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“What kind of Europe in what kind of world?”

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I would just like to say how happy I am to be with you today because as part of the work initiated by Ms Ashton in Brussels and in which I have an active part, it is always very interesting to be able to stand back and assess the situation. Events like this one provide a suitable occasion to try and think in more depth – with the benefit of hindsight – and to consider what we are trying to do and of course, the direction we are taking.

I have been asked to talk on “What kind of Europe in what kind of world?” I thought in fact that the simplest way to do this would be to try and answer the question directly – which is not really a habit amongst diplomats. But indeed, I believe that it is a good question in which there is a real interest in trying to provide new ideas or to put things into perspective.

WHAT KIND OF EUROPE?

Here’s a first thought: if you look at Europe from an historical point of view and try to understand what we have been trying to do since the end of the 1950’s, with the ECSC, then the Rome Treaty, you will see that there is one fundamental problem which has not been analysed often enough and which is related to the fact that in the beginning the European project was an internal one, of peace and reconciliation, between France and Germany – project for economic prosperity for the member countries of the European Community and then the European Union.

All of this has developed quite naturally through the Franco-German reconciliation, the end of the East-West divide, enlargement, the single market, the introduction of the euro and via all of the treaties that have gone hand in hand with this movement; we have seen the consolidation of these developments. After the Maastricht Treaty we started to think about the next step in the European project, because since reconciliation, peace and prosperity had been more or less achieved and even if they still required consolidation, it was clear that we had to move on to something else. From this point of view a critical point was reached with the Maastricht Treaty; since the next step – Europe’s transition from economic to political power has not been achieved easily, simply because the Member States do not agree on what Europe’s final goal is: there was no goal when we were twelve, nor when we were fifteen, and with 27 members it is even more complicated.

In fact since the Maastricht Treaty those that followed have not been as easy to conclude: we saw this with the Amsterdam Treaty and then that of Nice – we saw it also with the Lisbon Treaty and the draft Constitution which preceded it. Public opinion is more reticent, in France, but also in the Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark and the UK. The polls confirm this regularly. Europe is on an identity quest and finds it difficult to define a project. And if we limit ourselves to the idea of economic power which is trying to become a political power, it is quite clear that in reality Europe is struggling to assert

itself a political power. It still hasn't succeeded in converting the try to take full advantage of this formidable power that it represents and which, even today is an undeniable reality: more than 25% of trade in the world, nearly 75% of the American GNP per capita and many other figures that we might speak of.

The reality of the situation soon demonstrated how complex it was: some time after having written the last word of the Maastricht Treaty Europe entered into the Balkan crisis and it was forced to call on the USA to get it out of the rut, although the problem was in its immediate neighbourhood. Then we saw this in a series of conflicts around the world, notably in Iraq, over which we were deeply divided; it was also the case more recently with the military operations in Libya. Because of this, everything that was started as part of the European Security and Defence Policy was launched quite energetically, since in just a few years, there have been more than 20 operations. For those ongoing today we are looking for renewed impetus: in Kosovo, Georgia and in the operation we are undertaking against piracy on the coasts of Somalia in East Africa, the contributions made by the Member States are declining and the goals we set are becoming difficult to achieve. And so our partners across the world wonder whether the Europeans are still as decided to turn the European Union into a real political power capable of maintaining its role and position in the international arena.

If we accept this historical analysis, which is quite obviously too brief – the question then arises about why Europe is struggling to make the transition from the economic to the political. I have one or two ideas to suggest about the notion of "power".

Above all Europe sees itself as a normative power, as a "soft power", maybe even - to quote Hillary Clinton - as a "smart power". I believe that Europeans think this, but that in reality they invented this idea afterwards, without having really drawn up a real course of action in terms of this idea of power. Hence a gap has formed because we have never really tried to develop this idea to define its broad lines of action. In fact we stopped at the crossroads – as we have often done in the course of European integration.

WHY HAVE WE BEHAVED LIKE THIS?

I think there are three reasons for this, which are

quite obvious for anyone who experiences them on a day to day basis.

The first is that the very concept of power is not really in Europe's genetic code and that many of our partners still find it difficult to accept this idea. In a remarkable paper that he has just written "*Power in the 21st Century*" Pierre Bühler says in fact that European integration responds to the will for peace and stability and that as a result, the idea of power is contradictory to what the Europeans originally set out to achieve. If we accept that power – and this is obviously a simplification but it is what many of our partners in the European Union think – principally means the use of force and constraint that particular idea might be hard for many Europeans to accept. The idea of "soft power" therefore seemed to be a much more acceptable substitute, if it is interpreted in a specific way and which does not necessarily match the ideas put forward by Joseph Nye, who originally came up with the concept. He said that soft power was not the rejection of the use of coercive measures but that it was the way these were employed that counted. If we accept this analysis, Europeans face a dilemma because in their opinion, for a long time the debate over "soft power" has been one over military and non-military. Recently this has changed, as gradually an improved European sanctions policy has been introduced. But a certain amount of ambiguity remains, if we look at the recent operation in Libya.

