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**Address
by
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"Europe in the World: The Next Steps"

Cyril Foster Lecture

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Dear Chancellor, dear Chris
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the two groups that have invited me to come back to a city and university I admire:
the managers of the Cyril Foster Fund
and the European Studies Centre of St Antony's College.

It is a special honour to give this year's Cyril Foster lecture. Cyril Foster, I understand, was a special character. A retired owner of a shop selling sweets, who lived and died in a caravan. He left the remains of his estate to this University, stating that his money be used to promote peace with an annual lecture. This speech had to focus on "the elimination of war and better understanding of the nations of the world."

The commitment of ordinary people like Cyril Foster to international peace offers an important message to those involved in daily diplomacy. Our responsibility is not just to defend the national interest but to put this in the context of wider international interests. Gorbachev used the phrase "all-human values". This may sound foreign to use. But I know what he was talking about.

Since we are gathered in the Examination Schools, I am conscious I had better try to answer the exam questions that have been set. Why should the European Union play a global role? What have we learned in recent years? And what are the next steps?

In science, as in politics, one has to make the case. It cannot be assumed. So what is the case for a credible European Union foreign policy? Broadly speaking, I see two logics:

First, and perhaps most familiar, is the logic of effectiveness. It has become a cliché to say that the world around us is changing fast. Trite, perhaps, but no less true. Complexity and uncertainty are core features of the international landscape. The boundaries of national and international politics are blurring. Old templates do not enable us to make sense of today's new threats, new issues and new powers. Meanwhile, many of the old problems from the rubble of past empires endure.

In addition, power is shifting away. Both within political systems where markets, NGOs, media and individuals are increasingly powerful. But also between political systems: from the West to East, from North to South.

It is clear, or it should be, that in the face of these broad trends, national cards have only limited reach. These days, if you want to solve problems, you must bring together broad constellations of international actors. This applies to all governments around the world. But especially to Europe: a group of medium-sized countries that have had out-sized influence on the world. And whose power base, in relative demographic and economic terms, is eroding.

These days politics, like business, is increasingly taking place on a continental or even global scale. It is interesting that sometimes our publics and companies seem ahead of governments in realising this. So the first reason has to do with the changes in the world around us. Effectiveness requires us to group together.

On top of the external rationale, there is also an internal, specific European one. For a credible European foreign policy should also be seen as the logical extension of the origins of the European project. With six words, the French poet Paul Valéry captured the European condition in 1945: 'We hope vaguely, we dread precisely'.

It was only after Europe had experienced the horrors of the 20th century that people were ready to try a radical new idea: peace through openness; integration based on strong institutions and laws; a paradigm change whereby the strength of one's neighbour was no longer seen as a threat but as an asset.

European integration, together with NATO, has been essential for this fantastic success. No one under 60 has experienced a general European war. Historically speaking, this is not the "normal" condition for our continent. Then there is enlargement, through which we have expanded the zone of peace, stability and law. In the European Union we practice system change: it is voluntary, peaceful and extraordinarily successful. From the original six to 27 member-states today. More than 500 million people living under a Community of law.

Yes, all this has required a sharing of powers. Some people believe that sharing power means there is less of it when you share it. On the contrary, there is more. Michael Heseltine once expressed this point with a good phrase: "A man alone in the desert is sovereign. He is also powerless." By being members of the European Union, countries regain the capacity to address problems that, on their own, they would have no hope of solving. In other words, the rationale for European integration extends far beyond "no more war". Although that remains a success we should not belittle.

So the twin logics are: **First** effectiveness driven by external forces. And **second**, extending the internal success of the European project. From peace on our continent to promoting peace in the world.

In addition, the internal and external logics are linked. For the nature of the integration project has influenced the kind of foreign policy we are trying to shape. Internally, it has been all about taming the passion of states and spreading the rule of law. To make power lawful and the law powerful. That is the way we started and succeeded inside Europe. And that is how we try to operate outside.

Domestically, people are more free if they live under the rule of law than if they live in anarchy. So rules make people free and secure.

In the same way, states have more control over their destiny if they can establish a framework of rules and operate together. All this explains our support for strong institutions and rules. From the UN to the WTO to the African Union or the OSCE. But also on specific issues: from human rights, to non-proliferation, to climate change.

