

WHICH TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP AFTER THE GLOBAL CRISIS?

A POLICY CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF THE ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP

Houston, Texas

On 3-4 October 2011, a series of panel discussions addressed whether the transatlantic axis remains the driver of global leadership today. Since World War II, the alliance between the United States and Europe has been the foundation of diplomatic, commercial, and security policies on both sides of the Atlantic. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the transatlantic relationship even became the foundation of global security and the core of the globalization process. Since around 2008, however, major shifts in the balance of power began to surface spurred by the rapid emergence of new world-level players such as China, Brazil, and India. Additionally, a sequence of crises (9/11, terrorism, natural disasters, financial meltdown, and Arab Spring) has vastly revised the international landscape. In the wake of these disruptions to traditional patterns of global leadership, does the transatlantic relationship remain relevant?

The conference concluded that the transatlantic alliance must be redefined in order to adapt to the emerging global context. For the relationship to continue, the United States must begin by accepting the European Union as an equal partner. While parity may not yet exist in all areas, the imbalance in decision-making is no longer realistic in light of the world order. The two sides of the Atlantic may disagree on how to interpret certain global trends, but they agree on ultimate goals and this congruence of values is the basis that will sustain the partnership into the future.

Given this background, the following recommendations are being proposed:

1. A paralysis in global governance exists highlighted by institutions that have lost effectiveness. At the same time, the agenda of problems confronted by countries (e.g., climate change, terrorism, financial accountability) has largely become worldwide in nature.
 - Transatlantic values (e.g., respect for human rights, democracy, and religious freedom) should constitute the framework of global governance. The transatlantic partnership should stand united in promoting this priority.
 - A democratic deficit is responsible for many of the current world crises. Accordingly, civil society should be more legitimately incorporated into global decision-making structures, including within the political systems of the countries that constitute the transatlantic alliance.
2. A multi-polar world has replaced the post-Cold War status quo. Nonetheless, the transatlantic partnership retains a major role to play in shaping the outcome of future global developments.
 - The scope of the transatlantic alliance should expand to embrace the four continents that face the Atlantic: North America, Europe, South America, and Africa. This redesign of transatlantic collaboration will buttress against the rise of new global powers.
 - A common security umbrella for transatlantic countries, although not necessarily NATO, is vital to invent as a means of defending the interests that unite our societies.