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Commentary on the Warsaw Conference

The diversity of viewpoints and the wide range of topics discussed in Warsaw have one essential point in common: the center of gravity in the EU-US relationship has shifted fundamentally since the ending of the Cold War. On both sides of the Atlantic the number of actors and the space involved have increased significantly. Whereas up until 1989 this was a relationship involving essentially the United States in North America and the Western European states in Europe, among whom the United Kingdom, Western Germany, and France were the key actors, by the turn of the century economic and political convergence in both regions has produced a much larger regional configuration.

In the Western Hemisphere, the new reality is a distinctive North American region in which issues concerning the United States now require that Canada and Mexico no longer be considered footnotes to debates over US strategic and trade interests. In the Eastern Hemisphere the concept of an expanded Europe means that issues of concern to the Northern and Eastern European states demand as much attention as those involving what was considered to be the Western European core in European unification as well as in the construction of the NATO alliance. It should surprise no one that the question of the EU-US relationship has become a very messy proposition involving enormously divergent issues and vastly different competing perspectives.

As Laurence Whitehead sums us in his essay, the center of gravity no longer lies along the Atlantic coast on either side of the

Atlantic. His cases in point are Poland and Mexico. The fact that our dialogue began in Warsaw and elicited such enthusiastic response in Polish circles should flag from the beginning that what has been distinctive about our dialogue is recognition that today discussions concerning the Atlantic relationship can longer be limited by the original parameters imposed by common security concerns. Later, when we discussed whether or not this dialogue should be continued, the issue became how to broaden the discourse and where the next two venues should be. It was agreed that Brussels should be the locale of the next meeting, to ensure that francophone Europe be centrally involved, and that this be followed by a meeting in Mexico City, so that attention by necessity would be directed to the new North American reality, one that is truly continental. Not only is it the case that Poland and Mexico “share important characteristics that differentiate them from the old established power centres of the Atlantic Alliance,” but also, writes Whitehead, “they both have good reasons to value an international rule of law” and “want to ‘join’ pre-established democratic communities,” but without simply endorsing the old issues already on the table.

From the outset we had to confront different realities that were transnational. Those who spoke to common security issues saw these relationships as central to the EU-US relationship and found themselves at odds with those whose primary concern was with the economic relationship. Whereas Kenneth Allard, for example, defined the transatlantic partnership as the core of “a vital national security interest for both Europe and the USA,” Alberta Sbragia flagged the growing importance of transatlantic business as one of the new interlocutors in the transatlantic relationship that was both broadening and changing the relationship. In these terms, there was never an American as opposed to a German or French position, but rather very different perceptions of how to define the new reality that sustains this debate over the EU-US relationship, one which is derived from the particular sets of interests individuals focus on and has little to do with different national interests. Adam Rotfeld, for example, spoke to the new transatlantic landscape and the choices before the key participants in how they redefine security and defense policies. But the choices on the table here, which involve use of the military, he pointed out, have little in common with either economic or political concerns.

Yet, as Daniel Vernet, singled out there is a common theme in all these issues for many others: whether or not the United States is going to be willing to accept “co-decisions.” Increasingly in all these areas, where the US is clearly the sole remaining super power, he directed attention to the fact that interlocutors centered in Europe have, as a function of recognizing the necessity of building a wider union transcending different sets of national and subject-matter interests, devoted far more time to consensus building. They now find themselves increasingly at odds with unilateral perspectives on the use of power by those who stand in a position of strength. Seen from this perspective, in security, trade, and politics, the primary tension is derived from the great power discrepancy caused by the military and economic power of the United States vis-à-vis the European states, acting alone or in concert.

That position was challenged, indirectly, by Peter Trubowitz, who in his remarks focused on the US election and its outcomes as likely to constrain the power of the new US president because of the absence of a clear-cut majority and the need to take into consideration these competing interests and perspectives. This orientation, regarding the pressures to cooperate as opposed to acting alone, was reaffirmed in Manfred Knapp’s remarks, in his emphasis on the growing interdependence among the industrial nations on both sides of the Atlantic, which intertwine them in economic, financial, and monetary fields as well as in questions of security policy. Longin Pastusiak, Krzysztof Bobiński, and Andrzej Wielowieyski, in turn, called attention to how the EU has evolved as an element of political and economic stabilization on the continent and how, given the potential for conflict in so many different parts of the world, there is more in common between the US and the EU than the specific points of conflict which continue to arise in trade and in the deployment of military forces, as different international crises are responded to. When questions of military engagement arise, involvement of the US becomes indispensable. From their perspective, differences on specific issues should never deflect attention from the importance of sustaining this transatlantic relationship.

