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# THE JOKER IN THE PACK



**Prof. Dr. Margarita Mathiopoulos,**  
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of European Advisory  
Group

## IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

### A FAREWELL TO NATO SECRETARY GENERAL GEORGE ROBERTSON

What is the destiny of the Alliance after 9/11 and the transatlantic turbulences over Iraq? In the spirit of George Robertson, under whose auspices Article 5 was invoked for the first time in NATO history, and who cared in keeping the Alliance together and alive at a time of the greatest strain ever on allied cohesion, the answer can only be: partnership, not rivalry, between a strong Europe and the United States.

Lord Robertson, during his press point at Kyiv Boryspil Airport (Ukraine) before departure.  
(Photo: NATO)

Indeed, the transatlantic relationship is in a serious crisis after the Iraq war. The mood prevailing in Washington these days was expressed by the US-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice: "Punish the French, ignore the Germans, forgive the Russians." That alone will not heal the wounds which we inflicted upon each other. From the European perspective two main aspects need to be addressed: *First* and foremost, Europe must match its own standards with reality of the strategic environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and speak with one voice on the international stage. This one voice must be backed by credible military capabilities. However, we must recognize that a New World order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can only be achieved if the 19<sup>th</sup> century pattern of power politics – recently in fashion again – cease to guide our thinking.

Accepting these premises, Europe can become both a global player and equal partner to the United States. Only then can an EU-US strategic dialogue take place across the Atlantic that enables both sides to heal the rift and jointly address the global security and non-security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"To make the world safe for democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" the United States will – despite all its military might – need a strong democratic partner. The Bush Administration, with its emphasis on global security will recognize the attractions of a new contract with Europe if the European Union can live up to its own ambitions of becoming a full fledged international partner. Such partnership could amount to a "New Transatlantic Charta" in which Americans renew their commitment to remain a European power and Europe pledges



to assume its responsibilities in maintaining the European-Atlantic space as a sphere of stability, democracy and progress.

Clearly, we need each other. But forging a new bond will require political lucidity and willpower on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, a crisis always opens also windows of opportunity: An enlarged New Europe, with a new spirit, dynamism and good will is evolving. Transatlantic values never disappeared and we should not let a mass-murder like Saddam Hussein bury the values in the Arabic desert that did bind Europe and the United States since the French and the American Revolution. It's time to stop contemplating a split between the United States and Europe – this is not an option.

It was in Berlin at the Springer-Bundeswehr-Forum where NATO Secretary General George Robertson said: "A new transatlantic consensus has emerged: a consensus on today's new threats, the responses needed to meet them, and the capabilities required to do so successfully." Do these words of George Robertson stand up to the sombre reality of a transatlantic relationship in crisis after the Iraq war?

Does the Alliance want to play a real military role in the war against terrorism and the proliferation of WMD or will it become an "armed-OSCE", irrelevant in projecting power on a global scale? No doubt, the impressive outcome of the NATO-Prague-Summit, New Members, New Global Role, New Capabilities, New Military Command Structures and New Relations was a milestone in the history of the Alliance. Still, the Europeans will have to give an answer, not only to the ongoing demands of NATO-Secretary General George Robertson, but frankly to themselves: Are they interested and willing to keep NATO militarily relevant which means not only to make another general political commitment to increase expenditures, but a genuine, precise, timed commitment to acquire the missing defense capabilities, in order not to get increasingly marginalized? And the Americans will have to give an answer as well, not only to George Robertson, but frankly also to themselves: Are they interested to keep NATO militarily relevant for future crises at all, or is the doctrine viewed by the Pentagon, "the mission determines the coalition", the official policy of the Bush-Administration?

The problem seems to be that some Europeans still see NATO as a collective defence and crisis management organization whereas

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the most powerful and indeed indispensable member country, the US, do no longer look at NATO as an instrument they would wish to use in conflict and war. They obviously regard NATO as an useful political instrument and a collective security arrangement which has the political

task to stabilize Europe and to achieve the vision which led to the foundation of NATO in 1949, a Europe whole and free.

