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Dr. Michaela Hertkorn: An Outlook on Transatlantic Relations – after the ‘no-votes’ on the EU constitution and the terror attacks in London

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## **An Outlook on Transatlantic Relations - after the 'no-votes' on the EU constitution and the terror attacks in London**

The following comments were presented at the 4th Annual Transatlantic Studies Association Conference at the University of Nottingham on July 12, 2005. Parts of the presentation below will be published as 'Athena Paper' by Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes of Columbia University in July 2005 with the title 'Why German – US Relations Still Matter – Two Years after the War in Iraq: An Assessment of Transatlantic Relations – from a German Perspective'.

While German-US relations and French-US relations turned sour on the issue of Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003, the question ever since then has been, what are the prospects for a new chapter in both, German-US relations and overall transatlantic relations? This question today needs to be addressed, in the light of President Bush's re-election in November 2004, two years after war in Iraq and more than three years after September 11, 2001.

The events and developments just in the first week of July 2005, provide an elevated urgency and relevance to the issues in question. In this regard, we may quote from just one article of the Wall Street Journal dated July 11, 2005: “The longest week: EU presidency begins; in Saudi Arabia for support on Iraq, then Singapore for Olympic bid; Live8 reverberates; G8 summit opens; London triumphs; wrangling on environment, progress on aid, shattered by terrorist attacks.” These events concern the activities of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair. With regard to a German perspective, we can refer to the countless reports on probably upcoming federal elections, Schroeder's self-initiated ‘no-confidence-vote’ in the Lower House – the Bundestag – on July 1st 2005. And, interestingly, from both an intra-European and transatlantic perspective, early July also witnessed the 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad. To commemorate the event, Russia's President opted to invite French President Chirac and Germany's Chancellor Schroeder, but ignored the heads of state and government of neighboring countries, Poland and Lithuania – a clear diplomatic snub for example for Poland, which has been a close ally to US policy in Iraq, but also during Ukraine's democratic revolution. Putin also sent a signal that he was trying to intensify relations between Russia and the EU, namely between Russia and so-called ‘old Europe’ in the form of France and Germany – while clearly not primarily emphasizing the changed nature of an enlarged Europe – enlarged for instance by Poland, Lithuania and other Baltic countries in 2004.

When dealing with the transatlantic alliance, one of the main actors – next to various nation-states - has been and is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It seems and is, however, increasingly important to also consider the European Union (EU). Both organizations have seen their members enlarged in 2004, and the so-called common European foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European security and defense policy (ESDP) have caused tensions in recent years within the transatlantic alliance and among NATO members because of the very important questions: how common can Europe get? Should Europe create a ‘counter-balancing’ superpower challenging the US?

The relevance of these questions – and how much the so-called intra-European context matters – has been highlighted a few weeks ago when both the French and the Dutch voted ‘no’ on the EU constitution! I would conquer with an article in the Economist of June 4, 2005 that

– quote: “...the dream of deeper political integration and ... (of an) ever closer (European) union is over”. Quote: “The decisive French and Dutch noes have killed the constitution stone dead”.

One can conclude that a so-called ‘two speed Europe’ with countries, such as France and Germany proceeding with the creation of a real federation, which has been the vision of Germany’s Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, or creating a ‘counter-balancing European superpower - probably Jacques Chirac’s vision - will not become a reality. The question now is: if ever closer integration or ‘deepening’ has suffered a serious setback, what will happen to further enlargement concerning countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey? In other words: If deepening is over, what will happen to widening? The last EU Summit in Brussels of June 16 to 17, 2005 turned out as ‘battle ground’ of diverging views on the future direction of Europe, in political and economic terms. The two main antagonists Jacques Chirac and Tony Blair argued over EU subsidies with Britain not giving in this time, demanding that more of the EU budget be spent on research, instead on the CAP, the agricultural policy. At the G8 Summit in early July 2005, similar differences appeared between Great Britain on the one hand and France and Germany on the other hand, with Germany and France firmly opposing the phasing out of subsidized exports by 2010 – subsidies that limit free trade options for developing countries on the EU market.

With regard to Germany, it is the largest net contributor to the EU budget, and its unpopular Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was a heavy promoter of an ever closer European Union. In other words: The main focus of German foreign policy in the last seven years has been: ‘European integration’. The issue of Iraq in 2002/2003 caused intra-European rifts because not every European country went along with France and Germany opposing US policy on Iraq and because many smaller European countries in East and West felt increasingly ‘dominated’ by France and Germany - two countries that repeatedly have not met the requirements of the European Union Stability Pact.

