



Anders Fogh Rasmussens tale ved besøg på College of Europe i Natolin

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Statsminister

Dato

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Natolin i Polen

Europa efter udvidelsen

Thank you,

It is a pleasure to be invited to speak to you at the College of Europe here, in Natolin, today. And I am especially looking forward to hearing what you have to say in our discussions afterwards.

And, let me take this opportunity to thank the students of this college for your warm greetings to me on the occasion of the EU summit in Copenhagen in December. I was truly touched by your very kind gesture.

Looking round, I feel that the old town of Natolin and this college, with its young, dynamic students, is a perfect symbol of the Europe to which we all belong. Because that is what Europe's future is all about. The harmonious

merger of the old Europe with the new Europe - as represented by you and your campus situated here in this historical town.

The Europe of the past was a Europe characterised by wars and conflicts, rivalry and suppression. Not least Poland suffered from centuries of oppression on our continent, never able to determine its own fate.

But things have changed. The Europe of the future is a Europe characterised by freedom and peace, cooperation and human rights.

We have left the old Europe behind us. We are in the process of creating the new Europe, our Europe, one Europe.

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But let us take a look at the events of the last few months of 2002. What happened? Why do we say that they marked the beginning of a new era in European history? First, in November, there was the decision in Prague to enlarge NATO. Then, at the Copenhagen Summit in December, we reached agreement on the enlargement of the EU. Taken together, these decisions established a whole new framework for future European integration.

Because, after more than half a century of division, the countries of Eastern and Western Europe are now united in strong, democratic organisations.

For your country, Poland, and my country, Denmark, it marked the point when our main foreign policy objectives of the last 15 years were finally achieved. The hard work paid off.

There is a saying that “as one door closes - another opens”. And for us it is true. We have firmly closed the door on the Europe of the Yalta Conference and the Cold War. The Europe of the past. And we have flung open the door to the Europe of the future.

But it is not enough to stand at this doorway congratulating ourselves. The EU Member States – old as well as new - are now facing an important challenge. In the next couple of years we will have to define the character of a European Union with 25 or more Member States.

The negotiations in the Convention on the future of the EU and in the Intergovernmental Conference - which will follow the work in the Convention - are key elements in this process.

And by “the future of the EU” I mean “our future”. We are all in this together. So I truly believe that it is essential for all new Member States to participate fully in the Intergovernmental Conference -regardless of when the IGC begins. From now on we are all equal. New members and old. Large countries and small.

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now - as we meet here today - the members of the Convention are meeting in Brussels to discuss the values and goals of the Union.

And very important questions they are, too. The conclusions of the Convention will help pave the way for our common future. So my message to the members of the Convention is: be visionary and ambitious. But build on present-day realities. Aim high but don't have your heads in the clouds. And don't get carried away by your own rhetoric , using grandiose words which do not correspond to these realities.

In short, the EU of tomorrow must be based on farsighted visions but pursue concrete and realistic goals. After all, this formula has served the Union extremely well in the past. This was how we created the Single Market and the EMU. It was also the guiding principle behind the success of the enlargement process. And I dare say that this is the key to future progress as well.

I believe that building on what we have is especially valid in regard to the basic character of the EU. I do not believe in a Union based on a federal approach. To me, it is clear that the nation state must remain the basis on which to build the future.

We have a rich historical heritage. The nations of Europe are many and varied, but they have much in common. However, they also have strong individual characteristics, which must be respected. You only have to look at the dramatic and heroic history of Poland. Or look at Denmark, which has been a kingdom for more than one thousand years. Two countries with their own histories and own identities. In my opinion there is no realistic alternative to the nation state as the defining building block of Europe.

This does not mean that I do not wish to strengthen the Union. On the contrary. But I believe that our strength lies in what we already have - a community of nation states. But it should be a strong community. A community in which the Member States have faith in themselves but also enough faith in their Union to give it the competence to carry out a number of tasks in their name for the common good.

Having said that, it is clear that we cannot have a team where all members are pulling in different directions. A team, by definition, must work together.

So it is crucial that we maintain and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the EU in the coming years. It is vital to ensure that the enlarged EU can

become a true success. The new team must pull together - effectively. Inaction is not a viable option.

Because enlargement must not lead to a dilution of the EU. We need a strong, dynamic Union able to deliver in areas where the only way to solve problems is to tackle them together.

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So this is where we stand at the moment. At an important crossroads. I will now turn to the current discussions in the Convention, which has been charged with the task of charting the course of the new European Union.

