

Konrad Adenauer Foundation  
Washington

**GERMAN-AMERICAN  
PARTNERSHIP:  
OVERCOMING THE CRISIS**

**Memorandum of the Transatlantic Experts Group  
July 16, 2003**

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# **German-American Partnership: Overcoming the Crisis**

## **Memorandum of the Transatlantic Experts Group**

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Relations between Germany and the United States of America are facing a grave crisis. Decades of close and friendly relations are at stake. Nonetheless, Germany and the United States remain key allies and have one of the world's most critical economic partnerships.

The partnership between Germany and the United States has been a major catalyst for transformation and positive change. Ending the Cold War, unifying Germany, pacifying the Balkans, and bringing Central and Eastern Europe into NATO were all historic policy successes that were based to a large extent on common German-US efforts. Moreover, Germany currently contributes more than 9,000 troops to operations in the Balkans, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa. Indeed, few countries contribute more troops to operations which are either supported or led by the United States. To reduce this relationship to an argument over insufficient German defense spending or US unilateralism over Iraq ignores the strategic significance of these relations and precludes their healing.

### **A Common Agenda**

Given the importance of the German-American partnership and the severity of the crisis, we cannot simply rely on the self-healing powers of this relationship. Both Germany and the US need to make an active and sustained effort toward reconciliation and reaffirm the enduring transatlantic community of values and interests. This process should not be expected to lead to a return to the status quo pre-"9/11" or pre-Iraq. Rather, it should result in a new, more mature German-American relationship that takes into account the new realities of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: new threats which require new responses; the European Union's legitimate aspiration to become a security actor in its own right; the expansion of the Euro-Atlantic community through the enlargement of NATO and EU; NATO's new, expanded roles; and the growing asymmetry in military capabilities between the US and its European allies.

To achieve such a new, more mature relationship, both Germany and the US need to take active and immediate steps to attenuate existing tensions, and to lay the groundwork for the reestablishment of trust, confidence, and effective partnership.

## **Action Priorities for Germany**

- Germany must demonstrate that it regards NATO as the primary instrument to pursue its security interests. It should refrain from supporting European initiatives which could be interpreted as being directed against NATO. As NATO's new roles in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate, the Alliance remains among the few effective institutions that square the circle of multilateralism, effectiveness, and a strong US commitment. This makes NATO a unique instrument for pursuing German security interests. By holding NATO consensus hostage to decisions taken by other institutions, as Germany did in February 2003 with respect to the defense of Turkey, Germany risks undermining a key instrument of its own foreign and security policy
  
- Germany should resist any temptation to turn the construction of a European Security and Defense Policy into an exercise of building a "counterweight" to the US. A significant majority of European nations are not ready to follow the Franco-German lead on all aspects of European integration, let alone on transatlantic matters. Notions of a "German way" or a Franco-German-Russian "axis" are dead-ends. Instead, Germany should promote projects which include the UK as well as the other NATO Allies, and which develop European capabilities that strengthen NATO while enabling the EU to achieve the full operational capability of the EU Reaction Force. In a similar vein, Germany should curtail its indiscriminate use of terms like "multipolarity". Multipolarity is neither a value in itself, nor is it certain that a multipolar world would automatically be a more stable one.
  
- Germany must put a premium on maintaining military "co-operability" with the United States. This means embracing the notion of transformation in both its technical as well as intellectual dimensions. This does not rule out defense initiatives in an EU context, yet for demanding military operations there will be no alternative to close cooperation with the United States. Germany must transform its armed forces, concentrating on certain key capabilities such as C4ISR, lift and bio-chem defenses. To this end, Germany has to increase its defense spending in order to restore its credibility as a military partner of the United States.
  
