

Effective Multilateralism and the Member States: The EU, the ESS, and the USA

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There are three issues that clearly reflect efficiency of multilateralism in the European Union, European Security Strategy (ESS), and the relations with the USA. It is the matter of energy security, intervention in Afghanistan and the establishment of ABM defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic.

In the energy policy there is no dialogues between Europe and the USA, but there is a dialogue between the USA and Russia as well as between the EU and Russia. Afghanistan is a test case for the credibility of NATO.

Do the USA and the EU agree on the global role of NATO?

The ABM missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic is financed solely by the USA, but the public opinion in Europe is that it is one of the worst initiatives that had divided Europe into the old and the new.

Key words: Multilateralism, EU, ESS, USA

1. Introduction

Simon Serfaty, who holds the Z. Brzezinski Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said some wise words that put in a nutshell the dilemma confronting us:

NATO has transformed itself beyond recognition. Yet many fear that the alliance has gone astray. Europeans and Americans often feel ambivalent about NATO because they neglect its achievements, question its current actions, and differ what it should do next.¹

He said this reflecting on the NATO summit in Riga last year. The problem was that the summit did not come up with a new strategic concept, nor did it commission that a new one should be drawn up for the next summit in 2008.

But he did say that, nevertheless, it was a success. I will quote Serfaty again because to me the reasons he spells out for this success illustrate the present atmosphere of trying to come together that both the USA and the EU in the face of a growing common realization that the West is rapidly shrinking in what may now be called the Asian century of diminishing energy supplies and security? We are witnesses to emerging multi-polar world where China will loom large, but would it be provocative to propose that both parts of the West, i.e. the USA/Canada and the EU are – trying, but nevertheless not coming together in the face of the new challenges and new world order?

According to Serfaty, the summit was a success because, apart from the basic summit diplomacy principle that says summits cannot fail, it,

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in fact, did take place, it evoked a reasonable display of collegial courtesy as if the leaders actually liked each other, and, most of all, it took place in Latvia, showing how far NATO has come since its previous summits in 1999, 2002, 2004, which were marked by sharp clashes over issues ranging from Iraq to the alliance's future global mission. Thus the Riga summit is a benchmark in the trying part of my proposition?

When thinking about EU-American relations it seems to me a paradox that it is so hard for both sides to come together if the security strategies, as, indeed, the very basic values of both sides, are pretty much the same. Practically the only significant difference between the European Security Strategy and the American National Security Strategy is that one word, preemptive. The Europeans, after agonizing for a while, opted for pre-engagement instead of preemptive in their strategy.

Yet, if the gap consists of only this one word, is it so formidable that it precludes all efforts to come together? If Henry Kissinger now said that preemption should be the rare exception, not the basic rule of American strategy and this is, after the demise of the *neocons*, the basic position of the USA today, then the trying aspect of the proposition could succeed and a common foreign and security policy spanning the Atlantic could be achieved. Is not Kissinger's definition the same as that of the Europeans?² After all, if the Europeans become serious about their „battle groups”, they just might have to be used for preemptive purposes as well, for example, in the Balkans and Africa. What is the purpose of battle groups other than to do battle?

Looking at some outstanding issues on the table, we note, however, that this theoretical gap bridging immediately runs into practical problems. I have chosen the three most outstanding challenges, because they also reveal how divided the Europeans themselves are despite their common security strategy, which, by the way, was unanimously adopted in 2003 by all member states, and included the signatures of the new soon-to-be member states. They are divided not only among themselves but also within themselves.

The three outstanding issues are energy security; Afghanistan, and the planned ABM defense system to be established in Poland and the Czech Republic.

2. Energy Security

Last year the EU announced the launching of a new initiative called the European External Energy Policy (EEP). The problem here is that there is no common energy market, as there is a common trade market in the EU. When the EU flexes its muscles on trade, everybody listens, because the EU is a global player in trade. Not energy. The national policies of each member state vary considerably, especially for those states that have national energy champions. Europe is presently hopelessly divided, but may, over time, come together.

