

Europe's strategic interests The role of German foreign and security policy en route to European self- determination and global responsibility

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EGON BAHR, born 1922, professor and former minister of the Federal Republic of Germany was, together with Willy Brandt, the architect of the policy of détente in the 1960s. He is the SPD's most important foreign policy mentor. This text is based on a speech he gave at the 4th Willy-Brandt-Forum of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Brussels on March 29, 2007. Egon Bahr celebrated his 85th birthday on March 18 of this year.

Europe does not threaten anyone, Europe is geared to stability; Europe has no enemies nor does it have any territorial aspirations. It could be a heavy-weight force, but Europe as a whole is still reluctant to accept its role as a global player. Germany should concentrate all its efforts towards ensuring that Europe becomes the fifth pole in a multipolar world.

Discussions about our foreign and security policy interests are taking place in a favourable environment; there is no current controversy to muddy the waters. No-one is expecting ground-breaking innovation on European issues until the political situation in Paris and London has been resolved after the presidential elections and the change of leadership in the Labour party. On the other hand, we do not need to take account of the successors to either Putin or Bush, since no-one can say who they will be. Quick-fire solutions to the Kosovo negotiations are not in demand. This is therefore an almost ideal starting point for an open exchange of views between people from the fields of science, government and policy. I mean openness in a dual sense of allowing new initiatives and arguments into the equation. I will attempt to justify my point of view and to distil it into a few salient points.

There are three overriding factors which govern the orientation of German foreign and security policy: America, Europe and Russia.

In all this, I believe that the element of paramount importance is to establish clarification about our relationship with America. The reasons are simple: America is the only superpower, America is the leading power in NATO, and it is thanks to America's credibility and steadfastness that the Cold War was brought to a satisfactory conclusion. We are linked to America through principles, some shared, some not.

Without claiming that this is a comprehensive view, I would like to begin with the values we do not share. America's values include the death penalty, the right of private individuals to bear arms, the power of the president to declare war and deploy troops without the agreement of the nation's parliament, a penal system primarily free of rights for the incarcerated where the state decides what constitutes torture and what does not, illegal kidnapping of foreign nationals and the refusal to allow US citizens to be placed under the jurisdiction of the International Court in The Hague. The USA's refusal to sign up to international treaties

goes hand in glove with its assumed right to cancel contracts with which America no longer agrees and to wage preventive wars whenever America stands to gain. The national consciousness and sense of mission are inextricably linked. This amalgam represents a moral standard which is non-negotiable. The perception of nation and state will remain very diverse on both sides of the Atlantic; these are cultural differences which have developed in the course of history.

All of us can name shared principles such as democracy and pluralism. As the foundation of our alliance with the US, they remain strong enough, quite apart from the existential economic links; yet anyone who unthinkingly invokes a community of shared values must know that this could produce a formula of subjugation if our own values are no longer clearly represented. Without the right to assertion of our European principles, we are on the path from protectorate to colony.

It is Europe's responsibility to make "co-operation" the buzzword of the century.

However, there are two points which cannot be denied. America would not be the power that it is today without those principles and those principles will still apply, whoever becomes the 44th President of the USA. The fact that those principles are not shared by Europe could be due - to put it in a somewhat unkind way - to the fact that the European states now lack the power which, when they did have it, they were not loath to use. The history of colonialism remains fresh in people's minds. Conversely, it could be argued in a more favourable, though honest way, that Europe has learned the painful and agonising lessons of the dreadful history of its many wars and has made its military weakness into its strength: Europe's miraculous recovery, present living standard and attractiveness are the result of peaceful co-existence. Anyone who looks at the great problems of this century - the environment, tension between Christianity and Islam or overcoming terrorism - will have to admit that this cannot be addressed by the power of military hardware, but rather by peaceful co-operation. It is a European responsibility to make "co-operation" the key word for our century. The different perceptions on each side of the Atlantic regarding the perception of nation and state are part of that different culture which represents an unchangeable result of history.