So far the work of the Convention has been very promising. It is a formidable task the members of the Convention have been presented with. But under the experienced chairmanship of Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing work is progressing well. There is good reason to believe that the Convention will present comprehensive proposals for a new Constitutional Treaty.

Why do we call it a Constitutional Treaty? Well, it is a Treaty because it is obvious that the EU must continue to be a Union of states with its own treaty. And - if we agree that the time has come to make sure that we reflect a number of the traditional, fundamental, civil and democratic rights in the EU Treaty in

the manner we know from our own national constitutions - then we need a “constitution” enshrining these same rights, valid for all partners.

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Needless to say, each Member State, each institution, each single member of the Convention has its individual priorities and preferences for the new Treaty.

As far as Denmark is concerned, there are four important areas where we would like to see concrete results in a new Treaty.

First of all the Constitutional Treaty should describe the division of labour, or competences, between the EU and the nation states more clearly than is the case in the present Treaty. Put more simply - who does what.

If we don't know who does what, or who has a right to do what, we can never achieve efficiency. It is also important that the individual citizen has a clear picture of what the EU does deal with and what it does not deal with.

Allow me to illustrate:

A new Treaty should contain a clear definition of the fundamental principles of the division of competencies in the EU. The EU must only concern itself with what has expressly been defined as the responsibility of the EU. And the new Treaty should expressly state that the EU respects the national identity of all Member States.

The Treaty must clearly describe the role played by the EU in various areas. It must contain a clear definition of three types of competence: areas where the EU has full responsibility, areas where the EU and the nation states share competence, and areas where the EU can only supplement the legislation of Member States.

The Treaty should therefore make clear that the EU cannot harmonise the rules of the Member States in those areas where the EU may only supplement the Member States' own legislation.

Secondly, Denmark would like to see a strengthened role for national parliaments.

National parliaments could be awarded an independent “watchdog” role in respect of ensuring compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.

This could, for instance, be in the form of a safety mechanism that allowed national parliaments to react to a proposal by the Commission. In practice, it could be achieved by a number of parliaments notifying the Commission that they consider a proposal to be in conflict with the principle of subsidiarity. The Commission could then either withdraw its proposal or revise it.

Thirdly, the Constitutional Treaty should contain clear and precise rules for transparency and democratic control in the EU. There should also be provisions stressing the importance of the role of the European Ombudsman.

The Constitutional Treaty should clearly state that Council meetings are open to the public when new legislation is being dealt with. This will greatly enhance the quality of democratic control. Individual citizens, national parliaments and the European Parliament will then all have the opportunity to directly follow and monitor the legislative work of the Council.

Fourthly, we should make the “Charter of Fundamental Rights” legally binding. Bearing in mind that the Charter lists those rights on which our societies must be based, such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, private ownership, the right to good governance and equality before the law, it is vital and, to me, natural that it becomes part of the foundation on which we build our new EU.

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Although we tend to think of the EU as one body, it consists of three main institutions. Questions surrounding these institutions are at the core of the Convention debate. And they will no doubt also dominate the negotiations in the Intergovernmental Conference.

I believe that our approach should be based on three principles, which seem to meet with broad acceptance.

Firstly, whatever the final result turns out to be, it must respect the balance between large and small countries. If attempts are made to upset this balance, there is a risk that the EU will fall apart.

Secondly, the balance between the three key institutions – the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council – must be preserved. We must maintain a system of checks and balances between the institutions.

And thirdly, the solution must be effective and transparent. The solution we arrive at must be both workable and comprehensible. Because without understanding there can be no transparency.

Basically, I see two possible results of the negotiations. Either we strengthen all three central institutions – the Parliament, the Commission and the Council. Or we retain the status quo. In any event, I do not believe it is realistic only to strengthen one or two of the institutions. If they are to be strengthened, we must strengthen them all.

Let us first consider the European Parliament.

I believe we should enlarge the area where decisions are taken not only by the Council, but by the Council and the Parliament together, the so-called co-decision procedure.

As a point of departure we should extend the co-decision procedure to all areas where the Council takes decisions on legislative issues by qualified majority. This would mean, first and foremost, that the influence of the European Parliament on agricultural policy would be greatly enhanced.

Next, the Commission. I think we should have a strong Commission. It must be able to act with authority in those areas in which it is assigned a decisive role. This applies, for example, to such matters as the internal market, trade policy, competition policy and state aid. In such areas it is important to have a strong arbitrator who will not be governed by narrow and short-sighted national interests.

