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## The New Transatlantic Agenda: Does it have a fu- ture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

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## **The New Transatlantic Agenda: Does it have a future in the 21st Century?**

### **Introduction**

On December 3, 1995, a framework for a transatlantic partnership between the United States and the European Union was created. This partnership was to involve consultation and joint action in regards to important security and economic matters on both sides of the Atlantic. Presently, the current trend of events have appeared to be contrary to what the objectives of the New Transatlantic Agenda were.

In this paper, I seek to examine and analyze the European-American relationship in the post world war era especially in the light of the NTA and discuss the challenges affecting this relationship as we move on in the 21st century especially in the recent aftermath of the growing tensions between the two as a result of different security interests.

I will do this by tracing the development of the US-European relationship that arose after the world wars as a result of joint economic and political interests. From there I will outline the concept of the NTA actors, their roles and how they will go forth in the implementation of their objectives. This will lead me to talk about the issue differences between the EU and US that result in conflicts and lack of cooperation to enable them achieve the NTA goals. I will then end this paper by talking on how these two major actors can work together to enable an achievement of the NTA goals in this century.

### **The Development of the Post World War II US-EU Economic and Political Relationship**

After World War II, it was very vital that Europe was not to be dominated by a single world power like the former Soviet Union or Germany. The economies of the major western European powers had been seriously devastated and it seemed as if reconstruction efforts were going to be very difficult. The US had economic and national security interests in Europe and it was vital that they played a major part in the economic restructuring and the prevention against a German re-armament. Even though this was the main US goal, the Soviet threat also increased the participation of the US in European affairs.

“The US needed ready access to European markets, both for investment and for sales of goods and services. These goals were incompatible with an unstable Europe. Moreover, given geography, history, democracy, and politics, it was implausible that Western Europe could successfully insulate itself from chaos and instability in Central and Eastern Europe. Due to these important American interests in Europe, it was not surprising that in the 20th century when America was twice presented with a major threat to European equilibrium, posed in both instances by Germany, American forces were dispatched, at considerable cost in blood and treasure, to the continent.”

The result of the US perceiving the need for drastic measures to be taken in the rebuilding of Western Europe if it was to be saved from economic collapse and the threat of Soviet domination and German rearmament led to the launching of the European Recovery Programme (ERP). The ERP later came to be known as the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan offered massive financial assistance to the ailing economies of Europe. This lend-lease plan anchored by the US needed institutional support of the part of its European beneficiaries and in

1948, the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was founded with the express purposes of assisting in the distribution of American aid and of working out a code for the liberalization of trade and transactions among its sixteen member states. The OEEC was part of a process that led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) which became the European Economic Community (EEC) and consequently the European Union (EU).

The NATO treaty was signed in 1949. The treaty was said to be inspired by the West European nations who felt strongly that no satisfactory equilibrium and assurance of security could be guaranteed without the full participation of the US in an alliance with them. This was not surprising since the failure of the League of Nations had been attributed to the lack of US involvement with the institution. It was felt that if the US had been in, they would have been able to enforce some of the league's decisions and maintain a kind of coordination as opposed to allowing their individual interests over riding, the collective interests. NATO was a marking point of which US official alliance in different spheres started off. To make the treaty possible, it was required that America leave its isolationism; Western Europe had to bury past divisions and create new associations; and the Central and Eastern European Countries come together with those of Western Europe. It should be noted that this is a challenge these countries still face.

So far I have been able to talk about the initial development and expansion of the US and EU joint interests after World War II. For the Western Europeans, it was very vital that the US played a major role in their post war reconstruction for the US, it was important that they helped in the reconstruction of Europe. The United Kingdom, France, Germany, (the three which seen as the major EU powers) and the US are the major decision makers which wield the greatest powers within the major world regimes now. However it seems that the fates of the European states even after their post world success of economic integration and development continues to depend on decisions made in America. The recent divide within the EU in regards to America's "unilateral" decision to invade Iraq without a UN mandate is a perfect example of this. I will talk about the effect of this divide on the transatlantic relationship after I discuss the New Transatlantic Agenda.

### **The Policy, Polity and the Politics of the New Trans-atlantic Agenda**

On 3 December 1995 at the EU-US Summit in Madrid, European Commission President Santer, Spanish Prime Minister González, as President of the European Council, and then US President Clinton signed the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA). This provided a new framework for a partnership of global significance, designed to lend a new quality to the transatlantic relationship, moving it from one of consultation to one of joint action in four major fields: promoting peace and stability, democracy and development around the world; responding to global challenges; contributing to the expansion of world trade and closer economic relations; and building bridges across the Atlantic.

The NTA, accompanied by a joint US-EU Action plan is set out to no less than 150 specific actions to which the US and EU have committed themselves. These range from promoting political and economic reform in Ukraine to combating AIDS; from reducing barriers to transatlantic trade and investment to promoting links between colleges and universities. The NTA is a portrayal of the desire for a continued transatlantic cooperation in the 1990's and it defined the framework, the agenda and the institutionalism of US-EU relations from 1995 onwards. A major significance of the NTA was recognition not of the separate European countries but of the EU as a joint international actor with the US. A strengthening of relationship between these two actors was forecasted and the agenda was meant to serve as a catalyst for increased

multilateralism and burden sharing. With this, it was expected that the EU-US relations deepen in existing policy areas while readapting the relationship to the widened scope of EU competences.