The second reason why the idea of power comes up against opposition in Europe is that when we built the European Union, it was not on virgin territory. Indeed we have built the European Union with Member States which each had their specific character in terms of security and defence policy; we also, and above all, built it alongside the Atlantic Alliance. The presence of the Atlantic Alliance has been a problem for the European Union from the beginning, notably because for a long time France did not take part in the integrated military organisation. Although France has re-joined the integrated military structures, we can see that even today Member States still have a problem - they wonder whether it is really necessary to continue building European security and defence since France has now joined the Atlantic Alliance because their roles might be duplicated.

To this we might add that each of the Member States has developed a certain number of resources in terms of "soft power" (*in the sense*

intended by Joseph Nye) and that the European Union has progressively developed "soft power" tools – and not just in the military domain. Here I'm thinking for example of the sanctions policy. During the most recent "Foreign Affairs" Council we took further, particularly significant sanctions against Iran, in the oil and financial sectors which have placed the European Union at the head of the movement, showing that as the years have gone by we have acquired real expertise in this area. Over time we have also developed a range of economic instruments via trade agreements, assistance and development aid and also via our sectoral policies. Again Europe often introduces these instruments and develops them without however having any clear idea of the effect it wants them to have. Often a political or strategic vision, which would give real sense to our work, is lacking. In other words, we create "power", a little like Mr Jourdain, without realising it and this affects the scope our work, as well as the influence and authority we might hope to have in the world.

The third reason why we find it difficult to accept the idea of power is that as Europeans we are often divided over the goals that we want to achieve. Even within each of the Member States there is a certain amount of uncertainty about the way to move forwards.

If we take France for example, from the point of view of security and defence, we clearly see that our country vacillates between the desire for a European approach –it is undoubtedly the Member State that has been the most constant in this and in its will to take the security and defence policy forwards – and the temptation to move forward on a bilateral path as well. This double approach is not necessarily contradictory; it has even led to undeniable results: the Saint-Malo Agreement with Tony Blair's UK is a bilateral agreement that boosted the European defence and security policy; in this regard it comprised quite a fundamental step in reviving European integration in this area. But other, more complex effects are visible: hence the treaty that France concluded with the UK in 2010 was seen

by many of our partners as a Franco-British move toward autonomy; some then even wondered about what the Franco-British couple wanted. Since, at the same time, we can see less enthusiasm and commitment towards the European security policy, some conclude that European security is now starting to slow.

IN WHAT KIND OF WORLD IS EUROPE NOW DEVELOPING?

Firstly there is the economy – i.e. the economic and financial crisis that is affecting all EU countries and which is the source of two questions on the part of our external partners:

The first of these is the European economic and social model's ability to recover its energy and release what is necessary for it to continue financing its social protection system in particular. With regard to this I would like to invite you to lend an ear to the debates in the Republican "primaries" in the USA, in which the European social model is held up as a spectre most of the time.

The second problem which is just as important for those who see Europe with a "benevolent" eye, is our governance – i.e. the way we manage our institutions. This mirrors a feeling that is firmly established amongst a certain number of our external partners that Europe must bring its house in order, so that it can respond quickly and decide without giving the impression that it is hesitating or that it has doubts.

So, that is it as far as the economy is concerned.

If we want a vision of the long term, I think we should take three things into consideration.

First of all there is the globalised world in which we live. We can see that there is a growing challenge to European integration, as the hierarchy between nations and powers is brought into question across the world. Of course China springs to mind, but beyond this in every region of the world, we can

see new emerging powers which no longer accept the established order. This challenge has been evident in the UN Security Council for example, in the way that some emerging countries reacted to the intervention in Libya, in the difficulties we have in forming a coalition against Bashar al-Assad's Syria and more generally in the challenge made to the status granted to the five permanent member countries. We are no longer in the world we knew just a few years ago; new relationships have been formed and for the European Union it is a formidable challenge. Moreover, whilst the idea of "power" over the last few years had firmly been set on military power, this faces challenges that are increasingly difficult to overcome. We can see this in asymmetrical conflicts, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The second consideration set by this new world is its extraordinary pace. I shall not launch into a long description because we experience this phenomenon associated with the interconnection of networks and the capacity for an increasingly rapid communication of information on a daily basis. In a few words I would simply like to demonstrate the consequences of this on decision making in terms of foreign policy. First consider the speed with which the Arab "revolutions", the Arab Spring, spread from one country to another.

Also, think of the speed with which the intervention in Libya was set up: it started with a European Council – even if Europe did not show itself to be as united as we would have hoped, it was indeed the European Council of 11th March 2011 that laid down the blueprint for the intervention. It was in a bid to protect an agreement between Europeans that a certain number of principles were established: the competent regional organisation i.e. the Arab League, had to request intervention; a UN Security Council resolution had to provide it with a legal base; finally this operation had to meet with real requirements. The European Council took place on 11th March; in the days that followed a decision by the Arab League asked the Security Council to intervene and to set up a no-fly zone; a Security Council vote came on the Thursday evening and a

meeting at the Elysée took place on the Saturday, at the end of which President Sarkozy announced the intervention of French and British planes. It was an unusual sequence of events which forced all players in the crisis to act almost immediately. This acceleration is not just happening in terms of action: it is also reflected in the analysis and assessment of events that we permanently have to undertake. As an example I can quote the White Paper on Security and Defence that was drawn up by the French authorities in 2008: even though I believe it is still quite justified, as we start the year of 2012, it needs updating, simply in the light of the events that have occurred in the Arab Spring. In terms of the European Union several Member States are also asking for the European security strategy, drawn up by Javier Solana in 2003 and updated in 2008, to be reviewed again in view of ongoing developments.