We welcome a strengthening of the Commission by, for example, introducing a new procedure for the election of the Commission President. However, once again, it is important that this procedure ensures the right balance between large and small countries. It is also important to ensure the Commission's independence in relation to the other institutions. Such concerns will not be taken sufficiently into account if the Commission President is to be elected exclusively by the European Parliament.

My alternative proposal is that the election should take place in an electoral college consisting of a limited number of members representing national parliaments and the European Parliament, respectively.

An appropriate composition for this electoral college could be half national parliamentarians, half members of the European Parliament. The right to nominate must rest with Member States' Governments. Each candidate must be nominated by a pre-determined number of countries – five for example.

Following the election in the electoral college, the appointment must be confirmed by qualified majority in the European Council. This procedure will ensure that a new Commission President enjoys the confidence of all Member States.

Such an electoral procedure will provide future Commission Presidents with a

very strong mandate indeed. I can see a two-fold advantage. It will enhance the influence of national parliaments. And it will maintain the Commission's independence of the Council and the Parliament.

A major priority for the Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference is to create a framework which will ensure that the Council can continue to function efficiently and democratically after enlargement becomes a reality.

If we wish the EU to be regarded as a tower of strength and not a Tower of Babel we must ensure, and secure, efficiency in the decision-making process. This means that we must take as many decisions as possible by qualified majority. Denmark is, for example, ready to consider introducing qualified majority voting when fixing minimum rates for indirect taxation. Personal income tax, by contrast, can never become an EU responsibility. Such policies must remain a national matter for each individual Member State.

And then we have the somewhat thorny issue of the Council Presidency. I see two possible lines of approach.

Firstly, we may continue using the existing model with rotating, biannual national Presidencies. Experience shows that this system is able to achieve considerable results. Though I can tell you from personal experience that such results also require considerable effort.

But, with 25 or more members, can we continue this way?

A concrete method of reforming the rotating, biannual Presidency could be to continue the national Presidency system but to confine it to the political levels. This would mean that the great majority of technical committees and working groups could be chaired by the Council Secretariat or by individual members of the committees elected by their peers.

Denmark is able to support such a continuation and further development of rotating Presidencies. Its main advantage is that large and small countries are given equal status.

At the same time, however, we must have the courage to ask ourselves if such minor changes in the present the system are sufficient to meet the challenges we could find ourselves facing in the future. Will we then have to change the structure again in a few years' time?

It is for this reason that, while not completely rejecting the present system, I have signalled a positive Danish interest in examining a model based on an elected President of the European Council.

This is - in my view – the second realistic approach and worthy of consideration

in respect of the future organisation of the Council.

This model would be no minor change. In fact we could call it “the grand solution”. It is a bold approach which entails considerable structural changes in the Council.

So how would it work?

An elected President of the European Council would be appointed for a term of 2-5 years. Such an elected President would be charged with the task of preparing and chairing the meetings of the European Council and, in addition, being the high-level, external representative of the Union.

This system, with an elected President, would be combined with a system of changing national Presidencies of the sector Councils. And here it would be practical to use the existing model of a rotating, biannual, single-country Presidency. The Prime Minister of the country holding the rotating Presidency can then also act as deputy President of The European Council.

So we would then have a permanent, elected President with a fixed term of office and a Deputy President, changing every six months.

Whatever the model there must be a very clear definition of the division of competences and responsibilities between the main players. Once again – we must answer the “who does what” question. Also, if we go in this direction, it is vital for its success that we ensure efficient coordination.

All in all, Denmark is ready to look further into the idea of an elected President of The European Council. But only if the model can be based on a realistic balance between the interests of large and small Member States. We cannot run the risk of the larger nations “steam rolling” their policies through to the detriment of the smaller nations or the work of the Union being blocked by minority interests.

France and Germany have presented a very interesting paper on the key institutional questions. Their model is based on an elected President of the European Council.

In my view the Franco-German paper strikes a fine balance between those who prefer a federal approach and those of us who support a more intergovernmental model. But it fails to answer the question of how to strike the right balance between large and small Member States.

Personally, I think that there are two main elements to consider. Both of them important.

Firstly, we need some sort of firm assurance that large and small countries are genuinely provided with an equal opportunity to have one of their nationals elected as President of The European Council.

My own concrete suggestion is that a possible element in such a construction could be the creation of three “electoral groups” comprising large, medium and small countries. The position of President of the European Council would then be held in turns by these electoral groups. Thus ensuring equal representation between large, medium-sized and small countries.

