

**The European Union twenty years after the fall of communism.
A success story – crisis and challenge for transatlantic relations**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I. The legacy: victory for peace and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

For well over a year I have listened to and delivered many speeches in commemoration of the upheavals of 20 years ago: the fall of the Wall, German reunification and the end of the Cold War. What is striking is that the memories people have of those events vary quite considerably, as does the language used to describe them. Poles remember that they were the first to shake the foundations of Communism, with Solidarnosc, with the Round Table that provided the model for a negotiated, peaceful revolution. The Hungarians call to mind that by opening Hungary's border with Austria, they knocked the first brick out of the Wall that had divided Germany and Europe. Gorbachev is thanked for first wanting to save Communism with the help of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, but then when things moved much faster did not in fact send any tanks but chose to take the bull by the horns and cooperate with the West. In Germany, we remember Helmut Kohl for being the architect of reunification, and thank George Bush senior for supporting German reunification.

When people in the United States remember this period, they simply say: "When we won the Cold War."

To get the right angle on this period of upheaval in European history, it is important to be aware of other people's perspective, the various ways of seeing these upheavals in a positive light. All of us here today will no doubt agree that it was all positive. But we also have to be clear about where it is not seen positively – namely in Russia. Only a few years ago the then President spoke about the collapse of the Soviet Union as the biggest catastrophe to befall Russia in the 20th century.

When I look back after 20 years, the following insights are important to me:

1. **Freedom and democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, but must be enforced from within a country.** Support from outside is important, often vitally important. But first there have to be actors within the country itself. In 1989, the West did not win the Cold War, the West did not triumph over the East – what happened was that freedom and democracy triumphed in these countries. Despite all the West's efforts, Communism was not abolished by outsiders. It was swept away because people in those Communist countries often risked a very great deal for freedom and democracy – and in the end came out triumphant. In the peaceful revolution in Central Europe, it was the people – despite all the support they had from the outside – who themselves fought to secure their own freedom. And they deserve to take credit for that.
2. The peaceful revolutions of 1989 were, to a certain extent, **negotiated processes**. The round tables that originated in Poland are symbolic of that. The fundamental change of system was wrought in the difficult negotiating processes and with the pressure of the peaceful masses on the streets. There was no bloody catastrophe because the categories of thinking associated with the zero-sum game, in which one side wins because the other side loses, were abandoned.
3. A distinction needs to be drawn between the regimes and the people. In Communist countries, those in power would never have won totally free elections (with public access to information and the media!). In every decade there were people who held on to their values, the values of humanism and the European Enlightenment, to human rights, to their belief in God and in human dignity. And they often paid dearly for that. The **victory over Communism was a victory for these values**, which the West rightly proclaimed as laying the foundations for the state and society. The legacy of these events is that respect for human dignity never is a matter of negotiation and must never be played down.
4. **Unification was made possible because people fought for freedom.** That applies to both Germany and Europe. The Berlin Wall fell in the course of the peaceful revolution in the GDR. But this peaceful revolution is set in a larger context of what happened in Poland, Hungary and then in other countries. The victory for freedom in Central Europe pushed open the door to unification, to German reunification and the growing together of Europe. Although this unification in each individual case meant accession – through integration into the existing institution of the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union – the "new citizens" and "new Members States"

are participants in their own right since they autonomously and of their own free will recognised the free, democratic foundations of the institutions in the West.

5. The support of the United States was extremely important when it came to superseding the Allies' "rights for Germany as a whole" and recognising a united Germany's full sovereignty, in short for German reunification. The United States played a key role in moving the UK and France on the one hand and the Soviet Union under Gorbachev on the other to agree to that. The key condition imposed by the United States was Germany's future membership of NATO, bearing in mind that NATO was the most important bond in the transatlantic relationship and guaranteed US influence on the European continent. Gaining acceptance for that in the Soviet Union was, ultimately, the biggest success of 1990. And so over the next two decades NATO became a key anchor for stability and security in Europe – although in a completely new way!

II. Reshaping Europe after the upheavals of 1989/90

1. Concerns about a "Greater Germany"

In 1990 many a neighbour – and many a German too! – once more feared that German reunification would place a Greater Germany at the heart of Europe, which would lead to uncertainty and instability in Europe. These concerns were amplified on account of the fact that Helmut Kohl took a long time to resolve the issue of Poland's western border, especially since that was also a clear indication of his lack of solidarity with the new, democratically elected Polish government. We, in contrast, from the outset argued with him in favour of permanently recognising this border. Fortunately, the issue was resolved in the end.

2. A European Germany

The agreement Kohl and Mitterand reached in the context of German unification on launching a common European currency, the euro, sent an important and positive

signal, however. Particularly in view of French concerns about what direction a united Germany would take, it was to be made clear once and for all that a united Germany wanted to continue to press ahead with the process of European integration.