A NATO, however, which thus became so political that its defence guarantee would look hollow and which would only be used selectively in crises, would soon lose support. In fact, that would be the end of NATO. This would be a disaster for Europe and it would be a severe blow to American national interests as well. The US would run the risk to lose the control of one of its opposing coast lines and it would give away one of its most powerful instruments of political influence on Europe as such. It is quite obvious that this must never happen since it is neither in the interest of the US nor of the Europeans.

Following three guidelines should be under consideration:

**First:** There is only one way to gain influence on the US and that is to possess capabilities which really matter. This means that the Europeans have to take an American approach: They should concentrate on those capabilities which the US need to run and sustain, one or more operations such as Afghanistan and which at the same time will improve the ability of the EU to conduct operations on its own there, where the Americans do not wish to be involved. To this end NATO should really take a new approach to force planning: The issue is no longer to plan for capabilities which more or less copy American capabilities albeit at a much smaller scale, the issue is to identify American shortfalls and weaknesses and to plan for capabilities which reduce these weaknesses through the provision of non US-NATO-Forces. Examples for deficiencies for which the US would need European contributions in order to sustain operations or to be able to operate in more than one theatre are for example ground surveillance, air-to-air-refuelling and air transport, but also effective

engagement assets. Such instruments in the hands of the US allies will obviously not come for free, but the funds needed for that are within the realm of the possible. Thus the allies would become indispensable for the Americans and hence their influence would grow. Such an approach would kill two birds with one stone: It would foster the *irreplaceable* transatlantic link and it would at the same time strengthen the capabilities of the EU since, after all, we still talk about one set of forces. In addition, such steps could narrow the gap which exists today and which is growing minute by minute. The best evidence for this assertion is that the US defence budget foresees 140 billion US-\$ for capital investment, i.e. 37%, whereas most Europeans spend less than 20% or so to modernize their forces. If the European allies act in that way, the Americans would simultaneously look at the other, truly substantial European political contributions from a different angle. They would no longer be seen as a compensation for the inability to contribute militarily, but as a genuine contribution of its own value. Thus the Europeans could gain more political influence as well.

**Second:** It goes without saying that the willingness on the side of the Europeans to launch such a modernization program should be met

by an increased American preparedness to share technology. This includes closer cooperation in infrastructure, defence, and logistics, the creation of transatlantic synergies in procurement policies, and closer cooperation of the defence industries across the Atlantic. Our policy should not be "buy

American" or "buy European". Rather, we must create conditions to "buy transatlantic", i.e., procuring the most advanced systems at the lowest costs. Neither the Americans nor the Europeans can be interested to prolong the two-class-society as it has evolved in the wake of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). A serious political will in Washington to share US-technology with European allies is the precondition for transatlantic defense-consolidation which is indispensable to ensure NATO-interoperability and thus guarantee the future military cohesion of the Alliance.

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**Third:** However, all these good intentions will be in vain if Washington – instead of capitalizing on the momentum of a serious European commitment in the war against terror and in being prepared to do more in terms of military burden-sharing – continues its “NATO-a-la-card”-policy by grounding future military campaigns on a coalition of the able and willing including some NATO allies, but otherwise going it alone. No one in Washington should forget that it are not only capabilities which matter in the war against terrorism, but also shared convictions and values. No one else in the world can offer this combination to the United States but Europe.

Meeting the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, also Europe will need a new credible and courageous policy, if it wants to become a mature partner of the United States and a global player. To be sure: Paris should give up its

French arrogance, London belongs into the EMU, and Berlin is well advised to give up its free-lance diplomacy and to do its homework, setting its strategic priorities, defining its foreign policy goals, and drawing the respective security-and military-related consequences. 9/11 and the Iraq crisis made clear that the political will to exercise a global player-role is imperative and the prerequisite for a competitive Europe in political, economic and military terms, and for a Europe that cares to preserve together with its American friends its cultural identity vis-à-vis any attacks from totalitarian Islamic terrorists on Western Civilization.

It is also the prerequisite for an equal partnership with the United States and a strong and balanced European-Atlantic Alliance, able to meet new challenges anytime – anywhere. But, it takes two to tango.



**The sculpture and the flags of the 19 member countries at the main entrance to NATO Headquarters in Brussels.  
(Photo: NATO)**

