



Hellenic Republic
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
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At Georgetown University

"The Evolution of Europe and the US:
Synthesis or Antithesis"?

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Members of the Georgetown Faculty

Students and Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you today at this university, which is so renowned for the study of international affairs. I'm grateful to everyone who helped arrange for me to come and speak to you about the relationship between the United States and the new Europe that is being forged out of many disparate nations that have functioned independently for centuries.

It's a difficult task because I know that we Europeans are a perplexing lot to you Americans.

Madeleine Albright once proclaimed, "To understand Europe, you have to be a genius - or French."

And Henry Kissinger famously wondered aloud who he has to call, to call Europe.

Now both of these former U. S. secretaries of state were born in Europe and spent their childhoods there, so if they can't understand us, who can blame most Americans for being bewildered.

In my talk today I'm going to try to clear up some of the confusion, but since I'm neither French nor a genius, I don't know how much of the fog I can lift, so please bear with me.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Europe's evolution into a union of states is far from a new idea. The concept dates back centuries and was first recorded in a proposal made by King George of Bohemia in 1464.

The first linkage with the United States came at the very beginning of this country's formation. It was George Washington himself who wrote to the Marquis de La Fayette: "One day, on the model of the United States of America, a United States of Europe will come into being."

Some fifty years later, Victor Hugo prophesied: "A day will come when all nations on our continent will form a European brotherhood... A day will come when we shall see... the United States of America and the United States of Europe face to face, reaching out for each other across the seas."

As the years passed, many flocked to the banner of a United Europe: Giuseppe Garibaldi, John Stuart Mill, Mikhail Bakunin and, of course, Winston Churchill.

It was, and remains, I dare say, a noble vision. A union of European states that will render conflict impossible among the peoples who make up the European family and allow peace and prosperity to prevail throughout the Continent.

But this is where the common vision ends.

There have been as many views on what a united Europe should be as there are voices.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's been more than forty years since the then president of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein, attempted to institutionalize the relationship between the European Community and the representatives of major European countries in Brussels. The President of France at the time, General Charles de Gaulle, launched a counter attack, condemning and I quote "the artificial country that springs out of a bureaucrat's brow."

Well, for an artificial country Europe hasn't done badly, I am sure you will agree.

After all, by all accounts this unique European experiment has been a major success.

The European Union has successfully tied former enemies together in bonds of shared goals and has produced the most successful post-war exercise in conflict prevention in the world. It helped to consolidate democracy and prosperity in Spain, Portugal and my own country, Greece.

The EU has created the world's biggest economy with a combined GDP in 2005 of more than \$12 trillion, slightly larger than that of the United States. It is also the world's biggest trading power, accounting for a share of global imports and exports three times larger than that of the United States. With its Member States it represents some 55% of all international development assistance, and a full 66% of all grant aid.

The European Union is playing a crucial part in projecting stability around its periphery, notably through the process of enlargement. It is worth mentioning that paradoxically there are more nation states today in Europe than ever before, but nearly all of them are either already members or wish to become members of the European Union.

Equally significant, for the very first time a sense of European identity is growing within and amongst our peoples. Our citizens develop a “European consciousness” along with their respective national identities; and the blue-and-gold European flag flies next to the national flags.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Looking back over the evolution of the European Union one thing is clear.

The United States has been our staunchest ally, Europe’s strongest supporter, the Union’s greatest champion.

For fifty years, from 1941 to 1991, the United States and a growing fellowship of Europeans were engaged in a joint war against Nazism at first and at defending liberties and human rights later. This was considered the heyday of the geopolitical "West."

This is not to say that all went smoothly. Strains developed in the controversies of the early 1980s, for example, over the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe and American foreign policy toward Central America and the Middle East.

Generally, however, it is clear: both within NATO and outside it, at the most critical times the United States and Europe have stood together, side by side...shoulder to shoulder.

And to be blunt: it worked. Europe and the US form a winning team, one that survived a Hot War, a Cold War and any number of crises, and one that secured stability and economic prosperity for our peoples.

And yet something has happened along the way.

Today, there appears to be a great disconnect between Europeans and Americans. Stereotypes flourish. "Americans are from Mars," Robert Kaplan famously concluded, "and Europeans are from Venus" echoing that best-seller about relations between men and women.

Depending on one's side of the Atlantic or on the political spectrum, an argument is framed.

Some, like Robert Kaplan, argue that Europe has moved into a Kantian world of "laws and rules and trans-national negotiation and cooperation," while the United States remains in a Hobbesian world where military power is still the key to achieving international goals – however well intentioned.

Others see Europeans as wimps. Let me list such stereotypes, as described by one analyst.

Europeans are seen as weak, disunited, duplicitous, anti-American appeasers. Their values and their spines have dissolved in a lukewarm bath of multilateral, transnational, secular, and postmodern fudge. They spend their euros on wine, holidays, and bloated welfare states instead of on defense. Then they jeer from the sidelines while the United States does the hard and dirty business of keeping the world safe for Europeans. Americans, by contrast, are strong, principled defenders of freedom, standing tall in the patriotic service of the world's last truly sovereign nation-state.

None of the two perspectives are of course fair or accurate.

There is some grain of truth in each of them, however. It is clear that somewhere, somehow we went wrong. Future historians will have a field day explaining how the unity shown in the wake of 9/11 was replaced so quickly by misunderstandings and controversies.

Just a couple of weeks ago, as we commemorated the fifth anniversary of that awful day, many went back to *Le Monde's* headline on the 12th of September 2001: "*Nous sommes tous des Américains.*"

Let me tell you another story. One that saw the light of day only recently when published by Time Magazine.