A few weeks ago, Germany’s Chancellor – faced with growing economic problems – called for early federal elections in Germany this September – one year earlier than originally scheduled. The likely change of government in Germany in Fall 2005 and the no-vote by French citizens on the EU constitution already has a strong impact on both, intra-European dynamics and on transatlantic relations.

The following remarks are based on research conducted during the last four years. It generally focused on the changing state of transatlantic relations and began before September 11, 2001. Three phases were identified from a methodological point of view: The so-called pre-Bush, the Bush and the post-9/11-Bush phase. In the meantime, the so-called ‘post-Iraq-war-phase’ and the ‘second-Bush-administration-phase’ need to be added.

First, the so-called pre-Bush phase dealt with the long-term stabilization in the Balkans and a common European security and defense policy (ESDP) – in the aftermath of NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999,

Second, the so-called Bush-phase began with the election of President Bush in November 2000. It ended on September 11, 2001. The Bush administration put missile defense on top of its foreign policy agenda. The withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol caused considerable frustration among German political leadership.

Before the first two visits by President Bush to Europe in early summer 2001, one could anticipate that the US might need Germany in EU and NATO because of Germany’s close partnership with France and its good relations with Russian President, Vladimir Putin. However,

in that early Summer of 2001, the Bush administration entered Europe via Spain and Italy, were warmly welcomed, and Britain had already turned around. Furthermore, the sudden rapprochement of Putin and Bush on NATO enlargement and missile defense came as a surprise to German political elites. Having ‘charmed’ Britain, Spain and Italy, the core assumption of needed to be changed: The Bush administration could bypass Germany and France. The continuing flare up of German anti-Bush-anti-Americanism in German media put Germany in confrontation with the US already back in July/August 2001. This assessment served as basis for further analysis post-9/11.

3. The so-called post-9/11-Bush phase started on September 11, 2001. A date that changed parameters defining transatlantic relations. Policy issues of tensions between the Allies, like the Kyoto protocol, missile defense, suddenly were not on top of the transatlantic agenda anymore. Germany declared its post-World War II era over, and NATO was confronted with its first case of collective defense and invoked Article V.

In September 2002, NATO Ambassadors in Poland discussed NATO enlargement and how to streamline members’ capabilities. NATO’s Transformation Declaration of October 2002, stated NATO would go global where the threat was – also based on UN resolutions. This meant something new: NATO formally embraced ‘out of area missions’. The US proposition to create a NATO reaction force for peacekeeping, which was accepted at NATO’s November 2002 Summit in Prague, was going to have a lasting impact on the rapid reaction forces of the EU as the rapid reaction forces is a corner stone of the common European security and defense policy, or ESDP.

France and Germany have been the two countries in NATO and the EU – together with Belgium – that felt uneasy about the previously characterized developments. Why? The reasons have to do with how the common European security and defense policy or ESDP was conceptualized in the first place by different EU member states - views that are remarkably different within Europe:

Britain perceives ESDP incorporated in NATO, Germany’s current government regards ESDP as soft-power alternative to NATO. France hopes for ESDP to create hard-power alternatives to NATO. The French position is not new: When Paris proposed the creation of a European Defense Community (EDC) in the early 1950s, it was an attempt to avoid German rearmament in NATO. Paris hoped for a strong European defense pillar that was independent from NATO. When the EDC – a French proposal - was ironically defeated in the French Assembly in 1954, the US proceeded with re-arming Western-Germany. Western integration in Europe was thus intrinsically linked with strong transatlantic ties. In a remarkably similar way, French leadership in recent years was heavily in favor of the EU constitution. That it was now voted down by the French citizens seems to make up for an ironic ‘deja-vu’.

Plans for EU military and defense capabilities – fully independent from NATO - suffered their various setbacks. In December 2003 at a meeting of NATO foreign and defense ministers, it was decided not to include a defense clause within the constitution of the EU and not to create an independent EU military headquarter. Also; on December 13, 2003 the EU failed to agree on the constitutional draft. With the EU constitution now at least put on hold are for instance plans for a common EU Foreign Minister.

With regard to intra-European relations in 2004 the dynamics changed after 3/11 or the terrorist attacks in Madrid. Before that, the main transatlantic dialogue took place between Washington DC and certain European countries on a bi-lateral level, all around France and Germany – avoiding the two: Great Britain to the North, Italy to the South, Spain to the West and Poland to the East of Germany – those were the most important European allies to the US,

particularly post 9/11. After a new socialist government assumed power in Spain in Spring 2004, parameters for both transatlantic and intra-EU relations changed again.

We may ask now, what may be the immediate and long-term impact of ‘7/7’ – the recent attacks on London? May we see Europe internally moving together and Europe’s national governments sharing more intelligence? Will the EU take on a larger counter-terrorism role? Will the solidarity demonstrated between France and the UK during Blair’s press conference with foreign leaders at the G8 summit prevail? Will it move the US and all its allies closer together?