Wolf Grabendorff brought yet another perspective to our dialogue in his emphasis on the different perspectives on how to respond to globalization, between those who see the process as one designed to advance the role of markets and identify the new

driver in international relations as essentially being trade related, as opposed to those who see well-functioning states as an essential precondition and emphasize the development of a commonly-agreed-upon set of rules accepted by all which will guide international economic forces. Whereas the former is largely identified with US perspectives, the latter is more in tune with European thinking and a function of how relations have developed among member states in the European Union.

This particular focus returns us to the very great differences between those who center the US-EU relations around trade and economic development issues as we enter the twenty-first century and those who would focus on a redefinition of security concerns as the foundations of the order that needs to be established in transatlantic relations as essential to providing that peace and security in the West which will create the appropriate environment in which international trade and market forces can best function. Related to this latter perspective is the emphasis placed on the necessary preconditions for stimulating and sustaining the transition economies and countries on the periphery of core areas in Europe and North America. Speaking from the standpoint of those areas adjacent to the European and North America core, Janusz Kaczurba called attention to the challenges facing countries like Poland which are in transition and need the sustaining influence of coordinated global industrial processes to allow them the time they need for economic and political restructuring, processes which cannot be consolidated in a matter of a few years. What they see as the driving force is not so much truly global economic forces as it is the dynamism of the core regional economies to which they are attached: for the East-Central European states this is overwhelmingly the European Union, and by extension, for Canada and Mexico, the driving force remains the US economy.

In the concluding session, this latter issue was discussed in an expanded context, with Wolf Grabendorff taking the lead in emphasizing the dilemmas posed by asymmetrical relations for the transatlantic relationship. This asymmetry has increased as the hype surrounding each of the issues affected by these relations has escalated and as the public discourse has expanded in each world area independently of the other, with the one complaining about and continuously finding new evidence of American unilateralism and the other bemoaning the protracted nego-

tiations required among a multiplicity of actors to reach consensus on actions to be taken jointly. Originally, when this problem of asymmetry arose in conflicts over priorities and strategy within the NATO relationship, it was confined to negotiated solutions and concerted action through the participation of a relatively limited group of actors. The challenge before us now is how to sustain these interlocking relationships and nurture them, when on both sides of the Atlantic the number of actors is increasing as the asymmetries are growing and the number of issues which must be negotiated and resolved is expanding.

When we reflected on the outcomes of the seminar at the closing dinner in Krakow, the participants concurred that what this gathering had contributed was an open and frank discussion of the issues at stake, in the tensions between the European states that have embraced a common union and the United States. The group also concluded that this kind of focused dialogue should be continued in an expanded format. In moving the seminar to Brussels, the recommendation was that we enhance this dialogue by bringing together parliamentarians from both sides of the Atlantic as well as a select group of academics and informed citizens.

As our dialogue has evolved over an appropriate follow-on meeting, the Center for Democracy (a Washington, DC, non-governmental organization) has entered our discussions. Since 1985, the Center has collaborated with the Council of Europe, through the Secretary Generals and the Parliamentary Assembly. Between 1989 and 1992, it brought together leaders from every part of Europe and the United States to discuss issues related to the democratization process. Since then, the Center has hosted meetings in Washington bringing delegations from the Council of Europe to meet with leaders of the US Administration and Congress. Under its *New Democracies Forum* the Center has also brought delegations of parliamentarians and political leaders from the new democracies in Europe and regions to the east to the United States for meetings with their American counterpart on topics raging from foreign policy to legislative development, the rule of law, and market economic problems. In short, it has played a valuable role as a facilitator of dialogues involving the United States and the new Europe that is in the making

What is appropriate, we have concluded, is that we set our sights on an expanded dialogue, in collaboration with the Center

for Democracy, involving not just the Polish parliamentarians present at the Warsaw meeting, but also parliamentarians outside of Poland from both sides of the Atlantic. Envisioned in this follow-on meeting are representatives from the present European parliament as well as from the northern and east-central European states that are to be incorporated into an expanded European Union, along with parliamentarians from North America, coming from the United States, Canada, and Mexico. These individuals are to be merged with the existing format of academics and informed citizens, inside and outside government, which formed the core of our Warsaw seminar.