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Schroeder Doesn't Speak for All Germans

By Angela Merkel

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Rarely do we have the experience of witnessing firsthand the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. But this is exactly what people all over the world are now living through. This epochal change began with the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989, which marked a victory for freedom and the opening of the transatlantic partnership to the East. It continued with the events of Sept. 11, 2001, which shook the United States to its very foundations -- with consequences that, to this day, many Europeans have not fully grasped. Because of these decisive events, Europe and the United States now must redefine the nucleus of their domestic, foreign and security policy principles.

Europe is, on the one hand, assuming new responsibilities around the world, whether in Kosovo or Afghanistan. On the other hand, it is divided, maybe even deeply split. Thus, for example, aid to Turkey, our partner in the alliance, is blocked for days in the NATO Council by France, Belgium and Germany, a situation that undermines the very basis of NATO's legitimacy. The most important lesson of German politics -- never again should Germany go it alone -- is swept aside with seeming ease by a German federal government that has done precisely this, for the sake of electoral tactics. The Eastern European candidate countries for membership in the European Union are attacked by the French government simply because they have declared their commitment to the transatlantic partnership between Europe and the United States.

But there is a more positive side as well. An agreement was reached at the emergency EU summit on Monday: On the basis of U.N. Resolution 1441, participants decided on a coordinated attitude to be adopted by the Europeans in the Iraq conflict. The agreement, which was long overdue, has forced the German federal government to make its first change of course in its policy toward Iraq. As the German parliamentary opposition, we welcome this change and expect the German government's behavior on the U.N. Security Council to be in accord with the EU decision, although we also have reason to doubt it will be.

Two things have been highlighted once again by the EU decision. First, the danger from Iraq is not fictitious but real. Second, working not against but jointly with the United States, Europe must take more responsibility for maintaining international pressure on Saddam Hussein. As is argued in the EU summit declaration, this means advocating military force as the last resort in implementing U.N. resolutions.

It is true that war must never become a normal way of resolving political disputes. But the history of Germany and Europe in the 20th century in particular certainly teaches us this: that while military force cannot be the normal continuation of politics by other means, it must never be ruled out, or even merely questioned -- as has been done by the German federal government -- as the *ultimate* means of dealing with dictators. Anyone who rejects military action as a last resort weakens the pressure that needs to be maintained on dictators and consequently makes a war not less but more likely.

This is a grave matter: Peace is a supreme good, for the sake of which every effort has to be made. But it is also true that responsible political leadership must on no account trade the genuine peace of the future for the deceptive peace of the present. The determination and unity of the free nations will, in the Iraq conflict, have a decisive effect not only on the outcome of the crisis but on the way in which we shape the future of Europe and its relationship with the United States. They will have a decisive effect, too, on how we guarantee peace, freedom and security, and how we find appropriate

answers to the new threats of our time. Will it be alone or together, with determination or in despair, with our partners or against them?

I am convinced that Europe and the United States will have to opt for a common security alliance in the future, just as they did in the past. The United States is the only remaining superpower, but even so it will have to rely on dependable partners over the long term. Germany needs its friendship with France, but the benefits of that friendship can be realized only in close association with our old and new European partners, and within the transatlantic alliance with the United States.

A couple of days ago, an article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of Germany's major national newspapers, carried the headline "The End of a Friendship." It included the following passage: "For Germany, a permanent break with America would probably be not much of a liberation but a return to an ugly old-new reality, to the completely disillusioned world of the old Europe with its narrow-mindedness and disloyalty. Gratitude, friendship with America: in future these could still prove to be reasonable feelings."

For the party that I lead, our close partnership and friendship with the United States is just as much a fundamental element of Germany's national purpose as European integration. But both will be successful only if it is possible to build new trust and we are able to formulate our own interests. There is no acceptable alternative to this way forward at the beginning of this new epoch.

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