Yet this fact does not need to pose such a big hurdle for fertile co-operation in the future as it did in the past. Based on the aforementioned solid foundations, the awareness of joint similar or divergent interests will be of key importance. America has a global responsibility and is indispensable when it comes to providing a policing role. Europe is in its

infancy when it comes to achieving a global role. America already has an established identity in this field, while Europe is still looking for one.

An analysis suggests two possible conclusions: one is that the bond that we experienced between Europe and America during the Cold War cannot be reconstituted; and the other is that Europe's self-determination can only be achieved through a process of emancipation from America.

America's emancipation from Europe

Basically, this development began with America's own emancipation from Europe. That was set in motion during the Cold War when the superpower observed how its European protégé strove in vain for decades to achieve its goal of self-determination, of speaking politically with one voice. America learned not to take Europe seriously; instead the superpower acted on its own responsibility and in its own interests. It could not and should not have acted any other way. The often-heard complaint of the Europeans of not being informed or even consulted was equally often assuaged with assurances that the Americans would mend their ways. One only has to take account of how today's Europe is viewed by Washington to realise there is no other conclusion to arrive at: there is still no serious date in sight on which the EU will be able to speak with one voice.

One important step in America's emancipation was marked by the inauguration of the present administration. Although the USA emerged as the victor of the Cold War, was in a militarily superior position and was not threatened by any other state in the world, the country embarked upon a gigantic rearmament programme, on land and water and in the air, including new atomic weapons and the militarisation of outer space. Any and every state or group of states was to be discouraged from even entering an arms race with America. After the humiliating shock of the attacks on September 11, 2001, which were not initiated by any nation state, the programme was practically nodded through by the Senate and House of Representatives without discussion and is still being implemented. This set in motion an avalanche of arms procurement which went as far as Asia and did not exclude Russia. This process will be limited not by treaties but by the financial and technical means at the disposal of the individual countries in question. Monitoring of armaments is therefore effectively off the international agenda.

One truly disastrous step in the direction of emancipation was seen in America's response to Europe's unqualified demonstration of solidarity. The feelings of loyalty following September 11 were free of any political calculation, after the united front against terror was born and the UN

mandate for action against the terrorists in Afghanistan had followed. For the first time in its history, NATO offered to invoke Art. 5 of the NATO treaty for collective self-defence. Washington's polite gratitude and its decision to choose between the Willing and Unwilling (those "for" and "against" us), split the NATO alliance, and its differentiation of "old" and "new" Europe divided Europe. This differentiation does not have to have been the result of a political consideration, in the sense of "divide and rule". It can also have emerged from the American black-and-white maxim of the new always being better and the old being bad. Even if this dictum does not represent a particularly up-to-date and unfriendly gaffe by Donald Rumsfeld, it is at least proof of yet another difference in cultural sensitivity on both sides of the big pond: State-side the unshakable certainty of the justice of the mission, and on the continent the desire for a suitably responsible attitude.

The fact that Germany and France together with a number of other European states refused to participate in the Iraq war was a positive sign: Europe was beginning to define its own interests and to follow the result of its own analysis, which has moreover been proved to be right. A military campaign brilliantly carried out in circumstances of superiority is no guarantee of political success. If you are not willing to say "no" to the leading power then you cannot achieve self-determination.

Europe is beginning to formulate its own interests, following the findings of its own analysis.

