

FEATURES

BETWEEN KOSOVO AND IRAQ: THE PROCESS OF REDEFINING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

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European-American relations are a subject on which there is both good and bad news to report. The good news is that NATO still exists. There is an old European saying that military alliances disappear when the reasons for which they were built disappear. When the Cold War ended, everybody thought that there might be a danger that NATO would disappear; today we know that this did not happen. Regarding the economic side of the transatlantic relationship, there also is good news to report: Although everybody is talking about trade with China, a look at direct investments shows that Europe is the most important investor in the United States, and the US is by far the biggest investor in Europe, in all parts of the European Union. Europeans and Americans have their disputes, but if we look at basic principles, we will understand immediately how close we are. This is the good news.

If we look at the transatlantic relationship with the cold eyes of the political realist, however, there also is bad news to report. On the one hand, the EU has been in a very complicated situation ever since the French and the Dutch voted to reject the European constitution. On the other hand, the United States, the indispensable leader of the free world, is also in a difficult situation. If I wanted to put it more provocatively, I would say: Europe is weak and the United States is blind. This is not a good perspective for the transatlantic relationship.

Let me outline how we arrived at this situation, and let me also outline what I think must be done. Both sides of the Atlantic are still struggling with the end of a historical period. It all started with the collapse of the Soviet empire. November 9, 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, was an unforgettable moment of joy. I don't believe that I will ever again experience as positive a political emotion as I did then. The Wall came down: a military border where people were shot when

they tried to cross it. Dictatorial regimes disappeared almost overnight. The velvet revolution in Prague, the round table in Warsaw, the Solidarity movement: all this was a great success story with a happy ending. It was the spring of freedom. One year after the dramatic changes of 1989, the Soviet Union disappeared. The collapse of an empire in so short a time—in a historical second—was unprecedented. Usually, the foundation for historical changes is laid by major tragedies: the American Civil War, the First World War, the Second World War. Such events make seemingly unchangeable historical structures fluid, so that they can be formed in a new direction.

The end of the Cold War presented a completely different situation. The Western Europeans had built a house whose back wall was the iron curtain. Thanks to the American security guarantee and the presence of American troops, we felt safe. We were used to living with the nuclear threat of the Cold War. Germany had its own civil war between West Germany and East Germany, embedded in the larger Cold War. And suddenly the back wall of the house was gone. There were big emotions when the other part of the family suddenly appeared. There was waving. The new relatives did not have to knock at the door because the back wall of the house had disappeared. It was a big feast, with hugs, kisses, and tears. But as often happens in families when relatives arrive and stay too long, problems arose: There is only one bathroom. What's going on in the fridge? Where is my food? In short, practical issues. This was exactly what happened in Europe. It was not a shared experience because the experience of the Eastern Europeans differed from that of the Western Europeans, just as the East German experience was completely different from the West German one.

At the very moment of joy when the old world order of the Cold War disappeared, new threats arose and old threats returned. The beginning of the 1990s was the moment of Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait and of the breaking up of Yugoslavia. I don't want to enter the historical debate about whether it was wise to move forward with the breaking up of Yugoslavia or whether there was an option for a new constitution based on international guarantees that might have avoided bloodshed; historians will have to resolve these issues. What matters for the history of the transatlantic relationship is that the US and the Europeans had different perspectives on the Yugoslav crisis. While the Europeans thought this crisis was important, the US was much more concerned about the Middle East and Saddam Hussein. So the US essentially said: "The Balkan crisis is a European problem: Take care of it on your own." The result was not good. I was the deputy leader of the Green parliamentary group in the state parliament of Hessen at the time. I will never forget how surprised I was that "the West" seemed to suddenly

cease to exist. Instead, a confrontation along the lines of 1914 emerged: Britain and France supported Belgrade; Germany and Austria supported Zagreb. I asked myself: Where is the West? Was it a big illusion created by the Cold War, preserved only by the deterrence of the two superpowers? I couldn't believe it. The result was devastating.