The developments in the years that followed definitely backed that up. Germany remained the driving force behind the European process of deeper integration. You could even say it was more and more regarded as being in Germany's national interest to increase the level of integration, since it was becoming increasingly clear that principle government tasks, namely guaranteeing prosperity and security, can only be tackled at European level. Germany had a key role to play both when it came to the launch of the Common Market and the euro, in drafting the European constitution and – after that fell through – in getting the Lisbon Treaty signed. Since the end of the last decade when the Brits overcame resistance to the European defence and security policy at a meeting with France in San Marlo, Germany has become instrumental in driving the process forward since its EU Presidency in 1999 and despite quite some resistance from the United States.

3. Germany is actively involved in shaping security – within integrated structures

The EU not only provide Germany with the framework it needs for its own foreign and security policy. As a key player in foreign-policy and security-policy issues, Germany also plays a key role in further shaping the EU. Important changes in German politics after 1990 were decisive in that regard.

Germany remained aware of its responsibility on account of the country's past. The country has gained much recognition internationally since the late 1960s for having dealt with its own past under the National Socialist regime, and that was a key prerequisite for the former Allies and our European neighbours agreeing to German reunification. After 1990, however, this responsibility was re-interpreted – after a long process and many internal conflicts. In the light of the wars on the Balkans in the 1990s, Germany was prepared to take on its international responsibility in terms of conflict prevention and crisis management by taking part in military interventions there and later on also at international level, for example in Afghanistan. Germany went from being a security consumer to a security producer. That was no easy feat domestically and necessitated a process of rethinking. The majority of people in Germany "never again" wanted to send German troops abroad after the Second World War – and they believed that their cries of "No more war" meant they had learned their lesson from history! But now we had to learn that participating in

integrated security structures, protecting international law, and conflict prevention and crisis management, a recurring necessity, also means bearing one's share of the burdens and risks associated with it. The public discussion process that was needed in order to get the public to accept this has by no means been concluded. Political parties still shy away from making it clear that these military deployments are not just humanitarian interventions like in the war in Kosovo, but, where necessary, may entail combat operations like the one in Afghanistan.

4. Cooperation and integration

After 1989/90, both NATO and the EU had to be clear on what their attitude was going to be towards the former Communist states. In the early stages, the key terms for which structures were being sought were 'partnership' and 'cooperation'. At the beginning, both institutions found it hard to get used to the idea of their enlargement to the east and the accession of new member states. But the new democracies pressed for membership – and both NATO and the EU had good reasons for acquiescing. It increased the level of security because it no longer had to be defined and shaped in national terms, but within integrated structures and based on NATO specifications. And it secured democratic and economic development in the transitional countries. And so the opening up and enlargement of the EU and NATO became a success story.

Another aspect that must be seen as a huge success story that Germany played a key role in was that in 2004 not only many new members joined the EU, but also that there was a European constitution on the table – even though it took until 2008 and quite a few concessions for the Lisbon Treaty to become a reality.

5. The EU as a global player

How significant this simultaneity of deeper EU integration and enlargement is becomes clear when one calls to mind that the EU is a union of 27 sovereign states, each with their very own history and traditions. The EU is a huge work of peace – and one has to look to history to grasp the full significance of that. With the freedom of movement of people and the Charter of Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, the EU became a huge area of freedom, of respect for human rights and the rule of law. The EU had long before been an important factor for economic prosperity and solidarity for its Member States – today symbolised by the Common Market and the euro. Over the past two decades, more and more people have come to realise

that the European Member States – even the big ones! – can only together play a global role if they find common ground for political action.

The climate crisis is an important example. Another is the economic and financial crisis of 2008. Each individual country on its own and without the euro would have been unable to cope. The launch of the euro was a political *tour de force* that many in the United States would have believed Europe incapable of. But it did become a reality - although with the huge disadvantage that there is no European financial policy. And that has now come back to roost. Greece is a massive warning shot, as is the lack of rapid and decisive crisis management – a fact that Germany is not least responsible for (suddenly the party political interests of a *Land* parliament election campaign became the Chancellor's dangerous priority and she delayed the necessary decision-making!). But I am convinced that this crisis in particular will provide the impetus for making progress on issues concerning a more common fiscal and monetary policy!

One big challenge that has not yet been met by a long shot is what form a common foreign and security policy will take. Here in particular the big countries in Europe have their very own, deeply rooted traditions and relations. The Lisbon Treaty paved the way for progress to be made on joint action. But we need concrete initiatives and action. Unfortunately, the way in which the big Member States are going about filling the most important posts gives little cause for hope that the declared need for a common European policy will actually be translated into action. Germany would have a key task to fulfil here and would have to take on a leadership role that many other European states would also like to assume. That is why it is all the more unfortunate that no such activities are discernible at present.

Many questions that are of great significance to the EU remain unanswered or controversial. They include future policy on enlargement (e.g. Turkey's and Ukraine's prospects of membership) and relations with Russia. There is by and large no common energy or immigration policy, although both can no longer be shaped by nation-states in Europe and are of existential importance for the EU.

III. – Restructuring transatlantic relations

Following reunification, Germany regained its national sovereignty. At the same time, however, it has further integrated itself into the EU and NATO and moved that integration forward – as I have already mentioned. Especially within NATO it was always clear in the past that the United States had the leadership role. Consequently, it came as a shock to many when Germany and France did not back the war in Iraq and refused to send troops.

