

## THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

**Europe and the USA, it is repeatedly said, form a "community of values". The question is, how far common values can lead to a common policy in a multipolar world, or to what extent European countries can pursue their own interests.**

1. We increasingly live in a multipolar world. At the beginning of the 20th century, a third of the world's population still lived in Europe and North America. If the number of people on earth rises to 10.5 billion over the next 50 years, the proportion in the countries of the European Union will fall to 3.7%; that of the United States will be 3.9%. China's share would then be 12%; India would then have 250 million more people living than it does today, and the subcontinent's share of the world's population would be 15.6%. The increase in population in Africa is particularly dramatic; with only 7.1% of the world's population living there in 1950, and 27% in 50 years' time.

The change in the economic output of the individual states is also dramatic: after the Second World War, the USA alone generated half of the economic output of the entire world. Measured in terms of purchasing power, the share of the US economy is expected to fall from 16% today to 12% by 2070; that of the EU countries from 15% to 9%. China's share, which is 18% today, should rise to 20%.

The development is moving towards a multipolar world. There will be several centers of power on our earth in the future. Shouldn't this be an incentive for Europe and the US to try to achieve their political and economic goals together? But to what extent is it possible to work with a country like the USA that claims absolute leadership in all issues, does not tolerate any impairment of its own sovereignty and only accepts international organizations to assert its own interests?

A lot has changed under President Joe Biden: the language has become less authoritative, especially when it comes to international relations; the style became more diplomatic. Some symbolic accents were set, from human rights to environmental protection. Only one thing has not changed: America's claim to leadership must remain. "America first" now means "America is back". The US wants to maintain its hegemony in a multipolar world as well as in the unipolar one. They want to make the rules of war and peace, and they want to do it alone.

Such an attitude raises the question of whether a real partnership with the US is possible. Already the then Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld said that the US would choose its allies according to the occasion and the given usefulness. In doing so, he wrote off "old Europe" and placed his hopes in the new countries liberated from communism. That was a massive push to divide Europe.

## 2. The attitude of the USA towards the unification of Europe

An essential question is how the United States feels about a united Europe. In principle, one can say that the USA supports European unification where it believes that a united Europe would be included or subordinated to an Atlantic partnership. That was already the case when, after the Second World War, Washington campaigned within the framework of the OEEC (Organization for European Economic Cooperation) to coordinate the Marshall Plan; to facilitate trade and payments on the old continent in order to promote a future free trade area. Many saw no disadvantage in the acceptance of the American leadership claim, at least no contradiction to concrete advantages for the European countries. Jean Monnet, a key champion of European unification, has already been said to have been very open to advice from American politics.

Later, too, there were always strong forces who affirmed American leadership in Europe, especially when it came to security issues. When, for example, the French President Charles de Gaulle tried in 1963 to implement the French ideas of a united Europe with the support of Germany through the Elysée Treaty, the German Bundestag insisted on the importance of the transatlantic partnership for the Federal Republic by pointing it out in the preamble to the treaty.

In fact, the relations of the European states with America depend very much on their own history. Poland, for example, has always sought a protector against Russia. 200 years ago it was Napoleon; later the Republic of France; today the USA and NATO are supposed to offer protection against the "archenemy" from the east.

Whenever Europeans disagree on political or economic issues, it is possible for the US to take advantage of this divide. At the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, for example, leading exponents of the European Union spoke out against further eastward expansion of the alliance. It was known that NATO troops on the Russian border would not lead to more stability, but to more tension. Poland and the Baltic countries, on the other hand, wanted NATO membership, which was ultimately also enforced by the USA.

The European governments are similarly divided on the North Stream2 project. The aim is to supply Germany directly with Russian natural gas via a pipeline built for this purpose. The Americans, on the other hand, want to sell their own gas in Europe, albeit at higher prices, in order to "protect Europe from becoming too dependent on Russia". In fact, Russia should be weakened and Germany should become dependent on American energy supplies. So it's very much about interests, not values. As far as the ideological assessment of Europe is concerned, in the USA this is often made according to one's own political position. However, the following fixed points can be identified: Europe should not become too powerful and too independent. American hegemony must be preserved. Under no circumstances should a European defense of its own emerge as a competitor to NATO. There is widespread skepticism about the own European currency, the euro.

