

Europe's Role in Strengthening Transatlantic Security and Defense

Introductory remarks by

Michel Barnier, Special Advisor to the President of the European Commission on European Defence and Security Policy

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9:00-10:15am

Dear Derek,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we set the title of this address I had a particular message that I wanted to convey.

I wanted to underline that the community of interests and vision between the US and EU is stronger than it has been in a long time.

Be it on Russia and Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and the other fires burning in the Middle East, terrorism, Iran, the changing geopolitics and the economic and political rise of China.

We do not always employ the same words or instruments but our thoughts and interests are essentially the same.

What I had wanted to do was to make a plea for us – Americans and Europeans – to translate this into new important chapters in US - EU relations and NATO-EU cooperation in the months and years to come.

And I wanted to really focus on *how Europe could contribute*.

Now that I have arrived from France in Washington in a very different and difficult context I want to start by talking about something else.

About what is happening in Europe. And about *why Europe will be needing the support of its American friend and ally in the months and years to come*.

Arriving at Washington Dulles airport I was struck and touched by the huge American flag overlooking the terminal flying at half-mast. The Paris attacks have shaken Europe in ways that Americans can understand.

American solidarity has been immediate, strong, overwhelming – in symbols and in actions. I am thinking notably in terms of intelligence sharing.

I thank you for that. We thank you for that,

Yet I want to underline how this must only be the beginning. Europe needs you now more than ever. **Europe is facing both external and internal threats that we can most effectively tackle together.**

- There are those threats we very easily perceive as common ones. **Serious threats that jeopardize our way of life and the freedoms** currently enjoyed in Europe and North America.

To the east, we have seen Russia tear up the rules of international relations and embark on aggressive competition with the West.

Added to this, is an arc that spans from Afghanistan and Pakistan through Iraq-Syria, the Horn of Africa to Libya and the Sahel region, where we see the malign growth of Daesh threatening vast territories, using a range of destabilizing and gruesome means, from terrorism and war, tribal conflict, inter-religious strife to competition for food, water, resources, trafficking and smuggling.

The US, Europeans and other coalition partners must continue to stand firm on Russia and united in fighting ISIS.

The risk of further terrorist attacks in Europe is high. ISIS is not a problem that will disappear on its own. More determined action in Syria and Iraq must now be considered. At the same time, we must be vigilant in Libya and other places where this cancer is at risk of spreading.

- Then there are the risks and threats that might appear less salient in Washington, but that nevertheless are very real. In particular, there are two **existential risks to the European project that I would like to raise.**
 - o The first is the **refugee crisis** that is both a humanitarian disaster and a great challenge to Europe's unity and resilience. In the course of this year close to a million refugees will have arrived through Central Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes.

There is a mix of economic migrants from Africa and refugees fleeing conflict and war in the Middle-East. It is our duty to provide care and protection for refugees. But this huge influx is also testing our capacity to welcome, accommodate, and integrate them.

What we see today is only a first wave of what might come, if we think of the 12 million internally or externally displaced in Syria and the region and also if we look at African demographics.

This is not something that only concerns Europe. The US must show solidarity by:

- taking in refugees;
- increasing humanitarian funding, notably through the UN system and humanitarian organizations. *For our part, we have invested over 4 billion EUR for refugees/humanitarian needs, making the EU by far the biggest donor;*
- supporting frontline asylum destination countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon as well as pushing Gulf countries to do more here;
- and, needless to say, by helping find a political solution in Syria.

- The second, is the **risk of political disintegration** of the European project.

The UK has announced a referendum on its future relationship with the EU.

Populist sentiment is on the rise in Europe. The problems we face are testing for the unity of our common project and societies.

When our borders are perceived as open and our security as fragile, it is the breeding ground for populism and infighting.

I fear difficult times ahead for the EU. This **project of peace, prosperity and integration could very easily become one of dislocation and fragmentation.**

And if the EU fragments, that will have profound consequences for the Western liberal order, for our partnership and for the capacity of Europeans to contribute to transatlantic prosperity and security.

