy promotion, proliferation prevention, climate change, and energy security. A large majority in Germany, 73 percent, want to see both of us working together to prevent countries such as Iran from developing nuclear weapons. That figure rises to 74 percent in Spain, and to 79 percent in Finland. American support for that is 81 percent. When it comes to the supposedly controversial subject of promoting democracy worldwide, 84 percent of Germans want to work together with America to this end. That is ahead of the 72 percent support in the U.S. but behind that of Spain at 85 percent. Germans, Spanish and Americans have statistically identical views on the need for transatlantic cooperation to promote energy security, 80, 83, and 81 percent respectively. Across eight European countries, only an average of 4 percent said they did not want, and did not support, closer cooperation between the United States and Europe.

Bertelsmann’s own conclusion was that:

There is a clear mandate among the citizens of Europe and the U.S. for close transatlantic cooperation. Both parties see the other side as a vitally important partner.

I take pleasure in this endorsement for the core of my own country’s foreign policy toward Europe today, which calls for cooperation in resolving common problems we face throughout the world.

This mandate was endorsed last week by our leaders, at the European and U.S. Summit. Our leaders agreed to:

- Support determination of final status of Kosovo, supervised independence, where we both have troops under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- Coordinate security and civilian support for Afghanistan, where we also have troops under NATO
- Consider additional sanctions in Sudan, to put pressure on that government so that it ends the genocide in Darfur
- Promote the rights of the Cuban people, who deserve democracy no less than we
- Advance cooperation on energy security and climate change

We signed the following:

- A Framework for Transatlantic Economic Integration. The Framework is ambitious and substantive, and it is the original initiative of Chancellor Merkel. It will greatly reduce regulatory obstacles to building a genuine transatlantic economy, already the most robust in the world.
- A U.S. and European Union (E.U.) Air Transport Agreement. The Air Transport Agreement will allow every U.S. and E.U. carrier to fly between every city throughout the E.U. and the U.S.
- An agreement on exchange of classified information between the U.S. and the E.U.

Our declaration on energy security and climate change paves the way for concrete practical cooperation that can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, an environmental crisis of our time. We have made progress because we have made efforts. From the start of his Second Term, President Bush has reached out to Europe. Europe has reached back, and our relations are again on a strong footing. In the time remaining to the current U.S. administration, we will work with Europe together on many challenges i.e., Iran, Lebanon, Israel-Palestine.

I want to discuss today two longer term challenges.

- One is conceptual and organizational we need an integrative approach to global crises, one that brings together military capabilities and reconstruction and development.
- The second is strategic we need to find a framework for working with, and dealing with Russia, a great nation that deserves respect and with which we seek cooperation, but about whom we have concerns and with whom we have some differences.

On the first challenge, I am not talking about a division of labor between soft and hard power. Like talk of Mars and Venus, this tends to draw divisive lines. In fact, we all need to exercise both powers. The world remains a dangerous place. We have to sharpen all tools at our disposal and learn to work in an integrative, comprehensive fashion. The use of force is no virtue, but it may be our necessity. Force by itself will not bring success. But those who pretend we can dispense with force altogether are deluding themselves. Let us recall a field where our forces and our civilian agencies are equally involved Afghanistan. We need military means to confront and, yes, take out the Taliban. Success does not come from battles, however, but from schools and roads and good governance and jobs. We need teachers. But we need security forces to protect the teachers from the Taliban who could descend into town under cover of darkness and kill them.

Challenges Europe and the U.S. face in the early 21st century may well include those in which insecurity and dysfunctionality are linked, and we need integrated tools of security and development to meet them. We have to think of this conceptual framework, and apply the real world lessons we are learning in Afghanistan, as we sort through the institutional questions of NATO, the E.U., the U.N., World Bank and the other organizations we turn to, work with and are part of.

We must overcome habits of mind and policy and bad habit. To be blunt, we need to overcome the stigma that many in Europe attach to the use of force, and we need to see it as sometimes integral to our efforts to support human development. And to be equally blunt, America must recommit to what some in my country still refer to derisively as “nation building.” And we must do away with rivalries that have kept our best instruments from working together. The inability of the E.U. and NATO to work together is no longer just a nuisance: it costs lives and threatens our success where we cannot afford failure.

I hope that at the end of the current U.S. administration, we can resolve to put aside institutional theology in favor of integrated effort. Can we agree, for example, on the following?

- Total, unrestricted cooperation on the ground between E.U. and NATO operations and activities. Our principles should be transparency, coordination, and integrated action, not institutional separation.
- Greater strategic coordination among NATO and E.U. leaders, 21 countries are in both organizations. Our Foreign Ministers have a strategic discussion over dinner every three to four months. Why not Foreign Aid Ministers, Defense Ministers, or even Prime Ministers? And can we support Javier Solana and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer leading this effort, instead of imposing limits upon them?
- And finally, we need regular, practical coordination between NATO and E.U. staffs in Brussels and not, under the cover of darkness, but as an authorized activity backed by both organizations.

