

FRANZ - VRANITZKY - LECTURES

The Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue
in co-operation with the Institut français de Vienne and the Diplomatic Academy
kindly invites to

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UNEASY PARTNERSHIP: TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

Security Strategies in a Changed International System

Introduction:

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Moderation:

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Franz Vranitzky – (* October 4th, 1937). Special Advisor to WestLB (1997-2004). He was the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Danish Foreign Minister H. Petersen, for the OSCE Special Mission to Albania (March-October 1997); Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) (1988-97) and one of the Vice Presidents of the Socialist International; Federal Chancellor of Austria (1986-97); Austrian Finance Minister (1984-86); Chairman of the Board of *Österreichische Länderbank* (1981-84); Deputy Chairman of the Board, *Creditanstalt-Bankverein* (1976-81); Advisor on Economic and Financial Affairs to the Finance Minister (1970-76); with the Austrian National Bank (1961-70). Dr. Vranitzky received a Doctorate in Business Studies, Vienna University of Business and Economics (1969). He received Honorary Doctorates from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1993), the University of Ashgabat (1998) and the University of New Orleans (1999), and holds Honorary Degrees from the Universities of Santiago de Chile and Bratislava. The city of Aachen presented him with the Charles Prize in 1995, for his work to promote European integration and because under his leadership, Austria became a member of the European Union. In 1995 he was awarded the Fulbright Prize for his services to Eastern Europe after the dismantling of the Iron Curtain. Franz Vranitzky is Honorary Senator of the Vienna University School of Business and Economics.

Franz Kössler – (* 1952), journalist with *ORF/Austrian Broadcasting*. Director of the *Weltjournal*

Franz Vranitzky

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure and my privilege to welcome you at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue for a meeting which is organised by the Kreisky Forum in cooperation with the Institut français de Vienne and with the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. As you have seen from our announcement we have a very outstanding guest tonight to speak to us. Prof. François Heisbourg is a special advisor to the Foundation for Strategic Studies in Paris. He is Chairman of the Geneva Center for Security Policy, and he is Chairman of the International Institute for Strategic Studies situated in London.

We will listen to him and we will talk about the relationship between Europe on the one and the United States on the other side of the Atlantic. I think this is a subject and an issue which to a very large extent interests a lot of people. It is not free from emotions. It is not free from sympathies and non-sympathies. And many people who each of us would meet would know stories about how visitors to the United States are treated at emigration in the airports. They will know stories about America not complying to international institutions and obligations. They will know stories about America punishing the world by not agreeing to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, by not joining the Kioto-Objectives, and so forth. Those who use more technological language would say, America is tending to return to unilateralism instead of multilateralism which is suggested, proposed and exercised by the Europeans. Of course, we could listen to stories how wrong it was to invade Iraq, and how wrong it was to try to have military checkpoints more or less around the world. We will hear how bad the Americans are in having secret CIA torture institutions in other parts of the world, etc. When we talk to the Americans we will hear a very good deal apprehension against the Europeans. I am not going to tell long stories. But it seems as if, after the Cold War and after the disappearance of a common enemy, Europeans and Americans do not know any longer what they should agree about. I would also not forget that even in the United States, at least in the intellectual, academic and university circles there are quite a number of voice who do not agree with Bush-America, do not agree with the White House, do not agree with the Rumsfelds and the Cheneys of this world. I am not very fond of that kind of misunderstandings between Americans and Europeans.

So I think we have chosen a subject and a topic which touches quite a number of questions, quite a number of discrepancies between the both sides of the Atlantic. I am very happy and I am very glad that we succeeded in gaining an expert, in gaining an academic, in gaining somebody who has something to say in this context. I am looking forward to listen to Prof. Heisbourg. He was also kind enough to tell me that he would take a few questions from the floor. Thank you again for coming. I am looking forward to listen to your lecture, Prof. Heisbourg.