By mid 2004, transatlantic and intra-EU relations could be characterized as follows: Germany seemed to realize that ‘being the junior partner of France’ instead of the ‘junior partner of the US’ actually hurt its own national interests. Chancellor Schroeder tried to convince Germany’s ‘smaller’ EU neighbors that France and Germany were not intent on ‘dominating the European Union’, though French-German relations were still ‘a driving force for EU integration’. The French ‘no vote’ on the constitution provided a blow to this policy, hurting not only Chirac badly politically, but also the Schroeder government across the Rhine.

An article in the Economist of April 10, 2004 ‘Of Entente, understanding and Verstaendnis’ stated: “Meanwhile the French realize that, in a EU of 25, the Franco-German motor is not going to be enough to preserve their influence”.

With regard to Great Britain, a common summit of Chirac, Schroeder and Blair in Berlin in Mid February 2004, speculated about the rise of a so-called ‘menage a trois’. Did Great Britain have to try harder to make certain that its own interests were added to the French-German Duo?

What concerns the EU in general, the attacks in Madrid added a sense of urgency in Europe: Terror concerned Europe, too – whether (just) as allies to the US, or not. The in-famous ‘Bin Laden’ tape and the murder of an Italian hostage in Iraq - all in March and April 2004 - seemed for a while to have the potential to ‘unite’ Europeans, instead of pulling ‘US protagonists’ away from those countries that did not support the war in Iraq.

Given the latest enlargement round in both, the European Union - ten countries joined the EU on May 1, 2004 - and NATO - seven countries joined NATO on March 29, 2004 - the EU and NATO seem to be moving closer conceptually, too; meaning an increasing number of countries are members both in EU and NATO, their heads of state are meeting on a regular basis, and both organizations’ members contribute to international peace operations.

This view is not necessarily supported by the current German government. During a security conference in Munich in early 2005, Germany’s Chancellor Schröder surprised NATO allies with a proposal to reform NATO. Germany’s Defense Minister argued NATO as an organization had not adjusted well enough to a changed geo-political landscape and had outlived its purpose as the main organization facilitating transatlantic dialogue. There were other important players to be counted with; meaning the EU should take over NATO’s decisive role. The remarks were not well received within the Alliance. NATO General Secretary, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer declared, NATO was well capable militarily and politically to meet all current challenges. NATO was the body where major transatlantic consultations took place. Javier Solana, the High Representative of the Common European Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) emphasized, NATO had not lost its relevance. The remarks by the German Chancellor came only a few days after the Spring 2005 visit by US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to

Europe – a visit generally well perceived by the European press. After her talks in Berlin, for example, Rice obtained a pledge from Germany’s Chancellor to do more to help Iraq. The Chancellor highlighted the Iraqi need for democracy and stability and that Germany, which had begun training Iraqi police officers in the United Arab Emirates, was ready to help if the Iraqi government asked for it. Schröder’s surprising NATO declaration also came after NATO had agreed to expand its Afghanistan mission during a February meeting in Nice; and after the Chancellor had told Rice that Germany would ‘accept a new command structure for peacekeeping and anti-terror operations in Afghanistan, under the condition that the two missions remained separate’. At the same time, backed by the Alliance’s Secretary-General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, obviously pushed every NATO member to contribute to a NATO training mission in Iraq.

All NATO members by late 2004 agreed to either send troops to Baghdad, to train Iraqi officers outside the country, or to donate to a trust fund financing the mission. NATO members thus agreed on an official peace-keeping and nation-building role for NATO as an organization in Iraq.

Why the German Chancellor chose to make his surprising comments one week before the visit of President George W. Bush to Europe, in Spring 2005, remains somewhat unclear.

During President Bush’s visit to Europe, French President Jacques Chirac not-surprisingly welcomed the Schröder ‘plan’ to ‘out-balance’ NATO through EU and thus to ‘counter-balance’ US leadership in NATO.

The statement by the German government may also have been aimed at a domestic audience, possibly to distract from growing economic problems.

With regard to Germany’s economic problems, the country is now facing an unprecedented level of unemployment: a level not seen since the end of World War II and resembling Weimar conditions.

Interestingly, in January 2005, the German Chancellor made a case for national sovereignty, and this in the only area where the European Union successfully managed to transfer sovereignty to the transnational level: the economy. Schröder “demanded that the EU’s near-defunct stability and growth pact be relaxed by exempting swathes of public spending from its budget-deficit ceilings. He added in a Financial Times article that ‘intervention by European institutions in the budgetary sovereignty of national parliaments [should be] permitted only under very limited conditions.’”

