

Contributing to Europe's Defence

**Address by Congress Chairman
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Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First and foremost, permit me to preface my remarks by recalling why we meet annually within this framework to address issues of European security and defence.

The efforts of the European Union (EU) to inaugurate a security and defence policy date back to 1999. Much has been achieved in the interim, but the matter of Europe's defence is an ongoing issue and, moreover, one that must be addressed and reinvigorated on a regular basis in the interests of providing sustained input and impulse. Within the current legislative period, the European Parliament has closely monitored and responded to developments in this area and has formed a Sub-Committee on Security and Defence Policy. Let me add that the Kangaroo Group has, for a quarter of a century, played a substantive role in the development and promotion of the European Union and that Europe's security and defence continues to be an absolute priority on the Group's agenda.

It is fair to say that the European Union's preoccupation with security and defence policy has intensified in recent years:

- Decisions were taken in Helsinki with respect to a European Crisis Intervention Force
- Decisions were taken in Brussels regarding the requisite command structures
- First-ever EU interventions were initiated in Macedonia and in the Congo
- A European Security Policy was elaborated and articulated by Javier Solana
- A proposal for a European Defence Agency was endorsed; and
- Pre-emptive European Commission initiatives are in place with regard to security research.

Together, these facts attest to the progress made towards a European defence identity.

At the same time, the subject of European security and defence has increasingly been debated in the context of a wider public, albeit somewhat tentatively. As a European parliamentarian, I can vouch for the fact that conferences on this theme are increasingly well-attended.

That said, key questions remain and are more pressing than ever. What, for example, is the relationship between the security and defence policy of the European and the North-

Atlantic Alliance? Is there a duplication of effort? Are we jeopardising relationships with the United States?

In open public debate, the argument is frequently advanced that we have no further need of a defence posture now that the Soviet Union has imploded. Only recently, a friend of mine – who is well-versed in political matters – asked me “Who are we supposed to be defending ourselves against?”.

Such a question unequivocally demonstrates that more than half a century of **peace** in the founder countries of the European Union is frequently taken for granted. This ignores the fact that, since the end of the Second World War, more than *four hundred* individual wars and armed confrontations have been recorded and millions of deaths have ensued. Accordingly, we must redouble our efforts to ensure peace on a sustained and sustainable basis.

Security Strategy

In December 2003, heads of state and governments agreed a European Security Policy elaborated by Javier Solana. This takes as its point of departure the fact that, since the eclipse of the former Soviet Union, major aggression directed towards EU Member States has become less probable. On the other hand, our continent continues to be confronted by a range of other threats which are more diffuse, less evident and substantially unpredictable.

The first such threat is that of **international terrorism** and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We must now accept that Europe is not only a potential target for international terrorism but a breeding ground: Al Qaeda cells have been identified in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The most alarming scenario of all, perhaps, is that terrorist groups come into possession of weapons of mass destruction. This has already happened. In Tokyo in 1995, for example, when the Aum terrorist movement introduced Sarin nerve gas into the city’s Metro network, killing twelve people and injuring or incapacitating thousands of others. It might be added that the same group released anthrax spores into a Tokyo thoroughfare two years previously.

These examples show how problematic it has now become in this modern age to rely on traditional distinctions between internal and external security.

A further crucial element in the development of our security policy is that of **regional conflicts**. It is to Europe’s discredit and eternal shame that we were unable to take unilateral action to prevent or at least mitigate civil war in the Balkans. Seven thousand people lost their lives in Srebrenica alone, while the powerful economies of the European Union stood on the sidelines, unable to take decisive preventive action. We must do everything in our power to prevent this from ever happening again.

Europe’s individual Member States failed by proving incapable of pooling their efforts. At the time, the European Union had neither the means or mechanisms to intervene directly and militarily; it was only because of the intervention of our American allies that the Balkan War was ended.

The security policy articulated by Javier Solana and his colleagues identifies conflicts in Kashmir, on the open seas and on the Korean peninsula as key potential threats to world security. This judgment is accurate. As far as the unilateral capacities and capabilities of the European Union are concerned, however, it is predicted that, for the time being and in the foreseeable future, we shall be obliged to focus on our immediate field of geographical interest, with intervention in other more remote parts of the world reserved to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

A vital component of European security strategy is the close interface between **civilian and military measures** to anticipate crisis and to prevent and/or address it effectively. In this connection, it is significant that the European Union disburses more development aid than the United States. Brussels is currently in the process of creating a Civilian-Military Planning Centre which will have a central role in the European Union's security proposals for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A key issue in discussions between Europe and the United States is that of **preventive action**. In this respect, Europe is distinctly more reticent than its counterpart, the United States. Javier Solana has pointed out that the risks of arms proliferation are increasing exponentially and that, in the absence of countermeasures, terrorist networks pose a progressively growing threat. It follows that the first line of defence must be abroad rather in the homeland. It is still a moot point, however, as to which preventive measures are justified and acceptable.

The **national security strategy of the United States** clearly enunciates the lead role played by that country. It rests on the incontrovertible fact that the United States is at present militarily the most powerful nation in the world – and that it intends to remain so. In consequence, the United States reserves the right, as an alternative to working within the framework of NATO and/or the United Nations, to act unilaterally or in coalition with such other nations as are willing to cooperate.

