

Summary of Discussions

SWP / AICGS Working Group

"New Stimulus or Integration Backlash? EU Enlargement and Transatlantic Relations "

1st Colloquium, Washington DC, February 20, 2004
at AICGS

The Outlook for the Relationship between the New EU and the US

The addition of the Central and Eastern European countries to the EU in May 2004 will mean a much more fluid, differentiated, and possibly divided, EU. From the US point of view, it is still an open question as to how much the US should support a unified Europe: is it really in the best interests of the United States to have a bigger, stronger EU?

Although some feel that the US would like to undermine the EU, and its enlargement, there is not a lot of evidence that the US is pursuing this policy, largely because this does not work and it is counterproductive. There is, however, a rethinking about where this growing EU is going and there is lack of enthusiasm on the US side. Some evidence can be found in the US efforts to preserve and/or strengthen NATO at the expense of the ESDP. But A larger EU could be more docile because a large number of pro-US countries are joining. How serious is the pro-US attitude of the new members? Do the new members see their pro-US attitude as an additive to their general commitment within the EU and an integrated CFSP. Or is it understood as an Atlanticist-versus-Continentalist divide? How much of an issue will it be going forward? If we look at past enlargements, i.e. when the pro-US UK, Netherlands and Portugal joined, there was some concern about the impact they would have but now only the UK is still strongly pro-US. The new eastern countries are still in the process of defining their interests in the EU and with the US –nothing is yet fixed.

If the US truly does want to politically “divide” Europe, it must consider the negative consequences for dealing with Europe on a structural, bureaucratic level (i.e. homeland security and anti-terrorism issues). It is much easier and more effective to deal with a Europe that speaks with a single voice. Presently, however, the US is not much interested in structure of EU, it still looks to the individual governments because in many international forums where there is contact, the EU Commission does not represent the member states in security affairs issues, they represent themselves. This is especially true in Washington and at the UN, because there are stronger differences among the member states that cannot be easily harmonized under the EU umbrella. The EU will have huge difficulty to create and to visualize a single foreign policy.

Regardless of the policies of the US administration over the next 10 years, the most important change has been the strategic change and the fact that the threat from Soviet Union is gone. The removal of unifying effect of the Soviet Union has set the EU and US on course which will see them drift apart over the next 20 – 30 years. A general drifting apart of US and Europe as we become less and less relevant to each other. Strategic issues will still bind the EU and US and replace the cold war “glue”, i.e. the Middle East, terrorism, new neighbors. How these tasks are dealt with will probably define future transatlantic partnership.

The Reform of ESDP and EU-NATO Cooperation in the larger EU

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This concentration of power in the US at this time is unprecedented – unipolar world structure. As a result, the US is not worried about opposition or the views of its allies because its power is so great. How will this affect US, EU relations? The US does not want an independent ESDP to happen and they have been opposing it in “clever” ways since the Clinton administration because it could pose a threat to US military preeminence in the future. The US does not want to “give” power away and see a competitor grow there, if the EU is successful with the ESDP, it is hard for it not to influence relations with the US.

In order for the ESDP to be successful, it must not interfere with the role of NATO. Given that the ESDP is not designed as a substitute to NATO – it is oriented to stabilization and peace keeping—there should not be a conflict. In addition, the ESDP does not address issues of hard security. Moreover, most European countries hope that ESDP is limited to the periphery of the EU whereas NATO is operating further afield, i.e. Afghanistan, and considering operations in the Middle East. The new EU members, many enthusiastic members of NATO, will help preserve the balance between NATO and the EU/ESDP because their first priority is not to harm NATO.

The Impact of the CEE Countries Relationship with the U.S. on the CFSP

The enlargement process is bringing pro-Atlanticist countries in the EU. Many CEE countries feel that US was instrumental in bringing them into NATO and their quests for independence, especially so in Poland. As a result, these countries are enthusiastic members of NATO and the first priority is not to harm NATO. They will be very pro-American within NATO because there is advantage to be gained from that, but they also understand that there is nothing to be gained from behaving that way within the context of the EU. Moreover, there is a difference between being pro-atlanticist and being Pro-US. The CEE countries are already very European and share European values. For example, in CEE, opinion was mostly against the war in Iraq and in the instances when EU had a united stand against the US, Poland was with Europe, i.e. ICC, Kyoto treaty, steel tariffs, etc.

However, the US is viewed as a more reliable partner in the event of a crisis. For example, while Colin Powell was in Georgia to encourage Shevardnadze to step down, the EU did not send anyone, although a revolution was in progress, because it would first have to discuss it with Russia. This type of incident reinforces the idea that the EU is not ready to address tough issues. For Poland and the Baltics, the question of what happens in Russia is vital. Any change in Russia which appears to reassert authoritarianism will keep these countries in American camp.

The CEE countries will bring to the fore the need to address the countries to the east of the EU borders. There is a lot of concern about Ukraine and it is seen as critical to stability in the region, especially with regards to fears of a new Russian “imperialism.” However, in a view likely to be shared by the US but not by the EU, Ukraine must be given a clear signal that it is

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a potential member of NATO and the EU because the offer of membership exerts a strong western pull.

Future Trends in the Transatlantic Partnership: Policies towards Europe's New East

The key goal of the EU's Good Neighborhood Policy is for the EU to be surrounded by well-governed countries. However, the EU is not thinking of any of these countries as potential future members, and without the carrot of future membership, the influence in democratizing these countries might be therefore reduced. From EU view, enlargement is about enforcing and rewarding success. The EU cannot reward "in advance" what is a total failure and therefore there is little inclination to consider the new neighbors as potential member states. In the case of Ukraine, however, some argue that the EU should engage it otherwise it continue down the path of becoming a failing state controlled by the mafia.

Double enlargement of the EU and NATO is creating a new situation in the region. There is no longer a clear division of labor between NATO (hard security) and EU (economics and some political aspects). NATO is entering issues of politics and economics with the eastern partners. This is especially visible in the EU's Ukraine action plan where most of the issues for discussion are legal and political. The EU has a growing security dialogue, especially with Ukraine and Russia. The existence of these complementing and reinforcing arrangements implies a need for more policy coordination.