At the same time, it is amazing to witness the stringency with which President Bush is pursuing his strategic line. On his first visit to Poland he made an announcement, which at that time was not taken seriously by everyone, that his aim was to form a solid land bridge from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Anyone who looked at a map would have noticed that Georgia and the Caucasus region were just the other side of the Black Sea. The strategic aim of American policy, of establishing a south-east flank from the unsinkable aircraft carrier of Europe with the further goal of controlling a region stretching beyond the Middle East to include Afghanistan and Iran as well as the new states on the southern edge of the former Soviet Union, ties in well with American interests. Despite various setbacks with heavy casualties, President Bush has not veered from his strategic line. Those setbacks include the departure from the arrogant strategy of unipolarity after 2001, when Washington believed it did not need to listen to the annoying hurdles placed in its path by the UN and NATO. That was the phase of the USA's highly developed power consciousness, which lasted until 2005. There is no denying that it cannot have been easy for the White House to seek the help of the UN

and the Alliance in the Iraq crisis. It could well be that we are witnessing a partly cautious and partly reluctant methodic adjustment of American policy to the realisation that month by month China and India are becoming stronger and Russia is not growing weaker; in other words, that an American orientation towards multipolarity has become inevitable. This can also give us hope that the successor to the present US president will abandon his arrogant security doctrine and return to the world order of the UN. That would certainly be a source of great relief.

America will remain a superior military power for the next 20 years.

For our own orientation there are three main issues here:

1. The next presidents will continue to pursue a policy of strengthening their country and its influence in the world. America will for at least the next 20 years remain the power whose military might continues to grow.
2. The national "grand strategy" demands control of the Near and Middle East - and beyond. That too will not change, because both of these aims are supported at home.
3. Any interest in Europe becoming a true fifth pole in the world is not likely to be great.

When it comes to the last point, deliberations in Washington about NATO are important and revealing. The rediscovery of NATO under the heading of "transformation" runs along different paths, though in one single direction: how can we shape the Alliance into an instrument to support our globally-based policy? In all this, the interests of the Alliance partners are secondary to those of the USA.

For instance, it is clearly in the Americans' interest to limit Russian influence in the Caucasus, and perhaps beneficial for Turkey too, but not directly for Norway or Germany. The fact that NATO is no longer the central location for transatlantic dialogue, a fact which Gerhard Schröder bemoaned two years ago in Munich, is welcomed by some in Washington while others there have doubts about the loyalty of the alliance partners, leading to a need to perhaps choose those nations willing and able to participate in a given course of action. Furthermore, there is no inclination to formalise the security policy discussion between the EU and the USA, since that would help the EU to establish itself as an independent pole. The expansion of the Alliance by adding new members and skills is seen pragmatically as part of the USA's national "grand strategy". That includes new topics like energy security for which NATO is expected to take responsibility, and a stronger commitment to Africa.

By now, the pressure has been increased on the Allies to at least provide more money for a swifter process of modernisation of their armed forces: modernisation, that is, so that European units can be deployed alongside American ones. If equipment is not sufficient to ensure this, then a division of labour between stabilisation, i.e. peacekeeping, and combat engagement i.e. peace enforcing, will have to be developed, as was originally the intention for Afghanistan. What is astounding in all this is that so far, the Americans have dictated armament expectations, the type, location and duration of all tours of duty without the Europeans ever being in a position to run their own analysis and decide what form of globalisation, what geographic targets and what equipment for their troops might accord with their interests.

The saying still goes: the roots of penury are in poverty. From an American point of view that means: don't encourage the EU to develop into a global player because the Europeans are more easily manipulated on an individual basis, especially since their military capabilities are of peripheral importance compared with our strength. Our hegemonial attitude is unchallenged within the alliance; the EU, an organisation to which America does not belong, does not have the sovereign authority over its member states. The EU's efforts towards autonomous leadership and independent deployment of its troops must not be encouraged, a strategy which is easily implemented by applying the killer argument that we should avoid duplicating alliance functions. At the end of the day, that saying, translated to a European level, means: as long as Europe refuses to take its self-determination into its own hands, it cannot become truly independent.

Globalisation of NATO?