By contrast, the security strategy of the **European Union** is predicated on a world order based on **effective multilateralism**. This presupposes that the United Nations Charter must constitute the framework for international relations.

My own opinion in this respect is that our current security policies are inadequate to address the issue of **homeland defence** which, when all is said and done, is the primary concern of any foreign or defence policy. This may well be taken to imply that security at home is a function of security in far-distant lands and, if that is the case, then so be it. So much is all too clear from the value the United States places on homeland defence as a component of its overall security strategy.

By far the most important prerequisite of the European Union's territorial defence is the concept of **mutual and reciprocal support**. This is enshrined in the NATO Treaty and should be incorporated as a fundamental provision into the upcoming Constitution of the European Union.

EU security policy represents a solid base from which to **analyse and evaluate** current threats. That said, when it comes to determining **responses**, it rapidly emerges that there is a yawning gulf between Europe and the United States, where strategy is conceived and articulated by a small group of persons – the President, the Defense Secretary, the

Chairman of the Security Council and the Foreign Secretary. In the European Union, by contrast, security strategy is a function of a unanimous decision at the level of heads of state and government.

Putting Strategy into Practice

Several weeks ago, Germany's Defence Minister remarked that, in the instance of national-level procurement, a **European yardstick** would be "helpful", not to say "imperative". It is all too evident, however, that pan-European defence procurement strategies are still too vague for such a yardstick to be put in place.

Other European Union convergence issues – such as the Internal Market and a Common European Currency – have taught us that setting strategic goals is one thing and establishing a precise **schedule of contents and implementation** another thing entirely. In the case of the Internal Market, the schedule was set out in a White Paper drafted by Jacques Delors and Lord Cockfield; in the case of the Common Currency, the schedule was anchored in the Maastricht Treaty.

That was uppermost in our minds in the European Parliament when we debated the report on European security policy drafted by my colleague Philippe Morillon. We were aware that the emergence of a new European defence identity would inevitably ensue by stages. The appropriate timetable for implementation was felt to be the legislative period in office of the European Parliament and the European Commission and this was the basis on which Parliament formulated its goals for the years ahead. We submitted that the European Union should be in a position by yearend 2009 to address either autonomously or in cooperation with its allies a crisis of similar dimensions and intensity to that which had obtained in Kosovo. Parliament further proposed that a **core unit** of the as yet embryonic – not to say "virtual" – European Crisis Intervention Force be maintained in readiness for rapid deployment. The initial proposal was for the so-called Franco-German Brigade to be deployed; in the interim, the proposal has largely become reality in the guise of **battle groups** put in place following input from France and the United Kingdom.

To my mind, a further initiative would be publication of a **White Book** similar to that issued by the European Institute for Security Research. This could go some considerable way towards determining possible scenarios capable of facilitating transition to an EU security policy.

1999 and After

It is perhaps useful in this context to recapitulate what has been achieved since 1999.

The Helsinki Summit of heads of state and government postulated as an initial goal that the European Union would by 2003 have the capability to provide at two months' notice 60,000 troops for a minimum of one year's deployment in its own immediate sphere of geographical interest. This was a first step; and the European Union subsequently demonstrated that it is now in a position to meet these parameters by carrying out military missions in Macedonia and in the Congo. Additionally, the **Political Committee**, the **Military Committee**, the **Military Staff**, the **Central Planning Office** and **Agreements**

with NATO now represent the infrastructure needed to give effect to military intervention at this level and under European Union authority.

Assuming responsibility for the military mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (codename: *Althea*) represents far and away the European Union's most extensive commitment to date: 7,000 troops will be deployed there, as opposed to a mere 350 in Macedonia and some 1,800 in the Congo.

In policy terms, these military missions have a twofold goal: first, to ensure that the **leadership structure** is appropriate to the demands of the situation and, second, that the troops in the field have the requisite **arms and equipment** for the task in hand.

The **chain of command** in Bosnia-Herzegovina is in line with agreements concluded between the European Union and NATO, the so-called "Berlin-plus" agreements, and extends from **Brussels** via **Mons** and **Naples** to **Sarajevo**. *Althea* represents a crucial testbed for the practical viability of said agreements.

In terms of arms and equipment, it must be borne in mind that these missions involve troops of different nationalities. Accordingly, **compatibility** is a **primary concern**.

Financing of the operation must be provided within the framework of dedicated structures. Thus, the European Parliament has proposed **equal rates of remuneration** for the troops deployed (so-called "per diems") and that payments be disbursed directly from the **Community Budget**. The European Parliament is firmly and formally opposed to **shadow budgets** where security and defence issues are at stake on the grounds that such budgets cannot be monitored effectively. The proposal by the Parliament is intended to provide a solution conducive to more **transparent** financing of European military missions.

Research and Technology

The various crises in the Balkans revealed time and again that Europe's troops were fundamentally disadvantaged in terms of equipment. These **shortfalls** were particularly evident with regard to air and marine transport, satellite-based communications and aerial reconnaissance. In illustration, one need only refer to the existence within European military space technology of no fewer than five distinct satellite communications systems and three separate satellite reconnaissance systems, each with its own distinctive technology. As a result, **interoperability** is clearly prejudiced.