François Heisbourg

As a single strategic entity, the West, and its array of set-piece US-centred defence alliances, belongs to the past. This state of affairs is the result of basic and lasting changes in the international system, not simply or even primarily the consequence of the Bush administration's assertiveness. However this "end of the West" in a narrow strategic sense does not preclude under certain conditions the establishment of a new partnership between North America and the European Union.

POST-COLD WAR CHANGES

The fundamental changes in the international system which have led to this situation are the direct, if belated, consequence of the end of the Cold War on one hand, of the emergence of a

new set of security threats and actors on the other. This transformation can be summarised by seven propositions:

- The US is the sole superpower, and as such will actively resist the long term emergence of any peer competitor. This objective has been formalized in the White House's "*National Security Strategy for the US*" in September 2002.
- Being the sole superpower has not transformed the US into a "hyperpower". Indeed, it can be argued that by having become one-of-a-kind, the US draws more disaffection and rivalry than when it was the natural rallying point of the free world during the Cold War. The absence of the USSR and the threat it represented has deprived the US of a major source of influence and has reduced its strategic, ideological and societal attractiveness.
- The "mission determines the coalition" to use the formula publicized by Donald Rumsfeld shortly after the 9/11 attacks ; in other words, the existence and unity of multilateral alliances on the permanence of bilateral alliances is no longer of the essence, mission performance is. This is a direct consequence of the replacement of the permanent, existential, threat from the Soviet Union by a discontinuous and shifting set of threats and challenges.
- The established trends towards the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by states of concern have now been compounded by the threat of proliferation of such weapons into the hands of non-state terrorist groups. Meeting this risk implies major societal changes, as well as a rethinking of the terms of globalisation. However, counter-terrorism does not in itself structure the system of relations between sovereign states.
- More generally, the empowerment of a broad range of non-state actors, notably through the effects of information technology and knowledge-based economies has reduced the relative power of states: whether the world is still unipolar (as it was 10-15 years ago) or increasingly multipolar, the "poles" are becoming relatively weaker.
- Europe has ceased to be an area of major strategic concern for the United States. Despite the removal of the Soviet threat at the end of the 1980s, with its *Schwerpunkt* in Central Europe, this marginalisation of Europe in American strategic calculations only became fully visible after the end of the wars of Yugoslavia succession which had kept Europe and NATO in the limelight in the years 1991-2000. That Europe is an area of strategic calm is obviously a positive development. However, this development reinforces the US tendency not to place strategic value on "unity for unity's sake" of Europe and NATO, as we saw during the Iraq crisis. This trend is occurring as the EU has expanded to 25, enlarging the "Kantian Paradise" (Robert Kagan's description) but without being able to rely on the US for strategic cover, given America's own changing priorities putting in place the capabilities necessary to protect it. Europe will have to do more on its own, notably in the Balkans.
- In parallel, China is rapidly rising to great power status, with the prospect of it becoming a superpower and peer competitor of the US.

IMPLICATIONS

The effect of these trends has been in a number of instances magnified, aggravated and accelerated by the ideological make up and the policy decisions of the present US administration and of its counterparts in Europe, “old” and “new”. As a result, the loosening of alliance ties, the expendability of Atlantic and European unity, the affirmation of military prevention have taken on an unnecessarily harsh and acrimonious character: alliance splitting by all and sundry, the loss of old friendships, the abuse of prevention to justify the Bonapartist invasion of Iraq, the subsequent loss of strategic freedom of manoeuvre of the US vis-à-vis other potential crises (Iran, North Korea...).

A number of corollaries flow from this combination of fundamental changes and policy decisions. The first corollary is that the United States has no basic reason to return to the multilateralist system which prevailed, with varying degrees of intensity from 1941¹ until 2001. In particular, the permanent alliances of the Cold War have ceased to have a strategic *raison d'être* of the sort they had in World War II and during the Cold War. In those decades, the “coalition made the mission”: victory during the Cold War depended on “holding the ring” (Winston Churchill’s phrase applied to the need to preserve the unity of the anti-Axis coalition in the turning-point year of 1943). This is simply no longer required and Robert Kagan definitely has a point when he reminds readers that America’s embrace of multilateralism was essentially instrumental. The instrumental reasons have largely disappeared, at least for the time being.