In its present situation, Europe is an open invitation to the Americans to employ the union of nation states as part of the US national "grand strategy". You can hardly blame them for thinking that. Such thoughts can be summarised under the heading "Globalisation of NATO". The idea is to develop the regional defence alliance into a global organisation which, without any geographical limitation, would co-operate with any partner to defuse a crisis or a threat to security. That means: from the old NATO in which America guaranteed the security of its partners against the potential threat from the east, a new NATO should emerge in which the partner members are obliged to support America in achieving its global aims. The old American inclination is in evidence, in NATO as in Europe: new is better than old.

Defend yourselves against stealth tactics! Europe's interests demand a clear No.

We are talking here of nothing less than institutional expansion of NATO into Asia, with Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia and perhaps the Philippines as democratic partner states in the viewfinder. Since NATO does not have supranational, independent decision-making powers, America would continue to wield its dominant position, and America would receive an instrument with which to initially marginalise Europe, but this would also have a knock-on effect on the UN - after all, what body would want to interfere with decisions made by such a globally present NATO? If America had a new NATO like that at its beck and call, it would hardly need to worry about multipolarity. If for example Israel were to become a member of NATO, that would throw up some complicated questions and the idea that "old" Europe were involved, and therefore taking joint responsibility for conflicts in Asia, is mind-boggling. As soon as the alliance begins expanding like this, the concept of European self-determination is dead. France does not desire any expansion of NATO, at functional, institutional or geographic level; the German-French engine could find itself on the scrap-heap of history if Paris and Berlin are not in agreement on this issue.

We can expect an American proposal for a globalised NATO in spring 2008. In view of the complexity of the issue it is likely that the initial move will be in the form of a basic motion asking simply for willingness to discuss, analyse and examine the matter. Our maxim must be: Defend yourselves against such stealth tactics. European interests require a clear refusal.

There is even a global aspect which supports such an attitude. One of the biggest problems facing us in this century is the tension between Christianity and Islam. One of the important subsidiary effects of the refusal of Europe to participate in the Iraq War was the weeks-long bewildered silence on the part of the Islamic fundamentalists. That was because while the Christian West in America was in full support of the war, the equally Christian West in Europe refused explicitly to sign up to the American-led invasion into Iraq. That refusal did not fit the view held by the united Islamic front, which had assumed that the Christian front was equally united at a political level. That refusal hampered the formation of a united Islamic front against an assumed Christian front equally united at a political level. The unequivocal support of the late Pope for the European stance was also a message in the public domain which could not be ignored. The subsequent efforts, unusual in a Pope, by Benedict XVI to play down the indignation caused in the Islamic population of Turkey by his

Regensburg speech are evidence of the endeavour of the Holy See not to allow differences in religious views to escalate into a war of beliefs.

The risks of a globalised NATO would be destabilising for the world.

Institutional expansion of NATO into Asia would be construed as indisputable proof that Christian nations had formed a united front under American leadership, requiring or at least prompting a united response from Islam. The rest of the world views NATO as simply America in a multinational cloak, and that view is not entirely incorrect. Globalisation of NATO would be a gift to the fundamentalist arm of Islam. Any institutional linking of NATO with Asia would almost inevitably lead to a clash of civilisations. Groups of people willing to commit suicide for a cause, whom we call terrorists, would experience a flood of new recruits; people wishing to liberate their country from a foreign force would be joined by religious fanatics. The risks of a globalised NATO would be irresponsible for the entire world, a world to which Europe belongs.

Timothy Garton Ash, Professor of European Studies in Oxford, recently pointed to a key point in the European dilemma when he wrote: "Europeans today are not called upon to die for Europe."¹ The great achievements of freedom, peace, rule of law, prosperity, diversity and solidarity, not perfect yet envied, are at any rate attractive, but they did not develop the power of the nation states. They did not create an identity over 50 years. Europe has no enemies and is therefore unwarlike. In comparison with its history, that is a situation which could benefit from improvement for its people as individuals, though in principle it requires no major changes. It could even be described as ideal. But that is too much of a temptation, because the fact in reality is that Europe cannot avoid a global slant. It is instructive for the German population to learn what non-European topics are on the agenda for the German presidency of the EU and G-8 - mostly crises, some of which are costing lives: Near and Middle East, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan. At long last - and because it is needed - a strategy is being worked out for Central Asia. Globalisation means getting into the ring and sparring for power and expansion of power.