“An American businessman, traveling in India when the planes struck the towers made his way back to the US the following week as quickly as he could. That meant hopscotching across the Middle East, stopping in Athens overnight to change planes. He spent the evening having supper at a local Taverna. No one else in the restaurant spoke English, but when the owner realized he had an American in the house just two nights after 9/11, he asked his guest to stand up, face the other diners and listen to a toast. And indeed the entire room stood up, raised their glasses and said, as one, “shoulder to shoulder, until justice is done.”

The response of us Greeks, of all Europeans, was a natural reflex. One that fell in line with our history.

Let me give you our own Greek example. Greece is, along with Great Britain, the only state in the world that has fought for freedom, side-by-side with the United States, in all major world conflicts.

Could we have gone differently now, I wonder. Could we have gone any other way?

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The European Union is not a full-blooded Federation with a variety of shifting views and ideas. To be realistic, the concept of a United States of Europe remains quite distant. The hybrid nature of our coming together has made it difficult to forge a single Foreign and Security Policy, and foreign policy goes to the heart of what it means to be a nation.

What we have created remains a common policy, not a single one. There are necessarily several voices. Over Iraq, the greatest crisis in many years, our Union stood...divided.

Make no mistake. Speaking with one voice - whether we agree or disagree with our partners around the world – or across the Atlantic for that matter - this is Europe's greatest obligation; our greatest challenge.

Europe is not developing delusions of grandeur or attempting, as some suggest, to compete with the US on the world stage. Foreign policy is not a beauty contest.

No, it is about finding Europe's common voice.

It is about projecting stability.

It's about drawing on a whole range of instruments from politics to trade, aid, the environment and more.

Unfortunately, this is easier said than done, especially now.

The European Union today is undoubtedly in the midst of what many call a crisis.

In 2004, we welcomed ten new members to our Union. It was a historic moment for us all, one we were all very proud of, especially we Greeks who pushed the Union's expansion for many years.

The enlargement increased our population considerably, yet Europe's wealth, our GDP, increased by a mere 10%, and our GDP per capita actually decreased.

The Union is still struggling with institutional architecture. Making a group of 25 or 27 work, I am sure you agree, is much different than one of just 15. Our democratic deficit remains an issue in the sense that Europe's citizens cannot always relate to these institutions.

At the same time, we have been witnessing in recent years a slowdown of economic growth. Unemployment has been soaring in many member-countries; the sustainability of the welfare state and of the famous “European social model” are constantly questioned as social tension escalates.

It was, therefore, not a surprise, that two of the old member-states, France and the Netherlands, turned down the proposed new European “Constitution”.

The constitutional crisis demonstrates clearly that the E.U. is presently at a crossroads. It is in deep need of modernisation to function smoothly and speak with one voice to the world; it is also in need of economic acceleration and of reshuffling its social agenda in order to meet the challenges of development and globalisation. Finally, Europe needs to define its political role in the world and its relationship with the United States.

At present we are at a transitional stage. Given the impasse that followed the results of the French and Dutch referenda, we have decided on a “period of reflection” until 2007, or 2008 at the latest. In the meantime, we have decided to proceed with further ratifications of the Constitution. Most members, 15 in all, have already ratified it and those who have not can still do so.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While speaking of deepening the Union, one usually faces the equally important issue of widening. The expansion has caused grave fears as to the ability of the EU to cope with its problems.

But, most of all, Europeans are divided over the possibility of Turkey’s accession. They wonder whether Europe has actually the capacity to absorb a country of 75 million people; whether this will exceed the geographical limits of Europe; and whether the inclusion of 75 million

Muslims will drastically change the Union's social and, above all, cultural fabric.

I do not know what the outcome of this political debate over the future nature of the European Union will be. I am hopeful that, despite these differences, we will finally achieve a *Synthesis* of opinions for a new institutional framework that will make the Union both more democratic and more effective.

Greece is at the core of the circle of countries struggling for more integration. We are already a member of the Eurozone and the Schengen Treaty, establishing a common external security frontier. We participate actively in the common European Security and Defence Policy. Furthermore, we have ratified the proposed new European Constitution. Our government continues to support a strong unified Europe in the current institutional debate

Lades and gentleman:

Apart from reshaping the EU, we are concerned how NATO will meet its own new challenges; how Europe and the US can share responsibility for international security; and how we can streamline our economic and other non military resources to face some of the challenges before us.

Europe and the United States can better confront regional challenges together.

But in order to face regional and other challenges, we need to formulate the most expedient power-sharing possible with each side undertaking the responsibilities it is most fit to bear. In this context, European soft power is a desired corollary to US military might. Still, Europe must develop, as it is already slowly doing, its own military capability, which is crucial, particularly in regions where only Europe can be an acceptable mediator to all. This is a lesson we have learnt in the most recent Middle East crisis.

Europe and the US can, likewise, better guarantee together the security of energy supply and confront dangers emanating from its disruption.

They can also better face together individual countries which threaten world security with, weapons of mass destruction, aggression against their neighbouring countries, or attacks against sections of their own population.

Cooperation between the United States and the EU to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons is perhaps the most prominent example of the need for greater consultation and policy coordination. But not the only one. The US and the EU have been working closely in the Balkans, Belarus and Sudan among others.

To my mind a Europe capable of achieving a *Synthesis* of opinions on its own future will certainly be in a more advantageous position to define the *exact* nature of her relationship with the US and to promote it more effectively.

In any case, the nature of the relationship will be determined, after all, by the challenges we both face; by the fact that most of us belong to NATO as well – and the reality that NATO is in need of redefining its own role too.

We face grave common challenges, both new and old, and we must undertake our global responsibilities with a shared “hue of resolution,” to quote Shakespeare.

We no longer have the luxury of time. If we are to confront these threats successfully, we, Americans and Europeans, must move swiftly to find common ground and common purpose.

Thank you.