

National Sovereignty & Universal Challenges: Choices for the World After Iraq

Background Document

“Declaration on Transatlantic Relations: How to Overcome the Divisions”

- Carl Bildt and Others

The West is badly divided, both across the Atlantic and among Europeans. The emotions which recent diplomatic and military events have aroused still run high. But Americans, Europeans and people in other parts of the world have a strong interest in healing the current wounds. When the U.S. and Europe work together most global challenges are easier to surmount. Fortunately, despite our differences, there is still much that unites Europeans and Americans.

Now is the time to stop the provocations and work towards a common agenda. We reject a policy of revenge — whether it is to “punish” those who disagree with the U.S. and its allies; or to refuse to participate constructively and wholeheartedly in the rebuilding of Iraq. Neither strategy is viable and each would deepen the divisions. Repairing transatlantic relations is not an impossible task, for many of our interests are similar. We should focus our immediate attention on forging joint strategies with respect to post-war Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Iran, anti-terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We should also be able to co-operate better on medium-term challenges such as development, world trade and global warming. If we can work together on all these issues, we are more likely to achieve positive results, as well as revive the spirit of transatlantic relations.

Iraq

In recent months Iraq has been the most divisive issue in U.S.-European relations, but it also offers the greatest opportunity for reviving transatlantic co-operation. Although western countries disagreed over the necessity and timing of the war, they agree on the need to foster the emergence of a united, peaceful, prosperous and democratic Iraq, free of WMD. The pursuit of those goals will require a major commitment of people, money and time. We therefore need the broadest possible participation in the reconstruction of the country, making best use of all the instruments and institutions at our disposal.

Europeans and Americans should strike a broad bargain on Iraq. The U.S. should accept the need for a UN Security Council endorsement of the peacekeeping force, and a meaningful UN role in the rebuilding of Iraq. United Nations inspectors should be involved in the verification of any finds of WMD, and in their destruction. In return the Europeans, including those who opposed the war, should accept and contribute to a NATO security force in the country, and show pragmatism on the manner in which sanctions are lifted.

Israel-Palestine

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, the U.S. and Europe have a special opportunity to promote a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The politics of the wider region are now more conducive to an agreement than they have been in a decade. Moreover, the U.S. and Europe agree not only on the fundamental elements of a final settlement but also on the diplomatic mechanism to achieve it: the roadmap prepared by the Quartet (the U.S., the EU, the UN and Russia).

It will be hard to coax the parties to implement the provisions of the roadmap. But the absence of a peace accord carries a high human cost for both Israelis and Palestinians, harms western interests in the region and creates transatlantic tension. Moreover, many other shared objectives in the region – such as tackling fanatical terrorism, stemming WMD proliferation and promoting political reforms – would be easier to achieve if Americans and Europeans made the implementation of the roadmap a top priority.

Iran

The U.S. and Europe should start a new dialogue on Iran, with the aim of forging – as much as possible – a joint strategy to achieve their shared goals of promoting genuine democracy, halting support for terrorism and ending nuclear and other WMD programmes. This dialogue should also include the Russian Federation. Washington should recognize the potential benefits of the European Union's policy of 'conditional engagement' provided that the Europeans really keep it conditional: thus if Iran actively persists in a nuclear weapons programme, or seriously undermined order in Iraq or Afghanistan, the EU would take political and economic sanctions. Above all, the U.S. and Europe, together with Russia, should unite behind the demand that Iran live up to all its non-proliferation commitments — starting with full and unfettered access for IAEA inspectors to all nuclear sites.

Terrorism

Transatlantic co-operation on fighting terrorism has improved dramatically since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Importantly, it has continued to strengthen, even as differences in other areas emerged. In particular, we are building stronger intelligence and law enforcement ties not only bilaterally, but also between the United States and EU institutions such as Europol and Eurojust. Deeper intra-European co-operation (as for example on the common arrest warrant) opens new vistas for even closer U.S.-European collaboration. The two sides should build ties between the new U.S. and European institutions that deal with terrorism. Our common work in promoting peace in the Middle East and development in the Muslim world is an important element of this overall strategy. Leaders on both sides of the Atlantic must make clear to their publics that terrorism constitutes a challenge that threatens us all.

Weapons of mass destruction

Europe and the U.S. should embark on a serious dialogue on the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The proliferation of technologies and materials, and especially the risk that these may fall into the hands of states or groups which are unstable and hostile to the West, should concern Europeans as much as Americans. The U.S. and Europe should agree that this threat calls for a broad spectrum of policy responses.