Now let me turn to Russia, even more on our minds this week than usual. Russia and the West have dealt with one another sometimes well, more often uneasily, since at least Peter the Great. It would be hubris to proclaim some policy to resolve overnight the relationship between Russia and the West. We have had some spectacular differences with Russia recently:

- Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)
- Estonia
- Missile Defense
- Persistent differences, increasingly over democracy
- Additional differences may arise, possibly over Kosovo

But let us be steady. It is long-term partnership with Russia that we seek, and not simply management of difficulties. Let me suggest some principles for relations with Russia through what will be a complicated period as Russia moves toward an expected transfer of power this year and early next. If one is tactical, the United States and the E.U. should cooperate with Russia when at all possible, push back only when necessary, and at all times be realistic about Russia. In this regard, encouraged by the wise advice of Chancellor Merkel, the U.S. is intensifying strategic dialogue with Russia, on CFE, missile defense, and post-START arrangements. Secretary of State Rice and Secretary of Defense Gates have agreed to a “two-plus-two” format with their counterparts, suggested by the way by the

Russians, to consider these issues. We seek common approaches on missile defense, not rhetorical sparring.

A second principle is values based: we should be clear about what sort of Russia we want to see emerge from its unfinished transformation. We do not want a weak Russia. This does nothing for America or, I dare say, nothing for Europe. But a strong Russia must be strong in 21st century, not 19th century terms. In this century, a strong state must include a strong civil society, an independent media, a strong independent judiciary, and a market economy regulated by independent state institutions. On this basis, a nation may build the rule of law, which makes a good life possible. A strong center is part of this healthy mix, but a strong center in a state of weak institutions, is not.

We should be realistic about Russia. This starts with the understanding that Russia even today is freer than under the Communists, and arguably freer than at any time under the Tsars. But Russia is a great country and it can do better than that low standard.

We, the Europeans and Americans, have a stake here. History suggests a link between a nation's internal arrangements and values on one hand, and its external behavior on the other. Democracies have their flaws, but are apt to be better neighbors and better actors generally.

A third principle is that we should approach Moscow as friend and potential ally everywhere in the world, but we should not pay a price for cooperation, nor indulge Russia when it behaves as if a residual sphere of influence over its neighbors is its due. Europe and the U.S. should continue to speak out honestly and if necessary frankly about the use of political and economic pressure against smaller, vulnerable neighbors, such as Estonia and Georgia.

Countries like Estonia and Georgia have their own responsibilities to build better relations with Russia. Estonia should continue to reach out to its Russian community, not because it is pressured to do so, but because Estonia is a democracy and respects the rule of law, and such outreach is the right thing to do. President Ilves has made clear his commitment to such a positive approach.

Georgia should avoid the temptation of adventurism, and continue to work toward peaceful, responsible resolution of the separatist conflicts on Georgian territory. President Saakashvili has recognized his responsibility in this regard. We should all support Georgia as it deepens its reforms at home and, on that basis, seeks to draw closer to the transatlantic family and our institutions.

Russia has its own responsibilities, including the recognition that the countries that emerged from the Soviet empire, such as Estonia and Georgia, are truly free and sovereign. America, Germany, and Europe have responsibilities of our own to recognize that there is no grey zone in Europe, no implicit sphere of influence for Russia, no outside veto over the fate of these newly free countries. They must be free and responsible to write their own history, for good or ill, whether with us, based on their own readiness to share our values and join our family, or otherwise.

Today is May 9, 2007, when Russia celebrates Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. That victory was heroic, purchased at terrible price. The U.S. recognizes Russia's strong feelings about it. My country will always remember its wartime alliance with Moscow and we honor the courage and sacrifice of Soviet soldiers in defeating Nazi Germany. But Russia must find ways as well to recognize that while Russians' feelings are strong and have validity, so do the feelings of some others, especially those whose liberation from the Nazis did not mean freedom.

Relations with Russia are likely to remain a complex mix of partnership, some friction, some perceived competition, but hopefully growing partnership for some time to come. We cannot resolve all our differences in the next twenty months. But we can, perhaps, put relations with Russia on a productive, frank, and, given my country's electoral calendar, bipartisan footing.

There is much the U.S. and Europe can and must do in the world. In all our endeavors, neither the U.S. nor Europe can go it alone. Unilateralism, isolationism, appeasement none of these approaches ever works to the long-term good. The sterile indulgence of Euro-bashing or, its twin, anti-Americanism, should join other “-isms” in the dust bin of history. America in the world needs Europe and, may I suggest, Europe needs America. Our task is not to put our relationship on the Freudian couch and anxiously take its temperature every few weeks, but to put it to work in the world to resolve the problems only we can resolve together:

- Peace and security
- The advance of prosperity
- The common challenge of climate change and energy security
- The fight against disease and poverty, and misery