

Germany: Merkel visits the USA – a statement of discrepancies

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her visit on 6–7 June to the USA received in Washington, D.C. the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama. This is the highest US civilian award. The meeting was also used as an occasion to discuss some contentious issues existing between the two countries. However, the talks ended up in a statement of discrepancies.

Different stances on the two major issues, the way of handling the financial crisis and the interventions in Afghanistan and Libya, have recently cast a shadow on relations between Berlin and Washington. Last November, Wolfgang Schäuble, the German minister of finance, criticised the US Federal Reserve for its buyback of treasury bonds from banks. This institution, which performs the role of a central bank, was thus reviving economic growth in the USA. However, Schäuble warned that this could bring about a new global economic crisis. In turn, Germany in March 2011 abstained from voting on a resolution enabling military intervention in Libya at the UN Security Council.

The two-day visit of Angela Merkel, who was accompanied by senior German officials, has failed to draw the two countries' standpoints any closer despite the great symbolic significance attached to it. Angela Merkel was defending the decision she had made in March for Germany to refrain from military engagement in Libya. The US president appealed to Berlin to accept the burden of responsibility for resolving the financial crisis in Europe. In response, the German chancellor was arguing that Europe knows itself how to cope with its problems. The USA acknowledges Germany's increasing political and economic significance in the European Union and, despite the difference of opinions on many issues, must respect the German stance. <ciechan>