The plain fact is that these various systems were developed without prior consultation. To put it another way: no *European* operating system currently exists. This is the result, among other things, of there being as yet **no common European market in defence**. Although Europe's industries have stepped up cooperation in recent years, there is a pronounced lack of a **political dimension** in this respect.

In the United States, demand is essentially dictated by a single institution, the **Pentagon**. In Europe, by contrast, procurement is currently spread over twenty-five defence ministries. Experience has demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt that this makes implementation of joint projects extremely onerous and complicated.

At present, Europe is seeking to overcome this disadvantage by proposing two initiatives, namely a **Defence Agency** at Council level and **stepped-up joint security research** at the European Union level generally. A proposal for a **Common European Defence Agency** has been incorporated into the draft European Constitution. The proposal in question was elaborated by a working party under the chairmanship of **Michel Barnier**, France's current Minister for Defence.

In effect, a Common European Defence Agency was in already in place before the draft Constitution was ratified and was already operational under the direction of Nick Whitney. In European terms, one might add, this was an uncommonly fast reaction and one that surely confirms that the European Union institutions as a whole have the **political will** needed to take positive and pragmatic steps to advance the cause of a common European defence.

However, when I scan the repertory of **tasks** facing such an agency, I have my doubts. Long years in the field have taught me a bitter lesson, namely that the performance of pan-European agencies is in inverse proportion to the number of tasks they are called upon to address. Accordingly, I fervently hope that the agency will focus resolutely on its key mission, namely **coordinating demand** in vital areas of research and technology.

It appears crucial not only that the defence ministries of all EU Member States are fully and adequately represented within the top echelons of the agency but also that the **European Commission** is present. This seems to me a prerequisite if common priorities are to be addressed.

The most obvious shortfalls at present would appear to be in the **satellite telecommunications sector**, and I am at a loss to understand why the Franco-German Brigade was – and still is – equipped with two different systems.

Equally important, however, is the issue of **aerial reconnaissance systems**, which are indispensable not only to military tasks but also to the security of our borders. It would seem an eminently sensible proposal to suggest that the European Union battle groups currently in place for crisis intervention deployment should be equipped with one and the same telecommunications and reconnaissance systems.

A further priority identified by the European Parliament is with respect to **landmine clearance**. This point was driven home when I observed at first hand in Kosovo the antediluvian methods that are currently in use.

In tandem with the establishment of a Defence Agency at Council level, the European Commission has itself launched a **Preparatory Initiative in the Area of Security Research**. In the first instance, this initiative is directed towards the protection of the Union's borders and the safety of critical **infrastructural installations** such as nuclear power plants and air routes. The initiative is expected to culminate in 2007 in proposals for a **European Security Research Programme**.

To put matters in context: the United States currently spends some Euros fifty billion on defence, whereas the European Union disburses some ten billion, of which France and the United Kingdom disburse three billion each and Germany some two billion, the balance being contributed by the remaining Member States.

In the course of preparatory discussion on European Union security research, it was submitted that an additional **Euros one to two billion** be earmarked annually for the **Framework Programme**.

Procurement

If the ultimate goal is genuinely to create a **common market in defence**, procurement and, in particular, tenders must in future be coordinated Europe-wide. Sadly, the Member States have all-too-frequent recourse to **Treaty Article 296** which, as is all too familiar, provides for exceptions to the rules governing tenders. Such exceptions may be legitimate in the case of items where military secrecy is involved, but they are difficult to take seriously when it comes down to tenders relating to, say, the provisions of **socks and boots**. In those instances, classification as “top secret” would appear less than justified – other, that is, than in the case of “special agent” socks and boots for use by the James Bonds of this world ...

The European Commission has compiled a **Green Book** which focuses on the key issues with regard to procurement, and the **European Court** has issued several guidelines and criteria that distinguish between civilian and military applications. **Barbara Rapp** has authored an interesting article in this respect, setting out the position of the European Parliament; I commend that article to you.

Initial discussions on European Union foreign and defence policy took place in a workgroup chaired by **Pierre Bordeaux-Groult** and with the participation among others of **Leo Tindemans** and **Henri Froment Meurice**. That workgroup arrived at the consensus that a *common European foreign policy* was a must if a common European defence policy was to be developed.

Over time, I should add, my friends and I have come to the conclusion that it is **easier** to define common European security interests than it is to devise a common foreign policy – with all the ramifications such a policy implies.

It is a self-evident goal of a European foreign and security policy to guarantee the safety of the Union and its citizens and to serve the global interests and aspirations of the latter. In the end, that is what Europe’s citizens expect first and foremost from the European Union and the European Idea: to live at peace and to live in security.

On behalf of all of you, I should like to express thanks to Uwe Proll and his team who have been instrumental in coordinating this congress and its two predecessors. I should also like to express a debt of gratitude to my friend and colleague Hartmut Bühl, whose counsel has proved a major factor in the conception and elaboration of the present event.

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