Paradoxically, with the "spring of freedom" of 1989, war returned to Europe in the most horrible way. History opened its Pandora's box and the most terrible disease of modern Europe—nationalism—once again defined the agenda in a part of Europe. What was the intention of Greater Serbia? The situation closely resembled that of the 1930s. Once again, territorial claims were to be implemented by the use of force, mass rape, mass killing, and by making people flee in order to change a territory's ethnic composition. The intentional destruction of cultural heritage, including churches and mosques, was part of the program. The ghosts of Europe's past returned, and neither Europe nor "the West" had a common understanding of how to respond. We paid a high price for that: 250,000 people died in Bosnia; millions of people became refugees; cities, villages, and numerous cultural heritage sites were destroyed—until America became fed up with Europe's weakness and told the Europeans: "You are not able to take care of your own business." The bloodshed was only ended thanks to the intervention of American troops, who led the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia. The next step led to Dayton. Dayton is an Air Force base in Ohio. I think it was wise to choose an Air Force base: It's not very comfortable. In Dayton, peace for Bosnia was achieved under complicated circumstances. But the broader problems of the region—the challenge of nationalism, not only in Bosnia, but in the former Yugoslavia as a whole—were not addressed in a sustained way.

After Dayton, it was clear that the oppressed Kosovo-Albanian minority would abandon the nonviolent strategy it had used since the Milosevic government had dismantled their autonomy. There was a direct road from Dayton to Kosovo. At this juncture, one of the defining moments in the post-Cold War history of Europe and the United States occurred: We were able to learn. We understood that if we did not draw a red line and tell Milosevic, "You can't cross this red line without risking that we will use force against you," Milosevic would have continued. My impression was that he was not a nationalist. I don't know whether he had any political convictions except one: He believed in his power. Therefore he tried to ride Serbia's nationalist tiger. I doubt that he could have stopped the tiger without getting slain. We tried everything to convince him. There was a pilgrimage of European and American politicians and generals to the White Palace, on the outskirts of Belgrade, sitting on the famous sofa that many of you will have seen on television. But Milosevic could not be stopped. As a result, for the first time ever, NATO went to

war to protect human rights—the human rights of a mostly Muslim population in the western Balkans.

The challenge presented by this war was quite clear: How can we create a new order so that this part of Europe would have the same opportunities as the rest of Europe. All the other so-called post-Soviet democracies turned away from their authoritarian past and followed the path of the rule of law, democracy, strong civil societies, and integration into “the West.” The Czechs and Slovaks, for example, decided not to live together any longer and divorced in an orderly and civilized manner. Only the former Yugoslavia took a different path. Our common understanding was that if we wanted to overcome that region’s nationalism and end the tragedy that took place there, the only way was to repeat the success story of European integration. We had to bring these nations into the Europe of integration. The Kosovo conflict was a confrontation between an old nationalism, based on war and atrocities and harking back to the 1930s and 1940s, and the new Europe, based on integration, common institutions, negotiation, and finding peaceful solutions in a framework of common security and a shared economic and political future.

At the time of the Kosovo conflict, the issue of Jihad terrorism did not loom as large as it would after September 11, 2001; it was simply absent from the decision-making. Just think about the situation we would face if a young Muslim population of Kosovo-Albanian refugees sat in refugee camps today. In hindsight, it was an important consequence of the Kosovo war that any linkage between the western Balkan crisis belt and the Middle East was severed. The Kosovo intervention also created remarkable cooperation between Europe and the United States. I will never understand why it ended with the new US administration. During the Kosovo war, there was close coordination between the European five-power “Quintet” and the United States, represented by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. This group was not a formal decision-making body, but during the war, we had informal discussions about the issues almost every night. I think this close cooperation demonstrates the possibilities that are available for the future of the transatlantic relationship.

Both sides of the Atlantic agreed that the enlargement of NATO and the EU was key. The Balkan wars had a clear lesson: A return to a balance-of-power system—rather than European integration—would lead to a revival of nationalism, which carried a great risk of serious instability. To me at least, it was quite clear that we could not have lasting peace in Europe if the EU remained Western European. After all, the division of Europe, like the division of Germany, was an artificial one resulting from the Second World War. Therefore, Western Europe had to open up. And indeed, European enlargement and NATO enlargement have been great achievements. Europe’s move toward a supranational

structure was a crucial element in the resolution of the Balkan conflicts. Europe will never become a United States of Europe on the model of the United States of America. Europe will always reflect a balance of common European institutions and strong nation-states. We will have our different languages, histories, and traditions—bright and dark sides. As we say farewell to the old model of nationalism, we should be proud of our diversity; in a globalized world, this diversity might in fact be a real asset. Unlike the United States, we will not be one nation. We will be many nations, from the Russian border to the western coast. This was the message of the Balkan wars, and it worked. Two or three years after the end of the Kosovo war, I was invited to a meeting of foreign ministers from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia, and Macedonia. One year earlier, such a meeting would have been impossible. But the framework of the stability pact—the prospect that one day these countries will all belong to NATO and the European Union—completely changed the mindset of the actors on the ground. This is a great achievement, not only for humanitarian or security reasons, but because it will guarantee lasting peace in Europe.