### 3. Should the Europeans support US wars?

For the US, wars are an integral part of its foreign policy and international relations. In particular, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 led to a further militarization of American foreign policy. In the next seven years alone, the US defense budget increased by 80%. Of the 1.6 million American soldiers, 500,000 are stationed abroad, spread across 800 military bases. America has waged war anywhere and anytime for the past few decades. The invasion of Afghanistan took place in 2001, followed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the years that followed, the US took part in the fighting in Libya, Syria and Yemen. US special forces are also deployed in Niger and Somalia, Thailand, Jordan and other parts of the world.

Washington is constantly developing new military strategies to take action against actual or theoretical enemies. In recent decades, for example, the theory of the "Revolution in Military Affairs" has helped to strengthen belief in the invincibility of the US armed forces. Accordingly, technical progress has increased the destructive power of weapons so decisively that neither on earth nor in space could anyone resist the military power of the USA. Accordingly, under President Bush (son), the USA set up the "CYBERCOM" military command, which in 2011 carried out over 200 cyber-attacks.

Recently, the theory of the increase in "irregular warfare" has been developed. According to this, countries like China, Russia or Iran use illegal means such as hacker attacks and espionage. Special commandos and private mercenary units are set up to take action against US interests. At the same time, it is stated that the US is very poorly prepared against this type of attack. Russia is accused of stirring up social tensions in America by manipulating protest movements like "Me Too" or "Black Lives Matter". China and Iran are also accused of acting similarly against American interests.

It is difficult to explain what the strengths of the Russian possibilities and the weaknesses of the American ones in the field of "irregular warfare" are, because the annual defense budget of the USA is ten times higher than that of Russia. Rather, one is reminded of the election campaign of John F. Kennedy, when he massively denounced the alleged "Missile Gap" to the Soviet Union. Then it turned out, however, that the US missile arsenal was four times the size of that of the Soviet Union.

The question for Europeans is whether they should follow the logic of the American "military-industrial complex", supported by numerous media? Wouldn't it make sense for the Europeans to refer increasingly to the "Revolution in NON-Military Affairs", that is, to those changes that have taken place in the area of international law and public opinion with regard to warfare. Accordingly, wars are no longer the "extension of politics by other means", but mean a failure of politics. In Europe, "human security" is at the forefront of security policy thinking. These expectations should at least be built into the transatlantic dialogue.

#### 4. Together for human rights?

When the United Nations Charter was adopted after the Second World War, it emphasized the “sovereignty of states” and non-interference in their internal affairs. But as early as 1948, also at the instigation of the President's widow Eleanor Roosevelt, the decision on the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” was adopted, which initially only represented a recommendation for the member states. The Council of Europe, founded in 1949, then enshrined special protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the citizens of its member countries. So you might think that Europe and the US would act together on this issue.

In fact, the “Free West” was able to successfully use human rights during the Cold War. After the victory against communism, the neoconservatives in the USA in particular demanded that civil rights should be enforced with military support in those countries that opposed America. To this end, various models such as “regime change” or “nation building” have been worked out. In 2005 the General Assembly of the UN even adopted the resolution “Responsibility to protect”: all member countries should in future take measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This opened up the possibility of further military operations in the form of “humanitarian interventions”.

Corresponding operations were carried out from Afghanistan to Libya and from Somalia to the Balkans. In practice, however, it turned out that “nation-building” is hardly possible where there are not even pre-state structures. “Regime change”, i.e. the exchange of people at the head of a state, has not led to more democracy and prosperity in Iraq, but to more chaos and economic decline. It also proved to be difficult to find out how far power-political considerations were also involved in “humanitarian actions”.

