

**The quest for leadership in the New Europe.
Can the Europeans do it without the United States?**

Since the end of the East-West conflict ten years ago, the European states have been making efforts to establish a new European order. They have been supported by the United States who has so far given the impression that it will continue in future to be a leading power on the Old Continent. But the degree of the American engagement in Europe and the role the United States really is willing to play still remain unclear.

In this short contribution, we will primarily discuss a problem which is very important for the shape and stability of a future European order. It is the question of who will assume the leading role in the developing international order in Europe. Will the United States still be willing to assume such a leadership position, or will it consent to sharing political leadership with single European partners or with a group of European states? The following remarks depart from the assumption that an international order does not emerge naturally, but must be created by leading states and must then be upheld at high costs. It is evident that the development and extension of an international order must lie in the interest of the leading members of the system if it is to be durable.

The United States played a prominent leading role in the bipolar international order that lasted until the epochal caesura of 1989-1991. Based on its unmatched military power, the United States mainly assumed this pre-eminent role as the leading power in NATO. At the same time, it was the most powerful economic actor and assumed a leading role in the global international economic system. Since the 1960s, the expanding European Community (EC) increasingly became an economic competitor for the United States. Although occasional conflicts and crises arose between the United States and Western Europe, the United States was always able to secure its leadership role - also against the challenges of Gaullist France. This was especially due to the commonly perceived Soviet threat and the resulting need for protection of its European allies.

When the attempts of recent years to create a new international order for the fundamentally changed situation in Europe are considered, the durability of the two main institutions founded during the East-West conflict is particularly striking. Both the United States and its partners in Europe are determined to maintain NATO and the European Union (EU). The United States was particularly interested in maintaining NATO's operativeness and in preparing and using the given transatlantic alliance for new security policy tasks and challenges. After some initial hesitation, the Clinton administration was willing to enlarge the North Atlantic Alliance to the East by admitting three candidates (Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary), thereby making it the main security institution for the development of a new European order.

The EU states wanted to pursue the West European integration process begun in the 1950s after the turning-point of the years 1989-1991 and to deepen it by establishing the European monetary union with the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). At the same time, they went to great lengths to intensify their cooperation also in the fields of foreign and security policy. Yet it took another few years until the declarations of intent concerning the development of a European Security and Defence Identity were substantiated by plans to establish a common European crisis reaction force (set forth at the 1999 EU summits in Cologne and Helsinki).

All of the more ambitious integration goals of the EU, which include the willingness to admit further European candidates (in November 2000, after Slovenia, even all other successor states of the former Yugoslavia were offered a possible future membership in the EU), concerned the relationship with the United States: The progress of economic integration is expected to improve the EU's competitive position—also *vis-à-vis* America. The Europeans hoped that their ambitions in the field of security and defense policy would help them overcome their notorious dependence on the leading power in the Alliance.

The fact that these intentions still remained no more than wishful thinking became dramatically clear during the Balkan conflicts. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina ended with the Dayton agreement (1995) after the decisive action by the United States, and NATO's military action during the Kosovo crisis and the eleven-week bombardment of Serbia from March until June 1999 again laid bare the drastic military deficits of the European NATO

states and their dependence on the United States. However, the war in Kosovo had a catalytic effect on the efforts of the EU states to improve their own security capacities, independent from the United States. The most recent events and developments within NATO and transatlantic relations clearly reveal that the question of leadership in the developing new European order remains completely open. The dire need for clarity in this matter is obvious.

For the foreseeable future, the United States will continue to play an essential leadership role in the new European order. Substantial arguments speak in favor of the United States' continued indispensability as a major leading power in Europe: Firstly, the high degree of interdependence of the industrial nations on both sides of the Atlantic and the resulting intertwined relations in the transatlantic economic, financial and monetary fields as well as in the all-encompassing telecommunications sector render the United States' decisive participation in the governance of the political system in the whole Euro-Atlantic area absolutely necessary. Secondly, only the United States possess sufficient military capacities that could be used in the event of necessary conflict management on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic region (for example in South-Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean region). Thirdly, the United States will continue to be needed as an external "pacifier" and "stabilizer" in Europe. Regardless of the pacifying effects of the European integration process, it appears that only with the help of a continuing leadership role of the United States can rivalries among the greater European states for a para-hegemonic position in the European state system be avoided. The probable result of an inner-European quest for leadership would be a dangerous de-stabilization of the Old Continent. Fourthly, the security presence of the United States in Europe also has a stabilizing and balancing effect on (a strengthened) Russia, which should not be neglected neither by the United States themselves nor, in their own interest, by the Europeans.

The arguments in favor of maintaining an American leadership role in a new European order, which are presented here only in cursory form, demonstrate that the answer to the question in the subtitle of this contribution can only be "no". For the foreseeable future, the Europeans will remain incapable of doing without the United States' leadership services in and for Europe.

However, this American leadership role is a different one than it was during the East-West conflict. It can (and will) be reduced in size and effort, since the European allies' security dependence on the United States has drastically lessened after the end of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc.

In the developing new European order, the United States and the leading European powers must find a new fundamental consensus on a form of "shared leadership". At the beginning of the 21st century, the partners on both sides of the Atlantic have the great political task of substantiating the phrase "partners in leadership", which the then (41st) United States President George Bush coined at the beginning of the 1990s. This will particularly also necessitate an understanding concerning a new transatlantic "burden sharing" for the distribution of the costs of this leadership.