In such a world, Europe wants to determine its own future. One obvious weakness has been that for far too long Europe did not determine its own borders. Even the belated decision not to open any new membership negotiations still allows those states with which tailor-made partnerships have been concluded some hope of eventually being allowed into the club. Yet even without such hopes, the EU is stretched and is labouring under the problems of its own capacity to govern inter-

nally and to represent the union to the outside world. It is quite difficult enough to establish an internal self-administrative structure. Self-determination is what is required for the EU to represent its member states in the outside world. Without the goal of self-determination the EU need not become a global player and could then be satisfied with the accountability it gains from its economic and commercial competence within existing organisations in the world.

The overstretch now experienced by the EU is in part due to the obligation and also to the historic opportunity of keeping places open in the EU for the former Warsaw Pact countries once they were able to decide for themselves. On the other hand England was pretty successful in taking expansion of the EU forward before the union was more closely integrated. This is in line with that country's interest in avoiding an incontrovertible institutional bond with the continent and in protecting its special relationship with America.

Europe cannot allow itself to be held back long term by England.

Interestingly, it was Great Britain which made trouble in the run up to the Berlin Declaration because of the intention to include the Schengen Agreement and the euro in the achievements of 50 years of European development. The UK will continue to hold back from full integration into Europe, especially if that were to include the concept of Europe making foreign and security policy decisions which might not meet the agreement of the Americans. As long as Europe does not have the strength to force the UK to decide once and for all whether it wishes to continue its special relationship with the USA or would prefer to achieve full integration into the EU, that nation will maintain its present convenient position. As long as that is the status quo, then Europe's ability to act on a global basis will remain unthinkable and unachievable and only feasible without the UK.

That would be a great shame. Yet Europe cannot give up the opportunity for its own global self-determination and cannot, in the long term, allow itself to be held back by England. After the end of the Cold War, the logical and practical proposals put forward a few years ago by the German politicians Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers suggesting that closer integration should begin with those who are able and willing to go ahead and that the door be kept open to any state wishing to participate, convinced me that ideally at least one eastern European state should be included in that process, preferably Poland. That would incidentally be a welcome guarantee that a European identity would not degenerate into anti-Americanism.

What applies to England must at least be applied to Poland to the extent that those EU states wishing to combine their foreign and security policy capabilities should not be held back from doing so. Yet in contrast to England, Poland already has a continental tradition and will gain the benefits of full participation not only from the Schengen Agreement and the euro but also from membership of a European army.

Germany should bend all its efforts towards making Europe the fifth pole in a multipolar world. The outstanding value of such status can be drawn from the realisation that Europe would be the only global player with no territorial power aspirations. The EU's status carries weight precisely because it threatens no-one and is orientated towards stability. That status would grow if the EU had its own independent army which it could deploy at will. That army would have to have modern equipment and be in a position to guarantee promises made; it would not be in a position to fight something like the Iraq war and in principle could not be deployed in any situation without a UN mandate. That would permit changes in equipment and armaments, but that would mean that the German army, the Bundeswehr, would require more support and not less. Globalisation will in any case require higher costs whether the EU continues as before in the shadow of America or achieves self-determination.