At the end of the Kosovo war, there was still a strong common understanding between the United States and Europe. The differences began in another area, and they didn't start with the second President Bush, but much earlier. They began in the final period of the Cold War, when American administrations began to feel that America was like Jonathan Swift's Gulliver: tied down by dwarfs—by international law, by treaties, by all those issues that would reduce the power of the United States. Allow me to be frank here, as a friend of your country who admires your country and thinks that America is the world's indispensable leader because the alternative is a vacuum with very negative consequences for world politics. Frankly, then: As the Cold War wound down, America began to have unilateralist inclinations. It was not yet the beginning of unilateralism, but it was the feeling that America would be better off doing things alone.

Let's go back a bit in history. During the Second World War and the Cold War, America—your "great generation"—created the world system we still rely on today. This is true not only of NATO, but also of the UN. The UN is an American child even if nowadays it seems to be orphaned. The same can be said of the international financial institutions that were created at Bretton Woods in 1944. At the end of the Second World War, America was more powerful than at the end of the First World War. You had a nuclear monopoly, millions of men under arms, and by far the most powerful economy. But America seized that moment not to pursue unilateral politics, but to create a new world order based on alliances—on freedom, democracy, and consent. And it turned out that this was the best

thing America could have done for its own national interests. By contrast, at the outset of the post-Cold War period, the United States had a government that no longer believed in multilateralism.

And then came the terrible day nobody will ever forget, September 11, 2001. This created a great opportunity because across the globe everybody felt, "The US is under attack, so we must join our friends and help." Even in the Muslim and Arab world, there was this strong feeling. In Berlin, there was a huge demonstration in front of the Brandenburg Gate. I think only during the Berlin blockade and when the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 had Berlin seen bigger demonstrations. The famous words of a French politician expressed everyone's feelings: "Today we are all Americans." This was a great opportunity to unite the world and achieve great things. Everybody in NATO understood that the situation was serious, that our friend and protector was under attack. NATO decided to invoke Article 5 of the NATO treaty. All of us understood immediately that we had to join. In Germany, we put our government on the line: The German chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, called for a vote of confidence in the parliament, and the Germans joined the Americans in going into Afghanistan. This was a clear-cut case because Afghanistan had sheltered the terrorist organization; it was the place where the decisions had been made that killed so many people in the Twin Towers and in Arlington. There was a broad highway of facts proving the responsibility of the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden and his gang for the attacks. It was not seriously questioned that Afghanistan was a must. The UN resolutions were passed very fast, and we went into Afghanistan. Let's remember, by the way, that Afghanistan had been a humanitarian problem for some time; but after the Russian disaster, nobody was interested in sending troops in for a humanitarian action. The lesson of Afghanistan we have to learn is that the *belle époque* of the First World, where the rich societies live, will not live in peace if we do not address the issue of a new world order that offers a balanced compromise between North and South, rich and poor, between different cultures and religions.

Despite the groundswell of worldwide support after September 11, the US acted unilaterally, perhaps because America drew the wrong conclusions from the Kosovo war. A coalition war is always more complicated than if you go it alone. As long as you are on the road toward victory, going it alone is fine, but when things get rough, a coalition is a good thing—even for the most powerful nation on the globe. The Europeans also failed to understand the dimensions of the challenge posed by the 9/11 attacks. After 9/11, the Europeans held no special summit of the heads of state or government. Everybody reacted separately, bilaterally, because the EU was not designed for such a challenge. This was a big mistake. If the European leaders had met and deliberated together, this

would have contributed to a more positive development in the following months and years. Yet the reaction was understandable. For all of us, our relationship to the United States is key, and in a moment of crisis, the Europeans reacted, as they were accustomed to, on a bilateral level. The second problem was that the Europeans never explored the strategic consequences of the 9/11 attacks and failed to realize that the Americans were engaging in a focused strategic debate about these consequences. On September 18–19, 2001, just a few days after 9/11, I was sent to Washington DC by the chancellor. I spoke with the president and visited the Pentagon and the State Department. On the way back, I was seriously depressed because I understood from my conversations that there was going to be a sort of new world war. Sixty or more states were said to be harboring, supporting, or financing terrorism, and America was going to go after each of them, one by one; and these states were around the world. I knew a little bit about American domestic policy and thought that Osama Bin Laden would not be enough to convince the American public to go in that direction. So I raised the question whether, after Afghanistan, we would end up in Iraq. And from the very beginning, my position was that this was a very bad idea.

