



International Pan-European Union

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

General Assembly

International Conference of the Croatian Pan-European Union

Osijek, 20 – 22 October 2017

New winds have started to blow, let us dare more European cooperation!

Here in Croatia, Osijek is in the heart of South East Europe, with Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Romania as closest neighbours. Here, we find ourselves at the very place where Europe was dismantled almost 100 years ago. Since then, Europe has gone through many other upheavals.

Once more, let us pay the tribute he deserves to Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, for the leading role he played in rebuilding and reuniting Europe as early as 1923.

But the true rebirth of Europe began on August 19th 1989, when Archduke Otto Von Habsburg Lorraine organized a picnic in Sopron, thus offering the pretext to many East German holidaymakers to cross the Iron Curtain with the implicit complicity of the Hungarian border guards.

Two months later in Berlin the Wall collapsed and the People of Eastern Europe regained the freedom they had been deprived of by the shameful Yalta Agreements.

The end of the Soviet regime and the integration of most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the European Union gave a sense of relief to those Europeans, who thought that the world had finally calmed down and that they now would live and thrive in peace under the protection of the American umbrella, capable of wiping away any potential threat.

Unfortunately, this has not proved true.

The world has experienced deep changes, and the world we knew at the end of the Twentieth century hardly exists any more.

Rapid technological changes have brought about profound transformations in international relations, in international trade and in the relations between people.

But people, wherever they live, do not change like that, and continue to be driven by the same aspirations. We have no guarantee that the 21st century will be more peaceful and harmonious than the previous centuries, only because demographic, economic and political indicators have changed.

North America and Europe, for centuries at the centre of world activity on both sides of the Atlantic, are now overtaken by Asia, basically by three countries whose demographic, economic and political development have given greater importance to all countries along the coast of the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Africa is awakening and will become a new power whose influence on the world will have to be reckoned with.

Europe dominated the world until World War 1 and 2, when the United States and the Soviet Union emerged. While remaining the main trade partner, Europe should think about its own future and influence in the coming decades.

Whatever happens, Europe's ageing population and declining demography will have a negative impact on its ambitions.

In a belated burst of lucidity, Europe has eventually understood that there is no other choice but to unite, in order to defend peace, to preserve its renewed prosperity, to rise up to Soviet threats and when those disappeared, to open the door to the countries that had been left behind. With the exception of a few countries which are not members, the European Union has brought these countries together. However, the Union remains politically fragile, due to the rise of nationalism and the announced departure of the United Kingdom, all the more so since it is unable to guarantee its own security.

As new dangers emerge year after year, this fragility does not augur well for Europe's future. The worst threats could come from other "Brexit", leading to the breaking apart of Europe and to the end of the European Union.

In Germany, during the recent federal elections we witnessed the resurgence of a destructive nationalism which we thought had been forever wiped away.

The attempt by Catalonia to dismantle Spain will only further weaken the European Union.

At the same time, external threats have increased.

In spite of its vicinity to the Middle East, Europe is more or less absent from the scene, having left the initiative to Russia and the United States, to rival in influence on this strategically very important region of the world. But instead of bringing peace, the interventions of these two powers have fuelled new conflicts.

Afghanistan, point of departure of the conflict between Russia and America in the region, has spread like a cancer over Pakistan to the shores of the Atlantic in Africa. Europe, pole of attraction for its African neighbours, has become the expiatory victim of Islamist terrorism, as a direct consequence of its own conflicting interests and, often contradictory, complacencies.

Why has Europe chosen to follow the United States in conflicts which did not concern her directly? The floods of refugees forced to flee the wars have turned towards Europe to seek asylum. This is only the beginning. We see massive arrivals of Africans on the Mediterranean shores looking for a place to survive.

Turkey, once one of the Mediterranean pillars of NATO, an example of moderate Islam, has now turned into an autocratic regime, advocating a reactionary version of Islam.

What will happen in the Middle East? This long-lasting conflict could, and should, have been solved fifty years ago if General de Gaulle's just recommendations had been implemented.

Following the downfall of the Soviet regime, Russia entered a period of political and economic turmoil. Those days are now past, Russia is back on the scene with an autocratic government and renewed expansionist ambitions, as shown by its interventions in Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Syria, in violation of international law.

What are the potential threats against the Baltic States, now members of the European Union, of the new Tsar Poutine's Stalinist nostalgia?

In the short term, even if North Korea's military show of force only directly threatens South Korea, Japan and the United States, whilst preoccupying its other neighbours, China and Russia included, a war, potentially nuclear, in the region would have worldwide repercussions.

China, rediscovering its ancient power, might also be carried away into a conflict. Given China's weight in world affairs, any conflict in its geographic vicinity would automatically have repercussions on Europe and the Europeans.

As for the American superpower, dominating the world through the second half of the 20th century and even more so in its last decade, it has managed to maintain its military supremacy and

its leading economic and technological role, in spite of the unpredictable behaviour of its new President which could weaken its position.

Although new wars continue to be fought with traditional weapons, cyberwar is on the rise and could give the advantage to the weakest (Davids) in their fight against the strongest (Goliaths).

In this new distribution of forces in the world, will Europeans accept their inescapable decline and not mastering their destiny or will they try to control their own future?

If the answer is yes, do they have the means to do so?

This is a political choice and the military means they will have to devote to their defence will be the subject of many difficult debates amongst them.

Even if the British, staunch supporters of NATO, leave the European Union, many countries in the EU look to NATO and their membership in the organization as the only guarantee for their security. For many of those countries, the blind faith in NATO means enjoying the reassuring protection by a third party, at the same time, enabling them to limit their own budgetary efforts.

What is NATO today, other than a means for the United States to maintain their influence on its partners? So, is it reasonable for the other members of NATO to entrust their survival to this organization?

I would now turn to 3 other complex subjects:

First of all, a common European Defence policy could only work under the direct responsibility of a democratically legitimate political authority. And this is not the case of the European Commission, even reduced to fifteen members.

Second, flowing from the latter, there is the question of the institutions of the European Union. What shape will the new structure have, parliamentary and governmental?

And last but not least, how to make the Member States agree on a convergent external policy? Today, the approaches vary greatly from country to country, due to different backgrounds and geographical, cultural, economic and social interests. This notwithstanding, in order to ensure that the twenty-seven Member States accept to ensure jointly their collective defence, inside and outside of the external borders, they need to adhere to a shared geopolitical vision. This is all the more vital since in any defence action human lives are at stake.

To build a common defence policy, the priority for the EU will be to start working on mutual understanding between countries, taking into account the different national approaches. Only then will the Union be able to ensure its own security, and, if necessary, intervene in a world with growing threats.

Alain Terrenoire, President of the International Pan-European Union