There is no clear definition of our relationship with Russia. Five German federal chancellors have, over almost 40 years, kept an astoundingly steadfast course aimed at replacing the incredible burden of the past by trust, co-operation and even friendship. Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, Helmut Kohl, Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel each placed their inimitable personal stamp on their relationships with Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin respectively. Those relationships survived rockets aimed at each other's countries, the end of the Soviet Union, and German reunification - the European event of the century - whose security policy conditions were agreed by the American President George Bush Snr and the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The German economy has benefited from this development and it has brought benefits for Russia and America too. Gerhard Schröder coined the label "strategic partnership", which Angela Merkel repeated in her first speech to her new government. The new federal chancellor is fully aware of the valuable legacy she has inherited.

Russia: essential

There is another dimension to this, one which Brandt, Schmidt and Kohl could not have dreamed of: Russia is essential in peacefully defusing the

most serious present-day crisis, Iran's atomic policy. Russia is essential to the task of finding a solution in which the Middle East region, with the co-operation of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, will enjoy stability. Russia will also be needed to help find a solution in Kosovo. Russia has become an important factor in the field of energy, especially for Europe, as long as energy needs rise and prices do not fall, which is predicted to be the case for the next 20 years. With the possible exception of China, Germany is the country which over a period of almost 40 years has amassed the most capital in the form of trust. Germany therefore has an incredible responsibility to implement that capital in the co-operation with Russia in order to defuse the most dangerous crises. Conversely, America which is also essential, has not only lost in general prestige but also lost influence as a result of its sometimes confrontational policy towards Russia. I would in this case refer you particularly to the article by Vice-Admiral Ulrich Weisser in the March issue of *IP*.²

Germany's influence is greater than the weight of a European middle-weight power.

A situation has arisen which is almost unique in German history, in which Germany wields influence greater than that of a European middle-weight power. Foreign and security policy requires a world view, together with the realisation of priorities which must not be overridden by other topics or affinities.

A methodological framework to our room for manoeuvre emerged when we became involved in the war with Yugoslavia. There was increasing pressure at that time from Washington and London to deploy German troops on the ground but that request was met with a resounding "No" to the American president from the federal chancellor. An experience like that illustrates the fact that in a situation with a European dimension in which German help is requested, Germany has an almost veto-like voice. Somewhat later we devised a five-point plan which brought Russia back into the fold, received the acceptance of the Chinese, a UN mandate and the agreement of the Americans to negotiate with Milošević to bring about the end of the war. Fortunately, the Finns held the presidency of the EU at the time, and Martti Ahtisaari was successful. This incident shows that with a good idea and sufficient support and partners behind it, Germany can even take the lead - without patting itself on the back for having done so. If you cannot win over partners in such an enterprise, not even the best idea will stick.

The framework then is satisfactory, almost ideal, because no-one needs to fear the Germans but it sounds like a very simple task when measured

against the global dimension of German responsibility which we are today faced with.

The factors I have just mentioned result in an orientation plan for German policy in the form of a few points:

- Germany should endeavour to incorporate Russia, a power still linked as much with Asia as with Europe, as firmly and closely as possible into the old continent. It should propose developing the NATO-Russia Council into a committee with the power not only to discuss security policy issues but also to grant it the power to make decisions. That should include abolishing the outdated reciprocal threat of a nuclear first strike.
- Germany should endeavour to reach an agreement, on the basis of the alliance with America, whereby the unequal responsibilities - global interests on the one hand and European self-determination on the other - are pursued and linked in a relationship of partnership and division of labour.

- Germany ought to make arms control its trademark again. The principles of non-aggression and joint security, translated into treaties, have rendered the dangers of a potential Third World War irrelevant. This approach could help to avoid confrontations in other regions.

- Germany should seek to firm up its positions in the German government's disarmament report, with the aim of ending the continued stationing of American nuclear weapons on German soil and of ending German participation in NATO nuclear duties.

- Germany should suggest reactivating an earlier idea of developing a European missile defence system against any future threats with American and Russian assistance.

¹ Timothy Garton Ash: Europe's true stories, *Prospect Magazine*, February 2007.

² Ulrich Weisser: Wir brauchen Russia!, *Internationale Politik*, March 2007, pp. 48-55.

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