I fully shared the immediate reaction of calls for going into Afghanistan. Then, I thought, let's form an international alliance to bring those who are responsible directly or indirectly to justice. There was and still is a worldwide alliance to fight terrorist structures. If you look at the successes in fighting terrorism, they have mostly been achieved within the framework of this global alliance. But this is not a military alliance, it is one based on exchanging information—old-fashioned intelligence—through the cooperation of many nations around the world. I never understood why the step into Iraq should be taken. I understood that after 9/11, accepting the status quo in the Middle East was no longer an option. I understood that this meant a transformation of the Middle East. To create an environment where terrorists could be contained and their structures effectively destroyed meant modernizing and democratizing the Middle East. But if you point the barrel of a gun at a person and tell him, "Now you are a democrat," you are not creating a democrat, but an enemy. This was the difference of approach between part of Europe and the US administration.

At the beginning of these debates, I carefully read the autobiography of my friend Colin Powell, as well as the book by the elder President Bush and his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, because I asked myself: Why didn't they go into Baghdad in 1991? The road was open; it was almost a free ride into Baghdad. One concern was that this would have meant the end of the coalition with the Arabs. But the major issue was that once the United States was in, it would have to take over responsi-

bility for the entire Middle East. And if the US ended up having to get out without a new Middle East, this would create a vacuum that would lead to chaos engulfing the whole region. This was the accepted wisdom, not of a European radical, but of America's elected leaders and their advisers—Bush, Baker, Scowcroft—in a Republican administration, which, by the way, did a terrific job in foreign policy. So from my assessment, it was quite clear that the United States would get itself into a very—I will use a diplomatic word—challenging situation. Dominique de Villepin, the French Foreign Minister, said at the time that the French shared the same analysis: Iraq would end in a disaster that would weaken the United States, which would be bad for everyone. If Schroeder and Chirac had joined the coalition, by the way, it would have changed nothing militarily. Maybe it is a benefit of my radical decade, which was an ideological decade, that, like a child who has burned his fingers once, I can recognize ideologically driven politics immediately. And what I sensed in Washington after 9/11, during the run-up to Iraq, was an ideological politics that denied historical facts and cultural realities.

We tried, as did some in the United States, to engage our friends in the administration, the Congress, and the Senate to get answers to our questions: "How will you get out again? Do you believe that the American people will back a war that will last more than a decade with high losses in order to impose a new order on the Middle East? Saddam Hussein is an awful dictator, but there is no imminent threat from weapons of mass destruction (it turned out there was definitely no threat) and there is no imminent threat of another attempt at genocide like the one that targeted the Kurds or the Shiites in 1991. If you go into Iraq, democratization will mean that the Iraqis will vote: The Kurds will vote for Kurdish parties, the Shiites for Shiites, the Sunnis for Sunnis—this won't be a democracy. Iran will get the biggest gift in its history: a dominant position in Iraq. How will you deal with Iran?" All these questions were raised before the war. And to be honest, they were never answered because these concerns would have gone against the ideology at the time. Therefore, if Schroeder and Chirac had joined, it would have changed nothing. But if some of our European friends had said, "Let's develop a common European position; without that, we can't join," maybe this would have made a difference. Historians will have that discussion. For the future, we must learn that a divided West is a weak West. In the Balkans, we were united. In the Middle East, where our common security is at stake, we are divided. This is a very negative lesson.

Turning to the future, we face a whole set of common challenges. China will be a big challenge. Even if China behaves peacefully, the success of the Western economic model in China will present a huge challenge. On this issue, too, the West is divided. But I think Europe is in

a better position. If you look at the trade figures between China and the United States, and between Europe and China, you will understand how important developments in China are. If I had said twenty years ago that the leading capitalist power, the United States, would open its market to the leading Communist power, China, so that China could develop its economy based on the American model, and that China in return would finance the US budget, including the defense budget, through loans, you would have said: Fischer is crazy. But all this is fact today.

We also need to address the worldwide fight against poverty. United Nations figures show that many Third World nations are experiencing enormous development, which means increased consumption of energy and raw materials, as well as increased pollution. We cannot say to the Chinese, Africans, Indians, or Indonesians: Please accept our standards on energy conservation and pollution. Everybody who knows the industrial history of Europe and the United States knows perfectly well that they are in a different position. The West has the creativity, the financial resources, and the engineering intelligence necessary to address these environmental issues. Because Japan and Europe have long kept energy prices higher than the US, the pressure to be energy efficient was much stronger there. When I compare my households in Princeton and Berlin, I realize that the Germans are three steps ahead regarding energy efficiency. I am proud to say that the environmental sector plays a key role in the German business community today. It is becoming more important than the automobile and machinery sectors. This demonstrates that we are not talking about “green illusions,” but about an efficient fight against climate change and a common strategy that offers great business opportunities.