I personally believe that this criticism and non-involvement were entirely justified. This was the first time it became clear that mere allegiance was and is no longer an option in the transatlantic relationship. A new hand has been dealt since the emergence of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and France's recent return to NATO military structures.

NATO has enlarged its membership by letting in the new democracies in Europe and has become a unique international security-policy player that also cooperates with many other states. Although it is still the most important transatlantic institution, it has long since lost the ability to cope with the wide range of common interests and challenges.

Today, at a time when

+ the EU needs to define its new global role on the basis of the Lisbon Treaty and is increasingly also becoming a security-policy actor,

+ NATO is in the process of re-defining its core tasks and structures by means of its new Strategic Concept,

+ the United States under President Obama has reverted to cooperating at international level and strengthening legal structures in international relations,

we have to think about how transatlantic relations can be strengthened in order to be better placed to jointly tackle the global challenges and threats we are facing, and which structures will best serve that purpose.

1. Comprehensive security-policy approach

Security can no longer be provided by military means alone. We need a comprehensive approach that also incorporates political, civilian and economic instruments. NATO has neither its own instruments nor appropriate cooperative decision-making structures for such a civil-military approach. Capacity-building in that respect will require binding cooperation structures with member states (the US) on the one hand and with the UN, the EU and other regional institutions on the other. Relations with the EU have an especially important role to play here. A binding, institutional cooperation structure between NATO and the EU is also necessary in

order to avoid duplication and to save resources. That could include the EU's High Representative, Catherine Ashton, regularly participating in NATO Council meetings as well as structured cooperation between the NATO Council and the PSC, the EU's Political and Security Committee.

2. European caucus within NATO – equal partners

The current security-policy structures place those states that are both members of NATO and the EU in an ambivalent position. On the one hand they are increasingly defining themselves, in foreign-policy and security-policy terms, as a common political subject in the EU, but as soon as they join NATO, they, on the other hand, need to act as atomised individual states that define their joint action within the Alliance. The stronger the EU's identity on security-policy issues becomes (and it is already strong in the civilian sphere!), the less viable this structure becomes. Europeans must also express their common positions within NATO.

That poses a double challenge for the future. Firstly, the European states themselves will have to find a common position and more efficiently structure and jointly employ their resources. We Europeans are currently a long way from doing that. Secondly, that will mean that the United States will no longer be faced with a forum of member states within NATO that is, ultimately, only capable of allegiance, but rather will meet with equal partners that take on their common responsibility. That will be a multi-stage process, since the European Member States are still not quite ready (and the Brits, for instance, would also refuse to play along), whilst the United States still finds it hard to accept this fact. But I am convinced that this is the direction in which NATO must go in order to be able to guarantee a viable transatlantic security-policy partnership and cooperation in the future.

3. EU – US cooperation structures

Europeans and Americans today face global challenges that neither can tackle on their own on their side of the Atlantic. In order to be able to coordinate our actions on global issues, as well as in order to better deal with bilateral issues, the EU and the United States need to develop a much more intensive and better structured cooperation mechanism. That applies to climate change, as well as to energy, international finance and problems regarding information-sharing. Not least, the fight against international terrorism also raises questions that go beyond traditional security policy and await common action. The dispute over the passing-on of air passengers' personal data is a most recent example of that.

It has become clear, especially over the past decade, that Europe has increasingly understood that it is itself responsible for its own security. That may not yet have got through to enough people, but the realisation is dawning. The United States should respect and support that – without drawing the conclusion that Europe will thereby become less important for it. The opposite is the case. Both partners on either side of the Atlantic are and will for the foreseeable future be linked not only by way of their many shared values but also on account of a multifarious community of interests. The two are not only linked in diverse ways economically but also intellectually and culturally and are also required to take on a leadership role when it comes to solving global problems. Wherever we agreed common positions and common initiatives across the Atlantic, this creates a huge opportunity for us to solve upcoming problems. If we do not succeed in this, the risk is that those problems will not be solved at all, often with unforeseeable consequences for the whole of the globe.

Many people in the United States believe that Europe is no longer important for them. The focus is on Asia, for example China, the up-and-coming world power. I, too, believe that Asia – China and India – are becoming increasingly important. But I also believe that in order to be able to solve important global issues we urgently need to acknowledge the transatlantic community of interests and to bring it to bear, through coordinated action, in decision-making processes within the international community. That is why it is important that we pay sufficient attention to the question of what form the transatlantic relationship should take. That does not appear to me to be happening enough and therefore needs to be explicitly highlighted once more. Anyone – on either side of the Atlantic! – who ignores that fact will weaken us when it comes to realising our shared values in this world (that we naturally have to observe ourselves!) and lessen the chances of our being able to solve our global problems.

That does not mean that we cannot hold different opinions on various issues. But then we need to seek understanding on a level playing field. The times are gone when mere allegiance was commanded. We need to be conscious of the fact and always call to mind that we are and will remain dependent on one another and that our interest in one another must not wane. The united Europe has started to become of age – and still faces the challenge of being a real partner.

Let us continue to work on that – for the sake of our future on this planet.