It was undoubtedly an essential step in the development of international relations that human rights became a crucial point of reference. But if you want to be credible, you have to push for their implementation everywhere in the same way. And this in connection with other essential goals: preservation of peace, political and social security; promotion of economic growth and protection of the environment. If it were only about human rights, the door would be wide open to interventions to protect them; First of all in the Vatican, because it is well known that women’s rights are not properly realized there.

#### 5. Can Russia be our partner?

There is no other country that the United States has imposed as many sanctions on as Russia. Donald Trump even wanted to improve bilateral relations. Above all, the accusation that “Putin” interfered in the 2016 presidential elections has poisoned the atmosphere. The most serious allegation is that Russian agents tried to undermine the credibility of the US political system. The only question is whether you can undermine a political system even further than the Americans do it themselves. After all, the most important political actors are mutually delegitimizing their political actions.

Then there is the war of the secret services. When the Europeans' willingness to impose further sanctions on Moscow has bottomed out, a poisoned double agent suddenly appears. Shortly before the completion of Nord Stream2, an opposition leader is poisoned. Only the Russian bureaucracy knows why he is arrested and sentenced in front of the cameras so that these

images shock the whole world. But Russia has always been different. The political system in Moscow has followed its own rules for 1000 years. Why these could suddenly be changed by a "regime change" is again a secret that only the neoconservatives in Washington might know.

In view of the interests between Europe and Russia, it should be possible to develop the partnership in three areas: political, economic and security. Russia became a member of the Council of Europe in 1996 and thus, like the other members, has to comply with the relevant obligations with regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and can be measured against it. The basis of the economic partnership is clear: Russia is rich in the oil and gas that Europe needs. The countries of the European Union, in turn, are in a position to help Russia build the economic structures that a modern economy needs. Security partnership considerations must be based on the dangers a country or region is exposed to. If you are exposed to common dangers, then it is probably useful to work together. So there are fundamental reasons that speak in favor of a partnership between Europe and Russia. If American interests are different, then this must not be a pretext for uncritically adopting the enemy images built up in the USA.

6. How should we behave towards China?

In 2018, the European Union imported goods from China worth € 395 billion; exports amounted to € 210 billion. China is therefore a very important trading partner for Europe. Now, in its 2017 National Security Strategy, the USA once again emphasized that it is the guarantor of international order. Russia and China, on the other hand, were classified as hostile states. This is because the two countries are striving to reshape the international order, which, according to Washington, they are not allowed to do. In Washington, Chinese politics, especially President Xi Jinping's favorite project, the Belt and Road Initiative, is seen as a threat to the existing order. Leading scholars also believe that this whole development will amount to a war between the United States and China.

Donald Trump has declared an economic war on China, which is about much more than trade issues. It's about power, not values. It is about domination in a new international order. Even if Huawei were to sell more of its products in Europe, it would not convey Chinese values and ways of life. China advocates a multipolar world, wants to be an equal partner Beijing wants to exercise its rights in the South China Sea, but that does not mean a hegemonic claim to worldwide leadership. The United States has claimed this hegemonic status for generations. The crucial question is therefore: if Washington claims global leadership in all parts of the world, should other countries have the right to exert influence in their immediate neighborhood. China today is no longer a revolutionary state with a missionary mandate.

On human rights, Beijing emphasizes economic and social rights, on which great strides have been made over the past 40 years. This concerns the eradication of the worst poverty in the country, the greatly increased life expectancy, higher personal incomes and the freedom to travel. In the case of political and civil liberties, one argues defensively.

How should Europe behave? Will Europeans be able to represent their own interests? How can you change the behavior of an ancient civilization that has followed its own code of values since Confucius? If there is a way, it is through the development of the economy to create an

even broader middle class or to present institutions like those in Europe as role models. The European Union should endeavor to negotiate a new international order within the framework of multilateral institutions and not to force it through the use of force.

All in all, one can say that in increasingly multipolar world realignment, indeed a strengthening of the transatlantic partnership would be entirely appropriate. However, this must not be a one-way street; European values and interests must also be taken into account accordingly

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