This corollary does not imply that the US has no strategic alternative vis à vis the policies the Bush presidency. After all, the pre-1941 US had strongly contrasted phases of engagement and disengagement, from the extreme of co-belligerence (against the Central Powers of World War I) or imperial expansion (the war of 1898) on one hand, to absolute strategic economic isolationism during the 1930s, on the other hand. After the current Bonapartist phase, it is possible that the US may rediscover the virtues of a “Jeffersonian” policy of taking heed of the views its friends (the opposite as if were of the Donald Rumsfeld “school of diplomacy”). However, the US has another basic option, that of retreating into homeland sanctuarisation : if the military, budgetary and political costs of remodelling the Middle-East prove to be unsustainably high, the US body politic could, quite rationally, emphasize its territorial protection at the expense of overseas commitments. This would not necessarily translate as 1930’s style isolationism, but could look rather like a “concert of nations” US involvement in international affairs, pretty much as in the early 1900s or in the 1920s : aloof, but not absent nor hostile. Such an option should not be considered as implausible even in the light of globalisation.

A secondary corollary flowing from the previous one involves the future of NATO. If NATO is dead as a permanent defence alliance, that does not mean that it has ceased to play other important roles. In examining prospects for the US-European strategic partnership it is important to be clear as to what NATO has ceased to be, what NATO is (or can be) and what NATO cannot be :

- * NATO is no longer a war machine. The Kosovo air campaign not only caused deep reactions in the US against war by committee, but also demonstrated the extreme difficulties caused by the competition between the national US chain of command and the NATO chain of command. This problem was aggravated by the fact that each chain

¹ With the adoption of the Atlantic Charter in August 1941.

of command was headed by a US general officer (Chief of the Joint Chief Shelton, SACEUR Clark) who considered the other as a subordinate (EUCOM theatre commander Clark)) or force contributor (Shelton). Given that the post Cold War European Command (EUCOM) represents less than 8% of the US force structure, there is no doubt as to what will happen in the future: operations with a significant US force component will be run by a US chain of command, not by NATO.

- * NATO is a formidable lever for facilitating the transition to security sector reform in the post communist countries aspiring to membership. Although this is now a wasting asset (with the Alliance expanding from 16 members in 1998 to 26 in 2004), it still applies to the remaining aspiring countries, most notably Ukraine and the Balkan States (Croatia, Albania, Macedonia,...).
- * NATO naturally continues to serve as a focus for European-North American security dialogue and cooperation. On issues such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or some of the military aspects of the fight against terrorism, this is not unimportant.
- * NATO also functions pretty much as a UN regional organization in participating in peace-keeping and peace-support operations in the Balkans or elsewhere (Afghanistan today and maybe Israel-Palestine in the future). This is also highly significant.
- * Most crucially NATO remains an essential provider of interoperability, standardisation and operating procedures between the armed forces of its members, at least of course to the Europeans themselves. There is no easy European substitute for NATO's role in this respect. This is an instrumental role, but possibly the most important in this period of History. Furthermore, the need to establish ad hoc coalitions with some military efficiency implies a high level of interoperability of the armed forces involved.

However, these tasks correspond to only a fraction of the overall transatlantic relationship : security challenges such as the Iraq crisis (or, more recently, Iran) are not dealt with primarily in NATO councils or consultations ; strategic relations with key players such as China or Russia are not handled in a transatlantic mode by either the US or the EU and its members ; the non directly military dimension of the fight against terrorism is not primarily a NATO role ; strategically important policies such as those involving the future of Africa or the Middle-East peace process are non NATO: yet all of these issues have a potentially strong transatlantic dimension or consequences (And of course, this enumeration does not cover issues such as the future of free trade, the role of the WTO or of the financial system, the dollar-Euro relationship). Taken together, these are the issues which are of prime importance to the US and Europe and to their mutual relations. It is the degree to which the US and the EU agree or disagree on them which will determine the state of euro-atlantic relations.