This acceleration is a major problem for the European Union. The latter is a slow machine that needs time, particularly, because decisions in Brussels have to be taken by 27 members. We Europeans are still prisoners of a system, which if it wants to move forwards, needs the agreement of all in regard to foreign policy. Having said this, if we consider the sanctions I mentioned earlier, efforts have been made to move faster: hence in less than two months the European Union has succeeded in agreeing to sanction Iran's oil industry.

The third consideration is about the world at present: new challenges are now emerging.

The first of these being the new power struggle between the different regions of the world; we are still tempted to think of Asia first but we should not forget Latin America. Amazing changes are taking place, with countries whose growth rates vary between five and eight percent. Our Latin-American partners want to develop relations with the European Union and sometimes feel that not enough attention is being paid to them. Then there is Africa, where economic structures are emerging, which may provide this continent with the energy it

has been waiting for so long. Hence new economic relations are now being formed that will force us, the Europeans, to re-think our policy with regard to other regions in the world.

With regard to the Arab Spring, in Brussels we thought that these countries would naturally be a privileged sphere of influence for Europe, given our geographic proximity – a little like the countries of Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which turned to Brussels to ensure their economic development and to promote their accession to the European Union. But we are discovering that we are up against strong competition in the Arab countries and that countries as distant from this region as Brazil, China and even Australia, are exercising their influence – again "soft power" – and that they are challenging us directly. We have to show greater energy therefore and greater initiative, because the terrain is far from being conquered.

So, there is a challenge to the balance of power and also to the development of the trans-Atlantic relationship.

We are witnessing the emergence of a new strategic framework between the USA and Europe. It is not the idea spread by observers based on the recent speeches delivered by Robert Gates, Leon Panetta and even by President Obama himself, which suggests that the USA is distancing itself from the European Union. But it is more the feeling that the USA is expecting the European Union to take on more of its share of the burden and for them to draw up a new strategic vision of what the trans-Atlantic partnership should be together.

I think that this will develop, and possibly become more complex. In any event it will force the Europeans to ask themselves a certain number of questions and about what they want to do with the Euro-American relationship.

Finally the other challenge is of course in our neighbourhood. Not only that in the south because of the Arab Spring, which is pushing us to establish new relations with the Arab countries, but also in the east. Of course Russia, Ukraine, the

Caucasus and others spring to mind. We have to set a special place aside for Turkey which is not part of the neighbourhood policy since it is a candidate country, whose place and role justify specific thought: whatever the future reserves for Turkey's accession request, it will be a vital partner for Europeans in the definition of a new regional balance of power; we cannot afford to do without in-depth thought about the strategic interests that we share with this country and the type of dialogue we want to establish with it.

I shall conclude quickly with three comments.

First – a pre-requisite. If we do not settle the financial crisis everything else will be of little importance. It is enough to be in Brussels right now to gauge the importance of this problem. Undeniably the increasing number of European Council meetings shows that this is a matter of urgency.

But beyond this pre-requisite, given this new world and the upheavals it is bringing with it, what should we do so that Europe recovers its energy, its enthusiasm and hope?

It seems to me that we first have to define a certain strategic vision for the European Union, in order to set out what European political power should be. What does European power mean? What should the constituent elements of this be and how can it move forwards based on this analysis? My feeling is that rather than trying to project ourselves twenty or thirty years into the future, as we usually like to do, we might do better to try and adopt, a more modest, short term approach, in view of five or six years for example, and not extrapolate over a future, which, in reality is extremely difficult to define in advance if we are to implement a realistic, concrete and easily understandable action plan.

This action plan must include well identified priorities so that we can define the doctrine of the EU's action with regard to main regions and partners with whom it has to work, those in its neighbourhood and others in the various areas of the world.

“What kind of Europe in what kind of world?”

The European Union is the only entity in the world which has so many means of action at its disposal. Indeed it can act in the military and security fields in the wider sense of the term. It possesses trade, development and technical assistance tools; it can act in terms of immigration, education and research. In short, it has advantages that are not often matched in the world.

Simply then, these means will only become effective if they are firmly coordinated: from this comes an idea that is basically simple – in foreign policy Europe has to foster an approach that includes all aspects of its external action. This is the idea behind the Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the European External Action Service and of the new position presently occupied by Ms Ashton. Not only is she the High Representative, as Javier Solana was, but she is also the Vice-President of the Commission, so that she can summarise the work undertaken by the various institutions and provide

external action with unity and vision that are vital to its effectiveness.

It is at this price, by asserting its concern for coherence, that the European Union will recover its reason for being and take up its full place in the international arena.



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