The other problem is that there is no energy dialogue between the EU and the USA, though there is between the USA and Russia and the EU and Russia. Furthermore, the USA is hardly dependent on Russia for gas and oil, Europe is. What can NATO do in this regard? Very little.

Another problem is that the EU worried about gas supply cessations to itself, but not to Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. I have been at conferences where energy representatives from governments and energy companies claimed that Russia was a reliable provider, completely ignoring the in-between countries, even the Baltic states, now members, which have had gas (1990s) and oil shutoffs (currently) by pipelines from Russia. The irony is that Georgia and Azerbaijan, vulnerable European Neighborhood Policy states, will, in the end, become completely independent from Russian gas. What are the implications of this state of affairs for the EU, and member states like, for example, Germany? In answer, I will quote just one sentence from the recent report by the *Institut Montaigne*, Paris, from a list of recommendations that would establish a common foreign policy in the energy field:

*impose prior European-level coordination before any bilateral governmental negotiations (especially with Russia) and in the event of failure of the co-operative approach with that country, not to hesitate to adopt internal measures aimed at defending European interests.*³

The Georgians and Azaris would have no problem with this recommendation. For some older EU member states it could be an insurmountable problem. And I have not even mentioned the Gas OPEC being set up as Russia's initiative.

3. Afghanistan

As was said at the Riga summit, this country is a test case for the credibility of NATO. The problem here is that while everybody understands that the civil reconstruction of the country is more important than the military dimension, you need to fight in order to be able to do the reconstruction. Can NATO armies be divided into two categories, into peacekeepers and warriors, i.e. soldiers that protect civilians and are not allowed to fight, and soldiers that do fight and die?

In Afghanistan we see the Americans, Brits, Canadians, Dutch and Danes fighting, together with the Australians, who are not in NATO. Some Balts are also on pretty dangerous ground and have taken casualties. Can the Europeans and the Americans agree on the global role of NATO in such a situation?

In fact, the problem does not so much lie in NATO and the EU in helping the country, but in Pakistan and India settling their differences. As long as this is not done – and, it must be said that both countries are striving to reach an agreement, terrorists coming from the same camps will continue to operate in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Pakistan created the Taliban to control Afghanistan as a strategic hinterland in a possible war with India, but, in the end, created a Frankenstein monster which it no longer can control and which threatens Pakistan itself! Can the EU and the USA working together bring their weight to bear in helping both countries overcome their antagonism?

4. The ABM Defense Shield

The controversy about this shield involving ten missiles in Poland that could knock out Iranian or North Korean missiles aimed at the USA (or parts of Europe) with kinetic energy once again reminds us of the salient issues that divide Europe, divide political parties within EU countries, and, perhaps, may divide the EU and the USA.

I take up this issue because the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov appears to be striving to replace Javier Solana as the spokesman for European foreign and security policy. Without batting an eyelid, Lavrov pontificates on the need of unity of both the EU and NATO (he is worried that the shield „undermines NATO and the EU” and that it „endangers the transatlantic bond”)? But do ten missiles, as

claimed by Lavrov, overturn the strategic balance by directly threatening Russia? Or is it, as Michael Gorbachev points out, a question about who has influence in Europe: Russia or the USA?⁴

This is neither a NATO nor an ESDP project. Should it be a NATO or EU project? At the Riga summit NATO decided on a mobile theatre defense ABM system to be ready by 2013-15, but this would protect only NATO forces. A larger system for territorial and population defense against international ballistic missiles is under study, but has run into trouble because France and Germany are not ready to invest the money needed. Obviously it cannot be an EU project.

The missile defense system to be built in Poland and the Czech Republic is financed solely by the USA – all information can be found at the home page of the Missile Defense Agency that is building it.⁵ Americans are ready to pay for defense. Where does this leave both the EU and NATO with regard to the USA and Russia, if the American secretary of defense has offered Russia to be a full partner in the project? Not only in sharing information, but also in developing new technology, and even defense radar system? Russia is driving a hard bargain and may just get what it wants.⁶

The problem in Europe is, as Philip Stephens of the FT reminds us, in the matter of security, public opinion is disposed to believe the worst of any new US initiative since Rumsfeld divided Europe into Old and New Europe, and the shield feeds the neuroses the Europeans have toward the USA after the Iraq war. Not so much in the new member states, I might add, because, as direct neighbours of Russia, they are more sensitive to developments in Russia and what this could mean for them further down the road.