In other words, NATO does not have the breadth and the depth to be the foundation of the US-European strategic relationship, even if it will continue to be an important part thereof. Its core business has now become the provision of interoperability.

FROM DEFENCE ALLIANCE TO NEW PARTNERSHIP

In strategic terms, there will be no satisfaction gained in attempting to revert to the 1941-2001 multilateral model: that sixty-year strategic parenthesis has to be considered as being closed. What should be aimed for is neither a return to permanent alliance, nor an overburdening of NATO with tasks which it is incapable of handling, politically or bureaucratically. The

objective should be the establishment of something simultaneously more broadly based and less constraining, in effect a partnership. The European motivation would be to maintain civilized, friendly relations with the United States “agreeing to disagree” on occasion, but not making life deliberately difficult for the American partners: after all, the relationship with the US remains our most important relationship in overall economic and political terms. The American motivation for entering into such an association would be to facilitate European support of, and, as the case may be, participation in US led global policies and generally to increase the possibility that such support would be forthcoming, notably in the face of the rise of China.

However, to achieve a working partnership a number of limits need to be recognized and several conditions will have to be met:

- * It will no be terribly helpful if proposals are made which simply assume that America and Europe share values and interests. This sort of repetition may well be true, but if it were self-evident, then one would have to explain why the current crisis is so deep and severe (or one would have to argue that it is neither deep nor severe, in which case solemn reaffirmations are hardly called for). Part of the problem is precisely that interests and values are not as widely-shared as they were during the Cold War. And when they are shared (free trade and investment flows, democracy, rule and law...), they are less specifically US-European than they were, now that much of Asia and Latin America has joined the ranks of democratic or democratising and economically liberal states.
- * A partnership is not possible if one side considers the other as being the essential problem, rather than as part of the solution. Thus, during the Iraq crisis French or Russian calls for a multipolar world were not conducive to the establishment of a partnership, since they are directed at creating a countervailing force to the US : multipolarity can be advanced only at the expense of partnership. Conversely, Europeans (including the UK and France) are united in their promotion of a rule-based international system, in which multilateralism is not simply a means but also an end. The US need not agree on such a view for a transatlantic partnership to exist, since multilateralism as such is not directed against the US. However, there will be no partnership if the US deliberately and systematically tries to prevent others from working towards a multilateralist rule-based, international system. In this regard, President Bush’s second term appears to be placed under more hopeful auspices than the calamitous first four years of the Bush administration.
- * Even while considering a partnership to be indispensable, the Americans and the Europeans will need to recognise that it will no longer be sufficient: in a world of rising giants (China, India), and truly global challenges, even the combination of the US and Europe will not have the weight it had during the Cold War. In the messy, weak polarities of the emerging world order, it will take a cooperative relationship with other players – China, India, Russia etc... - to get things done: in this respect, we must look at the Iranian nuclear problem as a portent of things to come – China and Russia’s roles are pivotal on this defining issue.
- * Furthermore, we have to assume that the partnership will be a mix of “menu à prix fixe” and “à la carte”: the list of key global issues (*inter alia*, the rise of China, proliferation, energy, global warming) displays the great variety of areas of current agreement and

disagreement between the US and Europe. Even with a new US administration, major areas of divergence are likely to persist. Agreeing to disagree will be part of bargain.

In the “post-alliance” world, a partnership cannot be sustained if the Europeans don’t display a substantially greater amount of strategic seriousness in defining and conducting foreign and security policy: European views and interests will hardly be taken into account by Washington if they simply come in a reactive mode (i.e. reacting to an American proposal). As we see in the Iranian nuclear problem, it is essential for the Europeans to chart and conduct policy collectively, in close consultation with the Americans but not simply as a reaction to whatever US initiative may occur.

