

Trans-Atlantic relations – preconditions and prospects

*Speech by
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Mr Minister. Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very honoured to be here today and to speak at this conference on *Security Policy and the Defence Industry*.

This summer, children in Denmark – even the smallest - were speaking German. On street corners, in school yards and at play grounds you could hear Danish children shouting: “*Alles ist Fussball!!*”

One might not agree that everything really is football, but in football you find almost everything. You find entertainment, excitement, disappointment, happiness, affection, friendly competition – and not least friendship across borders.

The trans-Atlantic relationship has many of the same characteristics. Not least friendship. But what forms the trans-Atlantic relationship?

[Shared values]

One of the most important preconditions for a strong trans-Atlantic relationship is the fact that we – Europeans and North-Americans – share common and fundamental values.

We agree on basic values such as respect for the individual, democracy, freedom, human rights and rule of law. Good European values that were translated into words in the constitution of the United States more than 200 years ago.

Even though we agree on these basic values, we might sometimes disagree on the interpretation of the values. It will be no surprise, if I mention the International Criminal Court (ICC) as one such case where the Europeans and the Americans do not agree fully.

But in general we have the same understanding of the basic values of our societies. This creates a sound and solid basis for the trans-Atlantic relationship.

[Dialogue]

A second precondition for sustaining and developing strong trans-Atlantic relations is dialogue. All issues of common interest should be brought into the dialogue between Europeans and Americans.

When it comes to security policy issues, NATO plays a central role as forum for dialogue. Of course, the dialogue that takes place between the EU and USA, within the framework of the United Nations and in the OSCE is also of major importance.

But nowhere else than in NATO do the Europeans and the North-Americans meet almost on a daily basis in a format exclusively reserved for them. NATO is thereby providing the best possible framework for maintaining and further strengthening a substantial, open and close trans-Atlantic dialogue.

The close dialogue between the Americans and the Europeans is one of the most prominent features of the trans-Atlantic relationship. We might not agree on everything – but we are always able to sit down and discuss the different issues. Like in a well-functioning marriage where discussions are taken at the kitchen table – and not through the slamming of doors ending in divorce.

Applying the world famous world cup slogan on the trans-Atlantic relationship, one could say “*Everything is Dialogue*”. Or in German: “*Alles ist Dialog*”.

[Mutual Respect]

A third precondition for a strong trans-Atlantic friendship, is mutual respect. All parts “around the kitchen table” should be ready to listen with an open mind to the other participants’ point of view – and should be ready to share their point of view and planned action with the others.

The possibility to disagree without risking starting a fight has always been one of the most precious virtues of the trans-Atlantic relationship. And we are striving to create the same possibility for other countries in the world.

[Prospects]

Now, some words on the prospects of the trans-Atlantic relationship. As with football matches, you can not precisely predict the future. But you can have a vision. It is my vision that we all stay committed towards the trans-Atlantic relationship and work for an even stronger relationship – and that NATO will continue to play a central role to this effect. And I believe this vision will come true.

[Trans-Atlantic Relations and the Cold War]

For many years, strong trans-Atlantic relations and the Cold War were two sides of the same coin. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat in 1989, some feared that this would also be the end of the good trans-Atlantic relationship.

But as we all know, the trans-Atlantic relationship survived without the “Soviet glue”. It has managed well – also without the dark shadow of an all-destroying war. That we all appreciate.

But we cannot and must not take strong trans-Atlantic relations for granted. New generations grow up both here in Europe and on the American continent. For those new generations the sacrifices

made during World War 1 and World War 2 might not stand as clear in their mind as for the older generation. We therefore all must stay committed to working for a strong relationship.

[Terrorism – a new common threat]

For some time we all lived with the hope and had got used to the idea that never again our nations would be attacked at home. But the vicious attack on September 11th and the following terrorist attacks in Madrid and London opened our eyes. The threat from terrorism is different from the threat during the cold war. But just like the old Soviet threat, the threat of terrorism is a threat that concerns all of us - both Europeans and Americans.

We need to work together across the Atlantic in the fight against terrorism. We might have different approaches, but again – only together can we effectively address the threat of terrorism.

I started stressing our shared values. It is precisely these values that have been attacked by the terrorists. We need to stand together in the fight *against* terrorism and *for* our values. For freedom. For democracy. For the rule of law.

As I mentioned earlier, the close dialogue that we have today, must be maintained – and strengthened even further. Here NATO plays a vital role. The political dialogue in NATO should be broadened. NATO is more than a tool box for military operations. It is *the* forum for trans-Atlantic dialogue. And it is the primary framework for our operations. It is our organization of choice.

As pointed out by Chancellor Merkel at the Security Policy Conference in Munich this year – NATO should be the place to also discuss issues for which no immediate military operations or actions are required. It is a matter of giving all allies in the trans-Atlantic relationship a possibility to express their frank view on issues – including those where we might disagree. This way we will be able to align our expectations to each other.

It is my wish that the NATO summit in Riga in November this autumn will send strong signals confirming NATO as *the* central forum for trans-Atlantic dialogue. And hopefully the NATO summit will also stress the need for increased co-operation between the EU and NATO.

[The technological and industrial development]

The technological and industrial development in the USA and in Europe, will probably also play an increasingly important role in the trans-Atlantic relationship. Not least, when it comes to cooperation on defence issues, the gap between Europe and the USA gives rise to concern.

One example is Missile Defence. But also with regard to the more traditional capabilities the gap is widening.

We must ensure that also in the future, European soldiers will be able to operate together with American soldiers. The increased co-operation between – and even mergers of – armaments companies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean gives increased possibilities for economies of scale and for inter-operability.

We Europeans need to do more when it comes to investments in the defence field. When the Europeans invest one euro on defence, the Americans invest more than two – and especially when it comes to investment in research and development.

We Europeans are still on top in international football. But unlike the technological gap, our American friends are catching up in football. We must do the same when it comes to technology. Europe needs to invest more. And to do more together.

At the same time, Europe should keep strengthening what it already today does at world class level. Our strength on issues of “soft” security - such as reducing poverty, promoting good governance, assistance to nation-building etc. - should not be underestimated. When Americans spend one dollar on development aid, we Europeans spend almost two.

In many ways Europe and the United States complement each other. We Europeans, however, shall maybe be better to explain to our American friends our approach to security and what the EU is about. There are still misunderstandings in the United States when it comes to the purpose of the EU and the way the EU is functioning. As we can learn from our trans-Atlantic friends, the United States can also learn from our approach to security.

To sum up, the trans-Atlantic relationship is based upon a solid fundament of shared values. But we all need to work continuously to maintain the strong bond. The threat of terrorism concerns all of us, and we must stand together in the fight against terrorism.

Close and regular dialogue is vital for maintaining the strong relationship. In this respect, NATO plays a core role. And NATO’s role as forum for trans-Atlantic dialogue should be strengthened even further. At the same time, the Europeans must be better to explain what the EU is about – and is *not* about.

In short, it is all a matter of maintaining and strengthening the dialogue. Our presence today at this conference is one element of maintaining this dialogue. There shall be no divorce in the trans-Atlantic marriage. *Alles ist Dialog.*

I look forward to the debate today. Thank you.