



Per Stig Møllers tale ved debatarrangement om EU og forfatningstraktaten

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Politikens Foredragssal

Dear colleague, ladies and gentlemen

I welcome this opportunity to discuss what the Constitutional treaty will mean for us and what we should take into account, when later this year both our countries will have to make up their minds on it.

The Constitutional treaty will enter into force on November 1st 2006, if it has been ratified by all the member states. Some members like Germany and Italy will ratify the treaty by a vote in Parliament, while others like Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Britain will consult their citizens in a referendum. Spain has already successfully completed their referendum.

The treaty cannot enter into force unless ratified by all 25 member states. If there is a “No” in a country that country must come up with suggestions for solutions and the other countries must accept them. But a country that says “No” also has responsibility to make sure that the community can develop and the country has to decide whether it want to be part of the club at all. That goes for France, the Netherlands, Denmark and other countries.

So Bernard, we are both faced with the crucial job of explaining, why Europe is better served with a “yes” than a “no” to the treaty. With the Dutch referendum on June 1st and the Danish referendum on September 27th, I will have a bit more time than Bernard.

[States like Denmark and the Netherlands need a binding European co-operation]_ We need however to take a step back from the day-to-day politics in order to clearly assess what is at stake for Denmark, the Netherlands and other EU member states. We miss the larger picture, if we focus narrowly on the paragraphs in the new treaty. It is necessary to put our experience with the European Union into a historical perspective to realize the importance of the choice we will be making in September. As I will argue, it is a choice, which is even more important for European countries like Denmark and the Netherlands with open economies based on external trade, which by the way was the reason why the Netherlands appointed the commissioner in 1605.

A political map of Europe from 1942 would show that only four independent democracies existed on our continent 63 years ago – Britain, Ireland, Switzerland and Sweden. In those darkest of times, dictatorship, occupation, war and genocide were the order of the day. Before the outbreak of the war, any concept of collective security had vanished, and states like Denmark and the Netherlands together with Belgium, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Austria and the three Baltic republics were left fending for themselves – oppressed and occupied by Hitler and Stalin. The very few international rules and agreements that existed at the time were ignored by the big military powers, and the League of Nations did not function.

Today, within the same geographical area, the number of free and independent European democracies has reached 46 in 2005. An outbreak of armed hostilities between EU member states has become unthinkable. These political changes are astounding. It seems so rational today, but it is ahistoric to believe that the future will be the same as the present.

Equally so the economic progress enjoyed by European citizens in the same short time span. From a situation characterised by ration coupons in Denmark and outright starvation for many in the Netherlands, modern life nowadays implies an abundance of consumer goods and an unprecedented standard of living for Danes and Dutch alike.

My point is that we must learn from history in order not to repeat it. We should never take peace, democracy and prosperity for granted. This European success story is not the work of any single individual, country or institution. But the European Union has undoubtedly been the most important factor in promoting democracy and underpinning prosperity in Europe for the last fifty-years.

It has created the biggest free trade area in the world with 455 million consumers and helped democratic governments take root in Spain, Portugal, Greece and more recently on the Balkans. It has helped East Europeans countries to get into the European framework with its values, democracy and rule of law, and they are all moving forward inside the EU with admirable speed. By offering the vision of possible EU membership, it today continues to promote reforms in Turkey and the Ukraine.

But what is the particular nature of the European co-operation? And why does this co-operation entail so many advantages particularly for countries like Denmark and the Netherlands?

The European Union is first and foremost a co-operation between independent states that is based on legally binding rules – for countries and their peoples alike. Rules which apply to all member states regardless of size and economic might and which are backed by an EU Court of Justice. If the treaties regulating how the EU works seem complicated and technical, it is precisely because of the rule-based nature of the EU co-operation. With 25 member states having different historical and cultural identities as well as 21 different languages, common rules that are democratically adopted become vital.

Secondly, the EU ensures the absence of the traditional great power politics in Europe. It ensures that we will not return to the zero-sum game of the past, where big military powers carved up Europe, and later the rest of the world into different spheres of influence. The smaller European states often became the biggest losers in this game, as they were dominated or subdued by larger neighbours. Treaties and international institutions had little effect and in terms of being able to pursue the national interest, the playing field was anything but equal in Europe. The small countries were in principle sovereign states, but they dared not do, what their mighty neighbours did not like them to do!