To help implement these objectives, the two sides reaffirmed a commitment to NATO and the indivisibility of transatlantic security. There was also a further agreement to the further adaptation of NATO into the European Security and Defense Community as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the alliance. In theory, the development of the ESDC was particularly welcomed as a new step towards a bigger EU contribution towards a new burden sharing. The security architecture of Europe envisaged by the two parties reflects the changes brought about by the establishment of the CFSP and the development of efforts to enhance the capabilities of the Western European Union as a military arm of the EU. The eastern enlargement of the EU and NATO especially towards the former Soviet Republic countries was considered as further guarantees to security, stability and prosperity in Europe and gradually towards other parts of the world.

### **Different perceptions, different issues, different threats**

According to an empirical analysis carried out by Carla Monteleone to find out the impact of the transatlantic alliance on the international security issues between the 1990-1997 periods, it was noted that it was easier for the EU and the US to achieve their goals with joint cooperation rather than with a unilateral approach. The greater intervention role seems to be fortified more with the intervention of the role of the EU.

However, this does not seem to be so especially since the beginning of the 21st century. Over the years and especially more recently, the two major actors within the NTA have had different perceptions of different issues which have resulted in conflicts and prevented them from achieving the goals of the NTA. Post 9/11, the EU countries rallied around the US to declare their support and continued cooperation with the EU to help to solve the threat issue of terrorism. It produced a heightened degree of transatlantic harmony with the US. Immediately following the terrorist attack, Europe proclaimed its "unlimited solidarity" with the US and backing up such talk, NATO allies invoked the Article V mutual defense clause of NATO.

Recent events however prove that the two perceive threats in different manners and therefore their response to the threats vary a lot especially in regards to the time frame for intervention and the severity of the action. One of the reasons for this is that it will take a similar 9/11 attack in Europe for the Europeans to really feel threatened the same way that the US feels about terrorists. Also the fact that the EU is made up of different sovereign states with different perceptions and different reactions makes it difficult for them to come to a consensus on some very vital issues. To prove this, no other example can be more appropriate than the disunity that faced and still faces the EU in the light of the US invasion of Iraq. The major EU powers were at cross roads on the appropriate step to take. We had the United Kingdom with Spain and Italy on the one hand being for the invasion while we had on the other hand, countries like France and Germany on the other hand being against it.

Also, the following the break up of Yugoslavia, the United States and Europe were unable to concert their diplomacy or the use of, military force to help solve the crisis within Bosnia. The US was inclined to avoid entanglement and hand responsibility for Bosnia to a Europe that proved unable and unwilling and this only made matters worse. It was not until matters grew severe that there was a United States led NATO involvement there. In 1998, a similar pattern unfolded in Kosovo. In this case, both the US and the EU were slow to react to the mostly

Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo. Here again, the US and Europe found themselves at odds over the proper ends and means of policy, most notably the use of military force.

The development of a Rapid Response Force, RRF under the ESDC has been a recent source of contention between the two sides of the Atlantic. The RRF is meant to evolve into a military and defense arm of the EU and there is fear from the side of the US that this will result in a duplication of NATO and also make NATO irrelevant in the future. According to the US ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns, "The rules of the road are that NATO and the EU are partners...that the EU will not develop duplicative institutions...ideas promoted in France to build up the EU as a counterweight to US power in the world would be "a recipe for failure." Even though the US seems to be opposed to the EU formation of a separate military capability from NATO, they are doing a "go it alone" in a different way. In the new "National Security Strategy of the United States," even though there is a move to work towards the continued work-ing with its allies on the prevention of terrorism finance, the US is prepared and reserves the right to act preemptively and or unilaterally on grounds of self-defense.

All the above mentioned issues prove that the NTA is no where far from where it started from and if there is any hope of achieving the goals of the NTA, the two major actors have to really learn to work together to achieve them.

### **What Hope, if any for the future of the NTA?**

I believe that there is much hope for the future of the NTA in this century but this future success lies in the hands of the two major actors. The US has been too much involved in the EU since its onset to decide to move apart or step back and dust its hands off EU matters. The economies and politics of the two are so interdependent and intertwined that a termination of this alliance will be damaging to the two. The sooner the United States and EU-Europe realize how entangled and inter-reliant the transatlantic economy has become, a dynamic mutually beneficial to all par-tied, the sooner they will realize what is at stake.

The only way the RRF can become relevant within and outside of Europe is if it works with NATO and the UN peace-keeping force to improve their military and crisis management capacities. The impending enlargement of the EU and NATO towards Central and Eastern Europe means that there will be more countries of different sizes and capabilities making joint decisions together with the EU. The EU has to keep its own house in order so as to work with the US. If there is disunity within the EU, it will be impossible or at least very difficult for the Union to reach a joint agreement with the US.

The EU governments need to consult with the US governments before acting or coming to decisions that can prove extraordinary difficult to carry out. It is only through this that the CFSP can become very relevant. Also, the US needs to put a check on its decisions to take unilateral actions because it can never be to its benefit to work alone. In the long run, it will still need the support of the EU. This is evident in the US calling for support of other countries especially those of the EU and also requesting the peace keeping and nation building units of NATO and the UN to assist in the rebuilding of Iraq.

The ability of the two to cooperate will have a major impact on whether the emerging era of international relations turns out to be one that is more or less violent, prosperous, and democratic. Even, disagreements on particular areas that are outside the EU and US region will inevitably affect the ability of Americans and Europeans to cooperate on other issues, regardless of the venue.

The major goal of the NTA is the promotion of peace and stability and responding to global challenges. If these two actors allow their individual interests to continue to override their collective interests, these goals can never be achieved. It is only in joint cooperation that these goals can be achieved.

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