- German policy makers, in particular the German Government, must make a more active effort to raise public awareness about the new threats to national and international security and engage in a wider debate on German national security interests. The current strains in the US-German relationship are at least partly due to the difference in threat perception between the populations of both countries. Many Germans neither share the US sense of vulnerability, nor the American urgency in dealing with "rogue states". Moreover, "9/11", while continuing to be a defining event for the United States, is fading from the conscience of a German population focused almost entirely on domestic issues. In short, while America is still "at war", Germany is not. If this perceptual gap is not addressed, it is bound to lead to further friction in the future.

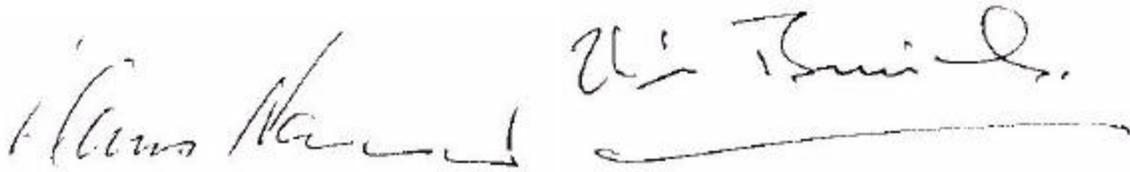
### **Action Priorities for the United States**

- The United States, its military preponderance notwithstanding, clearly needs Allies to deal with global security problems, and must engage in genuine consultation with them, specifically Germany. This requires a systematic effort to engage its Allies in early analysis, anticipation and joint planning for approaching common problems. The image of the United States as a country with growing military power, yet diminishing international prestige, has made it difficult for many allies to elicit support from their populations on controversial issues like Iraq.
- Even a nation without peers cannot remain a nation without allies. The United States should recommit itself to the cooperative international course that it has pursued steadfastly and successfully since 1945. It served the US interest then and it serves US interests now.
- The United States should make an active effort to repair ties with all of Europe rather than to perpetuate the notion of a "new" versus an "old" Europe. The United States has long regarded a united Europe as a key strategic interest. If the US were seen as actively trying to "disaggregate" Europe, it would provoke rather than prevent a European push towards alternative arrangements.
- The United States must reaffirm that the Alliance remains the focal point for developing a new transatlantic consensus in the post-"9/11" security environment. While this new security environment may on occasion call for "coalitions of the willing", this should not detract from NATO's proven value as a uniquely successful Alliance which offers the US an unprecedented degree of influence and Allied goodwill. As NATO's current adaptation to meet the challenges of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction demonstrates, it remains the indispensable legitimizing framework for US power in Europe. Thus, the US can remain a "European power", and exert considerable influence over Europe's consolidation as an undivided, democratic, market-oriented, and not least Atlanticist continent.

### **Joint Action Priorities**

- Both sides must refrain from using inflammatory rhetoric geared primarily towards their respective domestic audiences. Both Anti-Americanism and Anti-Europeanism will damage our strategic relationship.
- NATO's adaptation needs to continue. With its new roles in Afghanistan and Iraq, NATO has shed its "eurocentric" focus and is becoming an instrument for protecting transatlantic security interests wherever agreed. This opens a new opportunity for using NATO as a facilitator of German-US reconciliation. To exploit these opportunities, the US must make full use of the NATO consultation process. Germany, in turn, must engage fully in the transformation of NATO's military capabilities.

- The U.S. and Germany should work together to help develop a transatlantic strategy for the Greater Middle East. The war in Iraq has generated a new dynamic in the Middle East. This momentum must be sustained. In this context, an enhanced NATO role in stabilizing Iraq as well as in implementing an eventual Israeli-Palestinian settlement should be seriously explored. As a next step, a more active role for NATO in Iraq should be sought as soon as the international framework for such an involvement has been agreed. This would help to institutionalize transatlantic cooperation in an area of crucial strategic importance to both the United States and its allies.
- Germany and the United States must conduct a continuing strategic dialogue at the highest level to narrow their differences in threat perceptions and to develop common policies. This effort should be based on the US National Security Strategy and the forthcoming EU strategy statement. Such a German-US dialogue would represent a significant contribution to the needed American-European dialogue on global security issues.



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