These days are indeed moments of truth for European leaders, who must find the political and collective courage to face up to these urgent challenges and relaunch the EU project on sounder footing. That is the sense of President Juncker's work and commitment, including on security and defense.

Now to what I had originally come here to talk about: **strengthening transatlantic security and defence**. Let me be very brief and concrete on this: there are a number of **challenges and opportunities**

We see eye-to-eye on **three reasons to act together**:

1- We are facing the same threats. We are worried about the same things.

For a long time after the end of the Cold War, the US faced little peer competition. Europe has been living comfortably in the US shadow. Now the world is highly contested to say the least.

2- Since we are here to speak about defense capacities, industry and transformation, let us recognize we are facing important technological shifts.

In the past, military research and technology would have been leading civilian research and applications by maybe 10 years. Today, that is no longer the case. Aerospace, drones, cyber, robotics: civilian research is probably now more advanced. It is also globally accessible, including to non-state actors. Recently, I read in Jane's Defence Weekly that the Iraqi Army flies Chinese drones...

3- There is an asymmetry that becomes a weakness for us all.

The US continues to invest significantly in defence and remains a military power with full spectrum capabilities. The US has understood the need to act to maintain technological leadership.

In Europe, defence investments have been flagging for too long. Duplication is rife. R&T is weak and we have cause to worry about our industrial base. In other words, we need a step change in Europe on defence cooperation and innovation.ⁱ

So those are the challenges. **What are the opportunities? What must be done?**

From the EU side there is no doubt about the need for a shared security and defence agenda in meeting global challenges. My conviction is that three things must now happen:

1- EU must step up its ambition as a global actor

Being a global actor means having a global strategy. The EU needs to update its security strategy from 2003, by defining our interests and what we want to achieve.

This is precisely what HRVP Federica Mogherini is committed to deliver by June 2016.

For Europe, being a stronger global actor might paradoxically mean focusing on our own neighbourhood. It certainly means having the capacity to take on increased responsibility for our own security.

We already have 80 000 diplomats within the EU. We are the number one donor in Syria, and Africa's biggest development partner.

What we need to do is to step up our hard power. That means boosting our military capabilities. Getting more out of what we invest, by pooling, sharing and specializing.

We already spend roughly 200 billion dollars a year on defense. We have 60 000 troops in missions under auspices of the EU, NATO and UN.

By knowing what we want, and doing it together, we must get much more out of all that.

2- NATO-EU cooperation should be significantly reinforced.

NATO is as you know is in a process of transformation, just as the EU is.

I am well placed to observe that in the past the EU-NATO relationship has been politically charged, notably due to French and US attitudes. That period is now behind us and it is time to write new chapters in how we work together and share the transatlantic security burden.

The hope of a settlement in Cyprus will open up new opportunities for engagement at all levels.

We need to work concretely together on new areas such as hybrid threats, maritime security, defense capacity building and cyber.

And I say it without ambiguity: NATO has a fundamental role to play to recognize, encourage and accompany a stronger and more capable European defense, including through the use of EU-specific instruments when the situation so requires. Our dialogue on this must always be frank and open.

3- Last but not least, the US-EU security and defense relationship can also be developed further.

There is scope to considerably upgrade this element of the transatlantic relationship. Recent developments such as the mandate to start negotiations on EU-US Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) is an important step to strengthen our mil-to-mil relationship.

We are also keen to launch a regular EU-US Security and Defence dialogue at senior level to explore concrete synergies and opportunities for collaboration in the various theatres where

the EU and US operate. Africa is one area where cooperation has started and can be taken further.

I also see several areas where our relationship can deepen on defense capabilities and industries. In Brussels we will certainly pay much attention to how the transatlantic defense marketplace can develop further, just as we would like to be a partner in the US' highly anticipated third offset strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Partnership, solidarity and burden sharing are key words of today and for the future. It takes two to tango, and the relationship goes both ways. The EU is going through difficult days and must complete its economic, political and military transformation for the future. I can assure you that there is acute consciousness in Europe on what we need to do to be a reliable transatlantic partner. Likewise, we count on your unwavering support.

Thank you.

ⁱ http://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/notes/sn4_en.htm