In stark contrast, take a look at the enlarged European Union. It is built by and for 25 democratic member states, which have all joined voluntarily. It relies on a firm legal framework, which places all member states on exactly the same and equal footing - no matter how big or how small. In the discussions leading up to

a decision in Brussels, the political influence of Denmark or the Netherlands depends on the persuasive power of our arguments. The enlarged EU is based on shared European values and works to improve the daily lives of European citizens.

In this European context, countries like Denmark and the Netherlands have flourished. More than Britain, France and Germany, we needed the rules of the EU. Rules that politically provide a level playing field and economically opens the door for Danish, Dutch or Portuguese goods to be sold freely in France or Germany.

[Three good reasons to vote "yes" to the Constitutional Treaty]_But why do we need a new treaty? In fact, we do already have a democratic system in Brussels as well as the single market with the existing rules. The answer is simple: because neither Europe nor the world around us is standing still. We are not six, not twelve, not fifteen, but 25 and soon more member states.

We Europeans have always been eager to develop and improve our societies – economically, socially and environmentally. It is because of our fundamental individualism and scepticism that we continue to question our own social structures – and that we come up with new answers to each new challenge. Now, we need to do so again. And the Constitutional Treaty is the answer to the challenges facing an enlarged EU in a new century.

The pressure from the global economy on European jobs and prosperity is increasing and the threat from international terrorism and cross-border crime

needs to be addressed. Concerted action on an international level is also required to protect our environment. The news media are regularly sounding the alarm bells about issues such as outsourcing of jobs from Europe or smuggling of illegal immigrants and drugs to Europe. We need rules in the EU in order to be able to respond effectively to these developments. The Constitutional Treaty lays down the basic rules for the enlarged EU of 25 for many years to come.

Let me briefly provide you with three reasons why I recommend a “yes” to the Constitutional Treaty.

Firstly, the treaty ensures that the enlarged EU of 25 or more member states will be able to function effectively in the future. We owe it to the new member states to make enlargement work in practise. With so many countries around the table, we risk political deadlock and decisions based on the lowest common denominator unless it becomes easier to reach decisions. The Constitutional Treaty introduces qualified majority voting in more policy areas. In this way, Europe will maintain its ability to act.

Secondly, the treaty defines clearly what the EU is and can and what it is not. The treaty establishes a clear division of labour between the Union and the member states. It makes it absolutely clear, that the EU is a voluntary co-operation of independent states, and it says, that the EU only possesses the authority, which the member states have conferred to it. Certain areas such as trade, competition and customs policy are handled most effectively at the EU-level, whereas income distribution, social affairs and foreign and security policy continues to be mainly the preserve of member states.

Thirdly, the treaty enables Europe to assume greater global responsibilities. The new “President” of the European Council and the EU “foreign minister” will allow Europe to speak with one voice in international affairs as long as we agree. The world needs a strong and coherent Europe, which can make a difference globally. Europe has a lot more to offer as an international partner for peace, development and security, and it should become capable of assuming the political responsibility that should go with our economic influence. The treaty increases our ability to pursue a common European foreign policy and gives us the possibility to influence on world politics in a way we cannot do today.

[The EU matters also in our daily affairs] _Ladies and gentlemen,

I began by saying that the importance of the EU is clearly evident in a historical perspective. The three reasons just outlined may sound as if the European co-operation were mostly about big political issues or lofty ideals. But what about our daily life?

The Constitutional Treaty will allow the EU to make improvements within areas such as consumer protection, environmental standards, animal welfare or food safety. Policies that have a direct impact on how we all go about our daily business. Without the EU, today our continent would have had lower environmental standards, less consumer protection, more air pollution, less protection of minorities, unsafer nuclear plants etc., etc._ With more qualified majority voting, the likelihood of one member state blocking progress, which 24 other European countries aim to achieve, is significantly reduced.

I am convinced that all the governments in all the member states are painfully aware that the EU needs to deliver concrete and tangible results for our citizens. Results that will help to create more jobs and more economic growth in Europe. Action is needed both at the European and at the national level. The Constitutional Treaty will enable us to take that action.

Let me conclude by underlining that we need the EU more not less. We need the enlarged EU to be more consistent and to have the impact that we would like both on our own continent and globally. We have to develop our common Europe and enable it to play its part in a world, which – whether we like it or not – is on the move!

Thank you.

Kilde

Ukendt

Tags

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<https://www.dansketaler.dk/tale/new-rules-for-a-new-europe-why-we-should-approve-the-constitutional-treaty>