While on the one hand (suddenly) supporting national sovereignty with regard to fiscal and budgetary policy, the Chancellor tried to bypass a decision recently made by the German parliament, not to lift the sanctions and the arms embargo previously put on China. The Chancellor tried to enable the European Commission to go ahead with the lifting of the embargo. This is a perfect example, how external relations on the European level as promoted by the EU Commission can conflict with national parliaments in Europe – without much public discourse or scrutiny.

The policy by the German Chancellor to support the lifting of the arms embargo needs to be seen in the light of strong, national economic interests and Germany’s growing export dependency.

The issue of lifting the EU weapons embargo against China was discussed during President

Bush’s Spring 2005 visit to Europe and promises to remain on top of the agenda with regard to future transatlantic disputes.

It seems that growing economic tensions and rivalries between some European countries, such as Germany, and the United States might be at the center of future transatlantic problems.

Growing export dependency by Germany from countries such as China is paralleled by an unprecedented energy dependency from Russia; two countries that play a decisive role in international relations with regard to conflicts, such as North Korea, Iran or Syria.

It is troubling, that the close relationship between German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be based on national economic interests, while concerns about democratic reform in Russia seem not to be the decisive factor in Berlin when dealing with Moscow.

When linking these economic arguments with the ‘no-vote’ in France and Holland regarding the EU constitution, it is striking how intensely the debate has suddenly become, in Germany and other European capitals, whether and to which extent the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the Euro were a mistake. While the no-vote on the constitution arguably dealt a blow to further political integration, it is somewhat surprising, how the Euro is currently being ‘talked down’ by precisely the very same politicians – for example the Schroeder government - who were among the staunchest proponents of further or complete political European integration. So, are the governments of Germany, France and Italy simply blaming the Euro for any economic problems to distract from necessary economic reforms that are long outstanding?

Back to NATO and its increased role in peacekeeping ‘out of area’, in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Whatever differences may have existed between the United States and some of its old allies, like France and Germany in 2002, 2003 or 2004 regarding foreign policy issues ranging from Afghanistan, Iraq, China to NATO and the common European foreign and security policy, President Bush’s trip to Europe in Spring 2005 highlighted the still crucial alliance between Europe and the United States.

The American President made sure to visit both international organizations that have emerged as main actors with regard to the transatlantic and intra-European security dialogue - the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

President Bush in effect emphasized the importance of a strong and united Europe and characterized NATO as the “most successful alliance in the history of the world”.

Following his visit, an article in the Economist of February 26, 2005 titled “Are NATO and the European Union partners or rivals?” It argued that the European split over Iraq had gone “far beyond the merits of deposing Saddam Hussein. It showed that there are two broad approaches to security within the EU”.

As argued previously, intra-European relations may in the end have suffered more from the dispute within the transatlantic community over the issue of war in Iraq than transatlantic relations as such. When the governments of France and Germany rallied Europe or the EU against US policy at the turn of 2002 to 2003, intra-European or intra-EU cohesion gave way! The long-term impact is not yet fully foreseeable. The foreign policy issue of war in Iraq in that



sense may have been a turning point in European integration. Troubled German-US relations in particular had a negative impact on the transatlantic community, too: first, the troubled bilateral relationship negatively affected so-called NATO transformation; second, again, it negatively affected intra-European relations and weakened overall intra-EU cohesion. Germany's sole alliance with France from on early 2003 remarkably weakened German diplomatic options with regard to some of its main recent foreign policy goals, such as a permanent United Nations Security Council Seat or the establishment of a real European Union 'federation'.

The particular issue of war in Iraq led to alarming conclusions about the so-called 'near death' of the transatlantic Alliance (Elizabeth Pond) or the US and Germany supposedly 'parting ways'.

We can, however, today conclude that the Alliance has yet again survived another round of transatlantic 'jitters'.

Right after September 11, 2001, an important question was, would 9/11 strengthen European commitment in NATO or, alternatively, a so-called common European foreign and security policy?

As indicated in previous remarks, this still is THE core question – a question that lies at the core of much of Europe's internal fights, whether Europe should integrate further, what integration means, whether Europe should have its constitution and its own foreign minister, or whether it should counter-balance the United States or work together with it closely.

We can conclude that the ‘no-votes’ in France and the Netherlands in June 2005 with regard to a EU constitution arguably strengthened the pro-American and pro-Transatlantic alliance camp in the European theatre.

The recent attacks in London should strengthen and unite the 'old West' as it was set on a course in the aftermath of World War II - based on both, strong transatlantic ties and (formerly Western) European integration - instead of dividing the allies on both sides of the Atlantic, or alternatively, instead of dividing 'old Europe' from 'new Europe'.

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