Even more importantly, a post-alliance Europe can only be taken seriously as a partner if it is itself serious in meeting the challenges and threats of the post 9/11 world, whether in the realm of “hard power” or “soft power”. There are two areas of external initiative which the Europeans need to consider:

- * In the field of soft power, it is not enough for Europe to point out to into considerable contribution to international security through development aid which stands at close to three times the US level. The Americans may indeed spend much less than the Europeans, but they give much greater focus to the security consequences of their assistance. The US has consistently supported the existing peace treaties in the Middle-East through massive aid to Egypt, Israel and Jordan with a combined total of around \$ 3bns a year. The US has greatly enhanced global stability by endowing the Cooperative Threat Reduction Programme with some \$8bn over the last ten years (effectively denuclearising Ukraine, Bielorussia and Kazakhstan and in helping prevent nuclear materials from leaking out of Russia). In comparison, during the 1990s the EU countries spent about €1bnh a year in and around the Israeli-Palestinian area and less than \$ 800 millions on non proliferation in the former Soviet Union. Without necessarily emulating US spending patterns and habits, the EU should audit the security implications of its ODA expenditure and it should fulfil its commitment, made in the G-8, of matching US spending in the management of the Soviet nuclear legacy.
- * Hard power: the Europeans will neither preserve their “Kantian paradise” with the US otherwise engaged than in worrying overmuch about our security, nor be capable of acting as serious partners of the US without significant changes in defence expenditures and in force structure. The EU has more soldiers than the US, more tanks, more artillery pieces and a large array of combat aircraft, whereas the 25 member states only spend some 40% of what the US does on defence (some € 150 bn and stagnating versus \$ 400 bn and rising, not including the costs of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan), and less than 20% of what the US does on military R&D (\$10 bn versus more than \$ 50 bn). Furthermore, EU efforts are balkanised between 25 national force structures. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Europeans field only a very small fraction of US capabilities in terms of strategic mobility and command and control systems. It is not that we spend too little money on defence, we simply spend it atrociously. We are increasingly unable to work competently, whether with the Americans or without them.

It will be difficult to keep the US interested in the “service provider” role of NATO as a producer of interoperability and of military transformation if the Europeans allow themselves to fall behind.

IN CONCLUSION

It would have been highly desirable for the EU Constitutional treaty to enter into force: however, I assume that it will remain a dead letter. This should not prevent us to move forward in those areas which are compatible with pre-existing treaty language (Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice) and more recent policy decisions: this is the case for ESDP, but also for the European “diplomatic service” or measures corresponding to the “solidarity clause”. Similarly, the Council and CFSP should reflect on the way and means to give life and substance to the US-EU Summit machinery: more space for substantive discussions outside of the pressure from the media, and most importantly in my view, some form of joint secretariat to monitor the implementation of joint decisions.

Further down the road, once the current constitutional treaty has been declared dead, maybe the institutional foreign and security parts of the treaty – which were not controversial in France or the Netherlands – could be presented in the form of an EU treaty. In particular, the creation of the office of the EU foreign minister, bringing together the considerable external relations assets of the Commission with the acquis of CFSP, would be an indispensable element of a serious EU-US partnership: a man (or a woman) with real power at the end of Kissinger’s proverbial telephone call... The opportunity for such a ‘CFSP treaty’ could present itself with the obsolescence of the Nice Treaty, an occurrence which will take place with Croatia’s accession to Union, i.e. in a few years time. It is not too early to think about it: we badly need institutions conducive to a more coherent and effective EU as a foreign and security policy actor.

The ultimate paradox is that a post-Cold War US-European partnership will not thrive if the Europeans continue to act as if the US were in charge of the security of their Kantian paradise. A weak or a navel-gazing Europe is a recipe for a non-partnership with the US.