Everybody is concerned about nuclear terrorism, but without an efficient non-proliferation strategy—and this also means fresh ideas about collective disarmament—we will see that illegal proliferation networks like the one recently discovered in Pakistan will be only the beginning. We have to address this, and addressing this will be impossible without the United States. We have to address proliferation because otherwise, one day, it will be too late. Beyond that: How will we integrate the rising powers? Twenty to thirty years from now, the US will also be a small power compared to China and India, and you will rethink the importance of the transatlantic relationship.

We must also develop a common strategy with regard to Russia. To be frank, a red line must be drawn, and Russia must understand that. It was Europe, not the US, who defined that red line in the Ukrainian crisis. Europeans must never accept a Russian return to a zone-of-influence policy with regard to Eastern Europe. But we have ourselves to blame for being divided. When the Russians play games with oil and gas supplies—

which they never did during the Cold War—the European answer must be: Let's unite our energy policy. Once Russia has to deal with Brussels, and not with Berlin, Warsaw, Paris, Athens, and so on, the situation will be completely different. We are dependent on Russia, but with a united Europe, Russia would be also dependent on Europe. The westernization of Russia is clearly in our interest.

With regard to the Middle East, let me begin by noting that the Europeans are very short-sighted in their relationship with Turkey. Turkey is like a stool resting on three legs: the Kemalists, the Islamists, and the European Union. And if you look at the reform process in Turkey, it worked. But it is crucial that the European leg—the prospect of joining the EU—remain in place. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to convince Europeans that Turkey should have this European prospect. One important argument here is that the successful modernization of a big Islamic country would serve as a strong riposte to Jihadist terrorists. If it could be demonstrated that the rule of law, women's rights, an independent judiciary, a strong civil society, and a successful market economy are perfectly compatible with Islam, this would be the most powerful answer to the challenge of Jihadism. At present, we see that Turkey is falling back into an unstable situation, and that relations between Turkey and Russia are getting better and better. If we continue on the present path, there is a serious risk that we will alienate and perhaps one day lose Turkey. This would have negative ramifications for both sides of the Atlantic.

How to deal with Iraq? To be frank, America has to leave. The only question now is: how, and under what conditions? The only way to avoid complete disaster is to create a regional consensus. I think the leverage for this still exists because all the regional powers—Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, and the gulf states—are in danger of being sucked into the Iraq war, which none of them can win. The US has to talk to them, has to engage them. I fully agree with the Congressional Study Group. I don't see another way, because everybody knows the domestic political agenda of the United States: You will have elections, you will elect a new president, and the new president—whether Republican or Democrat—will have to offer a way out of Iraq or he or she will not be reelected. I think it is important to understand the consequences of the American intervention in Iraq. The whole region is on the brink of destabilization: If you look at Lebanon, Israel, or the Palestinian territories, if you look at the blocked modernization in many other Arab countries, you will see a grim picture that must be addressed strategically. The core crisis is Iraq. The only solution is to engage all the relevant players and create a minimum regional consensus. It is exactly the same with Afghanistan: Talking about the Taliban without talking about Pakistan makes no sense. There wouldn't be a Taliban without the Pakistani In-

telligence Service. And talking about Pakistan without diplomatically engaging in Indian-Pakistani relations makes no sense either. Addressing Afghanistan means achieving a new regional consensus, mostly with Pakistan, but also with Iran, but to address this, you must address Indian-Pakistani relations, and there, the core conflict is Kashmir.

In conclusion, the transatlantic relationship must be redefined. The Europeans must be more united. If a new American administration pushed the Europeans to unite, this would be in America's self-interest. It is also in America's and Europe's interest that America stay committed in Europe. There can be no strong transatlantic relationship without a strong European Union, because America will get tired of Europe's disunity and inability to act as a viable partner on the world stage. If we are to meet the big challenges of climate change, emerging powers, weapons of mass destruction, nuclear proliferation, and the rising gap between rich and poor, I think the West must have a future. We will have our differences in the future because we are different, but we are as different as members of the same family are. For the future, we need a strong transatlantic relationship, with America back in the lead in creating a new world order, a better world with a strong Europe as a partner on the global stage.