Specifically, the U.S. and Europe should agree that the WMD non-proliferation regime must remain the basis of policy, and that this regime needs strengthening and developing. But they must also agree that the treaties making up this regime are not, in themselves, sufficient. A number of measures, including, as a last resort, the use of force, may be required to enforce compliance with non-proliferation treaties. Moreover, in extreme cases, where the proliferating state or group clearly shows an aggressive intent, preventive military interventions may be needed. However, such actions should have the widest possible international support. To that end, UN authorization, though not a prerequisite, would be highly desirable.

Development

Poverty does not necessarily create terrorists. But a sense of hopelessness foments unrest, undermines states, nurtures fundamentalism and drives emigration. It is clearly in the interest of the U.S. and Europe to tackle the root causes of these ills. What is needed is a shared willingness to commit the resources that are required to accelerate economic development, alleviate the ravages of disease and improve standards of governance. Promoting trade and encouraging private investment have a crucial role to play in the development process. If necessary, a new and more ambitious development strategy should include the possibility of direct military interventions in failed states, to prevent humanitarian disaster, and if possible under UN auspices. With the Millennium Challenge Account, the U.S. has reversed a long period of decline in its development effort. It should now put this renewed financial commitment to good use by forging a strong multilateral effort – together with Europe and other donors such as Japan – to tackle the most pressing development needs.

Trade

Protectionist pressure has always imperiled the growth of world trade, on which the prosperity of all depends. But worries about security and the fragile state of transatlantic relations have now become a sizeable additional threat. The U.S. and the EU must act together to bring the Doha development round to a successful conclusion. A central priority for the G8 summit in Evian should be to move ahead with the round. The immediate requirement for the U.S. is to accept the broad consensus of WTO members on lifting patent restrictions and on promoting developing countries' access to cheap medicines. In turn, the EU must accept that liberalization of its Common Agricultural Policy is a political as well as an economic imperative.

Climate change

Closer transatlantic co-operation is required to tackle global climate change. While some scientific uncertainties remain, policy-makers on both sides of the Atlantic accept that climate change presents a serious threat that warrants shifts in policy. But an effective global solution to climate change is unlikely in the absence of a transatlantic agreement.

To bridge the divide both sides will need to change policies and behaviour. Europeans must recognize that there are flaws with the Kyoto process (particularly with respect to the performance of some EU members in meeting their targets, and the lack of involvement of the developing world), and that continued insistence on the United States rejoining that effort will not produce the desired result. The United States must be prepared to put forward alternative proposals that meaningfully address the

problem by reducing carbon emissions. Both sides will need to show leadership in the face of entrenched domestic political constituencies that resist meeting the tough challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Conclusion

The U.S. and Europe need to strike bargains and co-operate on these and many other issues. Clearly, a shared engagement to devise common strategies requires a genuine commitment to a search for consensus. That is why in future American and European leaders should refrain from publicly voicing disagreements through the media before – or while – they are discussed behind closed doors.

We are aware that the rules of international law which govern the legitimacy of military measures require a careful re-examination, and possible adaptation to the contemporary circumstances of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and massive violations of human rights. However, it is of the utmost importance that this re-examination and adaptation be done jointly.

A rejuvenation of transatlantic co-operation requires changes on both sides. Americans need to understand that policies intended to divide Europe are not conducive to healthy and constructive transatlantic relations. By the same token, the Europeans will not be able to pursue an ever-closer Union if they seek to build up Europe as a counterweight to the U.S.

Ronald Asmus

German Marshall Fund

Christoph Bertram

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

Carl Bildt

Former Prime Minister of Sweden

Richard Burt

Former U.S. Ambassador to Germany

Ivo Daalder

The Brookings Institution

Marta Dassu

Aspen Institute Italia

Thérèse Delpech

Atomic Energy Commission of France

James Dobbins

RAND Corporation

Steven Everts

Centre for European Reform

Lawrence Freedman

King's College London

Philip Gordon

The Brookings Institution

Charles Grant

Centre for European Reform

Ulrike Guerot

German Council on Foreign Relations

Karl Kaiser

German Council on Foreign Relations

Charles Kupchan

Council on Foreign Relations

Christopher Makins

Atlantic Council of the United States

Dominique Moïsi

French Institute for Int'l Relations

Simon Serfaty

Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies

James Steinberg

The Brookings Institution

Fred van Staden

Clingendael Institute

Karsten Voight

Former member of Bundestag

Note: Institutional Affiliations are listed for Identification Purposes Only