

Forum Frauenkirche online 2021

Europe and the Change at the White House. New Chances for a Global Peace Policy?

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With the inauguration of new US President Joe Biden, hopes of a revitalisation of transatlantic and multi-lateral relations are growing. For Europe, the change at the White House offers the chance to reposition itself at the international level. This was the topic of the panel discussion on 28 January 2021 between Federica Mogherini, former EU High Representative and now Rector of the College of Europe in Bruges, Professor Nicole Deitelhoff from the Peace Research Institute in Frankfurt, and John C. Kornblum, former US Ambassador to Germany. The public evening event – held online due to coronavirus restrictions – was hosted by the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), the Frauenkirche Foundation Dresden and the Saxon State Agency for Civic Education. The evening

opened and closed with images and organ music from the Frauenkirche.

Transatlantic relations between multilateralism and nationalism

Over the past four years, the face of America and the world has changed. US foreign policy under the Trump administration was based on the logic of a zero sum game, said Federica Mogherini. The goal was winning, not cooperation. This encouraged other heads of state and government to turn inwards and prioritise national interests. As a result, international cooperation – including within the United Nations framework – became more difficult. A particular challenge, from Federica Mogherini's perspective, was how to negotiate with a US president whose foreign policy was no longer oriented towards human rights.

With regard to transatlantic relations, both Federica Mogherini and John C. Kornblum made it clear that the major problem in relations between Europe and the US was that President Trump disliked and showed considerable antipathy to "Project Europe", a successful example of multilateralism. Federica Mogherini reminded the audience that Steve Bannon, for example, had campaigned for far-right parties in Europe and supported Brexit in a bid to destabilise the EU. Thankfully, attempts by Trump and his associates to destroy multilateralism had not been successful, John C. Kornblum added.



Forum Frauenkirche: Organ music welcoming participants

Changed power relations in the world

Nevertheless, the fundamental parameters for international cooperation have shifted, partly, although not entirely, as a consequence of Trump's incumbency. Until a few years ago, the international community was still reaching significant milestones in many multilateral processes, from the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals to the signing of the Iran nuclear deal. Those times are past, said Federica Mogherini: "It's a different world today, not only because we are facing new challenges and threats, from the pandemic to climate change, but also because power structures have shifted."

Europe's strength – Europe's weakness?

The partnership with the US has also been tested. For Europe, it was a shock that the notion of "us" – meaning Europe and the US as a community of values – was no longer guaranteed. However, both Federica Mogherini and Professor Nicole Deitelhoff agreed that this shock had enabled Europe to position itself with more self-confidence. Europe passed this test of strength and in doing so, has realised, perhaps, that it can do more than it thought itself capable of. However, Europe can only be strong if it speaks with one voice, said Nicole Deitelhoff. And there are many foreign policy issues, such as migration, where this still poses difficulties.

By contrast, John C. Kornblum was disappointed that after the upheavals of the 1990s, Europe had not developed as strongly as America would have wished. Europe has become more independent and more democratic, but not more productive. He was saddened to see Europe no longer as well-equipped to meet future challenges in industry, science and technology as it was in the 1980s.

A broader concept of European peace and security policy

With regard to future European peace policy, Federica Mogherini emphasised the importance of a broader, more integrated concept of peace and security: this should not be limited to military affairs but must encompass investment in trade, human rights, peacebuilding, development, humanitarian affairs and climate change, all of which are an investment in Europe's security. Nicole Deitelhoff underlined that one of Europe's strengths is its focus on political and non-military tasks. But in recent years, the situation in the world has changed, and military intervention has been required more frequently in response to conflict situations. This is challenging for Europe. Furthermore, peace and security policy can only succeed if Member States are able to agree a common

position. And that has often been a problem in recent years; in migration policy in particular, there is a lack of common ground.

The Iran deal – a successful example of transatlantic cooperation

There was consensus among the panellists that the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran was a good example of focused multilateral peace and security policy and a success story in European-US cooperation. The agreement is now a key pillar of stability and peace in the Middle East. Core elements of the agreement



Federica Mogherini, Roland Löffler (Chair), John C. Kornblum, Nicole Deitelhoff (clockwise)

have been maintained over the past few years, and thanks to the efforts of Germany and the United Kingdom, Russia and China have stayed on board, said Federica Mogherini, who was one of the negotiators of the deal. After the US withdrawal in 2018, she would like to see the Biden administration rejoining soon. With Wendy Sherman – who also helped negotiate the deal in 2015 – the new number two at the State Department, Biden has sent a clear message. But time is pressing: with parliamentary elections scheduled for summer 2021, a new political landscape could well emerge in Iran. She made it clear that Europe should play a key role in reviving the deal.

Hopes rest on the US government

In the multilateral arena, the hoped-for renewable of the Iran deal is just one of the many items of unfinished business left by the Trump administration. President Biden has made it clear during his first few days in office that he is determined to close these gaps. John C. Kornblum, who is personally acquainted with the new President, described Biden as a multilateralist and a friend of Europe. Federica Mogherini was convinced that from now on, the Europeans will no longer have to stand alone on the international stage and that America is keen to invest

in more collaborative politics again. Biden has hit the ground running, as the return to the Paris Agreement shows. But she also warned that after the past four years, the US needs to pick up the pieces at home as well, not least because citizens' trust in democracy and its values has been shaken.

Towards new norms for digital governance

In relation to the future challenge of building a peaceful and cooperative world order, the discussion turned to the increasingly important issue of values in a digital world. All the panellists agreed that Europe has considerable normative power, which should be utilised. But as John C. Kornblum pointed out, this is not enough. Much of the technology that we use was developed by American firms. This may change in future years as Russia and China gain influence. In the context of multilateral coopera-

tion, the critical issue at present is to define which values should form the basis for our digital future. He expressed his fears about a fragmented world order with multiple centres of power, and concluded by appealing to both the US and Europe to step up their cooperation on this issue.



Forum Frauenkirche: Countdown before the session

Cooperation partners



Imprint

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