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Buzek : l'UE devrait être plus pragmatique et les Etats-Unis plus romantiques

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Le partenariat UE-Etats-Unis devrait être revigoré, et chaque partie devrait faire des gestes à l'égard de l'autre, l'Union devenant plus pragmatique et les Etats-Unis plus romantique, a déclaré le président du Parlement européen Jerzy Buzek hier (16 mars).

Background

EU-US relationship had come under increasing strain under eight years of the George W. Bush administration, with issues such as the war in Iraq and the War on Terror dividing Europeans and Americans.

With the election of Barack Obama, the EU got the US president it wanted. However, relations were not boosted up to the expectations, which was illustrated by a reluctance of European leaders to engage more in Afghanistan ([EurActiv 02/12/09](#)), by the disillusion of the Copenhagen climate summit ([EurActiv 22/02/10](#)), or by Obama's decision to snub the 24-25 May EU-US Madrid summit ([EurActiv 02/02/10](#)).

More recently, the European Parliament refused to rubber-stamp the interim SWIFT agreement between the EU and the US on the transfer of citizens' financial data to prevent terrorist attacks, dealing a blow to both EU governments and US authorities using SWIFT ([EurActiv 11/02/10](#)). SWIFT is a Belgium-based private company that handles the banking transactions of thousands of banks, including most European ones.

A result-oriented approach, which is close to American thinking, should be the base for upgrading EU-US partnership, Buzek said at a conference in parliament, organized by Notre Europe.

The think-tank, founded by former long-serving Commission president Jacques Delors, unveiled a 'Concept paper' titled "Reshaping EU-US relations". Its authors include Delors, Buzek, former Commission president Romano Prodi, ALDE leader Guy Verhofstadt, former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, former prime minister of Finland Paavo Lipponen and Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, president of Notre Europe.

Buzek said the world needed to see the beginning of 'responsible global governance', in which the EU had a role to play, together with the US and the other actors of the multipolar world. In his words, the European Union was now equipped to do its part of the job, with a new treaty, a new parliament with more powers, a new Commission, and a European External Action Service which would be soon operational.

"The so-called West is incapable to solve the many international challenges", Buzek said, calling for a new multilateral governance in which the Union would find the framework to promote its values and make use of its 'soft power'. He called the EU-US relations a 'springboard' to kick start such a governance, but added that "a springboard is not sufficient for a good jump", as the West needed to engage other partners as well.

One of the most important statements of the 'Concept paper' is that in spite of the recovered international credibility of the USA under president Barack Obama, the European-American partnership is still unable to deliver, as demonstrated by the failure of the Copenhagen Climate Conference of December 2009. One of the reasons, it says, is that "partners refocus their energies on domestic policies".

Buzek admitted that Europe still needed to strengthen its internal positions. "To have strong international positions, we need strong internal positions," he said. In this context, he advised European to be more pragmatic, as Americans are known to be.

Regarding the recent Parliament vote against extending the interim SWIFT agreement between the EU and the US on the transfer of citizens' financial data to prevent terrorist attacks ([EurActiv 11/02/10](#)), Buzek said that the reason of the vote were "own EU internal problems", and it was "not about the US".

Positions

Etienne Davignon, former Commission vice president, said shelves were full of books about EU-US relations, but the merit of the concept paper was the fact that it is forward-looking and taking stock of recent events such as the Copenhagen climate summit or the recent decision of the Obama administration to skip the EU-US summit, planned by the Spanish EU presidency.

Regarding the Copenhagen summit, he said that the lesson to be learned is that in a multipolar world, other actors such as the emerging economies told the EU that they wanted to write the rules together with the West, and not to accept such rules drawn in a closer circle.

Asked about a risk that the US would consider engaging in a G-2 format with China, to the detriment of other players, he said that the possibility existed, but such a format "could not work", as the two countries were divided by topics of great importance, such as exchange rates or access to raw materials.

Tommaso Padoa Schioppa, President of Notre Europe, said that in a first stage, the Concept paper had been planned as a joint effort of European and American

thinkers. But later, it was decided that “a European reflection” was needed first, before seeking synergies with US counterparts.

He explained that the aim of the concept paper was to formulate key principles, applicable for many fields of EU-US relations. In a nutshell, he formulated two such principles: the full acceptance of multilateralism, and the acceptance of the idea of the need of ‘sharing sovereignty’.

Next Steps

- The authors of the ‘Concept paper’ said that it would be presented to US universities and research institutes.

Liens

NGOs and Think-Tanks

- Notre Europe: [Reshaping EU-US Relations: A Concept Paper](#)

Press articles

- EurActiv Slovakia: [EÚ by mala byť pragmatickejšia, Spojené štáty romantickejšie](#)