However, it would not only be the electoral group in question which itself nominates the President. All Member States would participate in the actual election. And all countries would have the right to nominate or recommend candidates. But, on each occasion, the candidates would represent one of the countries included in the electoral group whose turn it would be to stand for the position of President of the European Council.

Secondly, if we are to accept the idea of an elected President, it should be made clear that we are talking about a person with clearly defined powers. I do not envisage a figure with the kind of presidential powers we know from various nation states around the world. This would be neither realistic nor desirable. What I see is more of a “chairman” than a “president”. A practical person with a real job to do. Not a symbolic figurehead. A chairman who can make sure that The European Council always functions at its best, who can create continuity and be a high-level, external representative for the European Union.

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Finally, I would like to say something about the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Already a complicated issue - the events of recent weeks have not made things any easier.

If any conclusion can be drawn from recent events it is that the Common Foreign and Security policy must be based on present day facts and realities and not on dreams of a distant future.

We do not have a “single” European foreign policy. We have a “common” policy to the extent possible. And this extent is defined by the Member States and their national interests. This is especially true for the large Member States with global interests.

So our starting point must therefore be that the foreign, security and defence policies of the EU continue to be based on co-operation among the Member States. The so-called intergovernmental co-operation, firmly anchored in the Council.

But, within this framework of intergovernmental co-operation, we should strive to make foreign, security and defence policies as common as possible.

And why? Because it is in the interest of us all that the EU develops a military capacity capable of carrying out peace-keeping and humanitarian tasks on the European continent. The Western Balkans are a prime example.

So while accepting that we may not always speak with one voice, we have a vested interest in giving the EU's foreign policy coordinator as strong a position as possible. Today, we have a so-called High Representative, anchored in the Council. At the same time, we have a commissioner who is responsible for external affairs. Perhaps we should merge the two posts into one - having one single foreign policy representative. As foreign policy will remain a primarily intergovernmental matter, I think it only logical that the EU foreign policy representative should be anchored in the Council.

This is not a question of strengthening the EU at the expense of transatlantic co-operation. Quite the contrary. We have a vital interest in close and strong co-operation between Europe and the USA. But, at present, the Western world is faced with challenges that make it necessary for Europe to stand on its own feet and make its own contribution. This is not only in our interests, but also in the interest of the USA.

Strong transatlantic relations are vital to Europe. We must not fall into a trap of trying to build a strong Europe as a competitor to the US. We should build a strong Europe which is a reliable and solid partner for the US allowing us to

meet the many important challenges together.

Twice during the last hundred years America has brought peace and freedom to Europe. And even today young American soldiers are ensuring peace in the Balkans. This is our history. This is our present reality.

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In this context I would like briefly to touch upon the situation in Iraq.

This week, a draft resolution concerning Iraq has been introduced in the UN Security Council by the United States of America cosponsored by two of our EU partners, Spain and the UK.

The Danish Government welcomes the continued American commitment to the UN track in the attempt to solve the grave problem of Iraq's defiance of the numerous demands by the Security Council over the last twelve years for cooperation on disarmament.

At the extraordinary, informal meeting of the European Council in Brussels on

the 17th of this month, the 15 EU Member States stated that Iraq has a final opportunity to resolve the crisis peacefully. It must disarm and cooperate immediately and fully. Poland and other Candidate Countries have associated themselves with this line.

In clear words, the EU has thus asked for action now. Let us keep that in mind in view of the well known track record of Saddam Hussein for using tactics of delay and evasion. The decision on further steps now lies with the Security Council. It must live up to its responsibility.

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Before I finish I would like to say a few words about the Polish-Danish relationship.

The events of recent years have made the already-strong relationship between our countries even stronger. Our close co-operation during the enlargement process has brought us together. The substantial reforms carried out in all aspects of Polish society have created respect and admiration in Denmark.

Experiences from the co-operation in NATO could hardly be better. The Polish-German-Danish corps – whose headquarters is placed in Szezecin – is a first class example of a multinational command.

Denmark is proud that it was in Copenhagen that we could take the historic decision on the enlargement of the EU. And we are looking forward to the day in the near future when we can welcome the great Polish nation as full member of the EU.

I know that we shall succeed. Because you – you are the future – you are our future - and, together we shall build the new, strengthened Europe of tomorrow.

Thank you.

Kilde

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Dokumentation på online medie

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