

Nov 04, 2016 by *Adam Clayton Powell, III*

U.S., Europe Both Value Multilateral Action, but With Different Motivations and for Different Goals ^[1]

The U.S. and Europe both value multilateral action, “contrary to public perceptions,” but American and European governments have different motivations and goals.

That was the message from Liechtenstein’s Ambassador to the United States, Claudia Fritsche, who delivered an address on truth and transparency at USC on Tuesday.

Much of Ambassador Fritsche’s address focused on the role of her country and its prominent financial sector in the global economy and in diplomacy. But her analysis of multilateralism and its differing practices on the different shores of the Atlantic was intriguing:

“Some foreign policy experts have argued in the past that there is a transatlantic divide over the utility of international organizations – and diplomacy more generally,” she noted. But then she argued that this was not entirely correct:

“Contrary to public perceptions, however, this divide is not because the United States has acted on occasions in a unilateral way and Europeans prefer more the multilateral approach,” she said. “The actual difference is more about the process than the outcome. For Americans, multilateralism is often a means to an end; for Europeans, multilateralism is an end in itself.”

Ambassador Fritsche traced this to Europe’s history – perhaps especially acute from the perspective of a country she described as “small -- the size of Washington DC -- as well in size as in population -- 36,000.” And she predicted that the U.S. and Europe are on a path to increasingly shared approaches to multilateralism:

“I doubt however that this divergence over multilateralism will continue to persist,” she said. “The long-term distribution of power, the medium-term distribution of threats and the shared sense of social purpose will make us all realize that cooperation on all levels will be the most beneficial approach.”