I would agree with Philip Stephens that Putin must be wearing a very broad smile over the controversy in Europe over the ABM defense shield.

5. Conclusion

I am strongly tempted to conclude that Europe is back in the power politics game (if ever it left it) both within itself, with the USA, and its dealings with Russia. This may be normal, but a realistic balancing of values and interests with a rising Russia has occurred just as, indeed, it has happened in America over the Iraq debacle. The question is

whether the values will become so insignificant in our *Realpolitik* foreign policy agenda that they became only mantra without substance. Looking at how the member states building Galileo, the European satellite navigation system, (a „core” of only five states, and all euro states except for Great Britain), are bickering and fighting amongst themselves, and wasting great sums of taxpayers money, and, further, seeing how Russia and China, while receiving economic aid from the EU, might overtake the EU with their versions of Galileo, one wonders if the EU has not already become fragmented in substance while still united in form.⁷ One Russian think-tank guru called the EU a „camel train” at a Wilton Park conference in February. He asked who needed money from the EU.

This exacerbates the question of what should be the main institutional set up that coordinates EU-USA relations. What is the main channel of communication in case the Europeans can reach a common position: NATO, direct EU-USA talks, including twice-yearly meetings between the US Presidency and the presiding EU Presidency country (twice-yearly, because of the six-month rotation of presidencies in the EU) or something else?

I hope very much the project Initiative for a Renewed Transatlantic Partnership headed by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington can come up with a good answer.⁸

I end with a reflection and an anecdote. A Finnish historian observing how Europe took shape after the dissolution of the Roman Empire in the early 5th century exclaims that even for a seasoned historian it is astonishing how the hinterland of the Roman Empire became the mighty Europe of the late Middle Ages, whose influence reaches every corner of the world today.⁹ It was Western Europe, not the East, meaning the Byzantine empire, which lasted another 1000 years, that created most of the planet as an image of itself. I would add, not a very good image, unfortunately. Now it seems that this imperfect image is coming back with a vengeance, including, among other threats, uncontrolled immigration from the imperfect image. Illegal immigration, by the way, is a threat that also binds the USA and Europe together in that both sides are unable to cope with it.

At a CSIS think-tank summit at the Wye Plantation in April 2005, the European participants, including myself, were struck with the frank American view of the future world order: in less than 50 years the leading world's economy will be China followed by India with the USA only at number three. It was unclear where the EU would end up.

The anecdote is that after a group of Europeans complained to the Chinese that a multi-polar world was to be preferred to that of the American system, the Chinese replied that a bipolar world would be just fine – that of China and the USA.

NOTES

1 Simon Serfaty, Are they listening to us? Missed opportunities at NATO's Riga summit, CSIS Transatlantic Report, Washington, DC, vol. 2, March 2007.

2 Atis Lejins, The CFSP and the PCA: Between Realpolitik and Values, in Atis Lejins (ed.), „The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy toward Russia: The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement as a Test Case,” The Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Riga, 2006, p.17.

3 What energy policy for the European Union? March Report, Institut Montaigne, Paris, 2007.

4 Philip Stephens, The Putin strategy is to divide Europe over missile defense, Financial Times, April 12, 2007; Craig S. Smith, Plan for U.S. antimissile system stir Cold War embers in Europe, International Herald Tribune, April 18, 2007.

5 www.mda.mil

6 Thom Shanker, Gates fails to win over Moscow on missile-defense cooperation, International Herald Tribune, April 23, 2007.

7 For the Galileo debacle see Judy Dempsey, „EU's satellite navigation system loses its way,” International Herald Tribune, April 18, 2007.

8 See www.csis.org/europe

9 Tuomos Heikkila, Europe takes shape, in Tuomos Heikkila (ed.), Europe 2050: Challenges of the Future, Heritage of the Past, Helsinki, 2006, p. 36.