Mind you, all this is not some naïve do-goodism. We know that all of us, including the strongest, benefit from having a system of rules. And we know that rules need to be enforced. Above all, we know that promoting peace, law and institutions, requires taking risks. Politically and with people on the ground.

That is precisely what we have done. Since 2003 we have deployed 18 operations on three continents. From classic peace-keeping, to border monitoring, to security sector, police or judicial reform. In recent years, around 10 000 people have been deployed in EU operations. These operations are mostly small in size. But conceptually they are quite sophisticated. Mixing military with civilian instruments; in support of a political strategy.

This is what we try to do in Chad, where we will protect refugees. We do not pretend that this is the answer to the Darfur crisis. It is sad but probably true that we cannot deal with Darfur directly. But we are doing our best to deal with the effects. We do so in close operation with the UN. And alongside our military engagement we offer aid and other forms of assistance.

Moreover, having people on the ground is changing the way outsiders see us. Slowly, people outside Europe are beginning to see that Europeans are not only people who talk or give money. But who are also willing to take risks and have people on the ground. Besides, deploying people is also changing our own mental maps. We no longer see ourselves as something like the World Bank. We are becoming a political actor with interests to defend and values to promote.

All this is leading to a more serious and more strategically rounded mindset. But, if you like, it remains more influenced by Kant than Hobbes. Because of our attachment to democracy and the rule of law.

This brings me to the second part of the exam question: what have we learned in recent years in the area of foreign policy? Einstein once said that politics is much more difficult than physics. This is even more true of foreign policy. There are no quick fixes. But the trend is clear: year by year we are getting better - even if there are fluctuations in the trend.

What are the key ingredients for success? I see six important elements.

1. A desire to change things and a willingness to take some risks.

Whenever we discuss our response to a crisis, there are always voices in favour of the status quo. Or those who say that "now is not the time" to take action. But little of value is achieved in political life by standing aside. And I am glad that we have taken some risks. For some of the EU's greatest successes in recent years - take for example our operation in Aceh in Indonesia - were far from obvious at the beginning.

In Aceh we helped to end the longest running civil war in the largest Muslim country in the world. With people on the ground, we helped to ensure that the peace agreement between the government of Indonesia and the Aceh rebels was implemented - on time. For the future, we need to draw inspiration from this.

2. Invest in international and regional partnerships.

Our operational impact is growing. But of course there are limits. The world is too complex and its problems too great for the EU to address alone. This is true even in our immediate neighbourhood like the Balkans. We have been most successful when we have worked with others. Major players like the US and Russia. But also organisations such as the UN, the African Union or ASEAN.

I know that this type of co-operation is not easy. But the benefits are clear. As is the strategic aim of building up regional capacities. The Middle East is an interesting case. I am convinced that the weakness of regional co-operation in the Middle East is both a result of but also a reason for that region limping from crisis to crisis.

3. There is no simple sequencing of military first, civilians later.

Integrated solutions are needed, drawing on both civil and military instruments, from day one. That is what we learned, the hard way, in the Balkans. We are now trying to apply these lessons learned in Africa and Afghanistan. We also know that, ultimately, there are only political solutions. Crisis management is about creating the space for politics to work.

In a way, the same is true for development aid. Over the years, countries like Pakistan or Kenya have received quite a lot of aid. But the current instabilities underline that aid alone, without functioning politics, cannot transform a country.

We should be modest and not oversell our strengths. But probably no organisation is better placed than the European Union to work on the nexus of security and development. Of course we should practice what we preach. And ensure that 'coherence' is not an empty slogan.

4. Be prepared to commit for the long-term.

Countries often fall back into the conflict-poverty cycle if the underlying political dynamics do not change. It is a bit like heart patients relapsing after heart surgery, if they do not change their lifestyles.

Collectively, the international community is not doing as well as it should to prevent these reversions. Haïti, Somalia and East Timor highlight the need to stay the course after the initial intervention. It takes time before any transition becomes self-sustaining. This is a real challenge for the wider international community - but no less for the European Union.

5. The institutions in Brussels should be properly aligned. But what really matters is what member States do.

In foreign policy, it is member States who have the legitimacy and resources that count. What we are doing in Brussels is at the service of the member states. And our job is to add value. It is not easy keeping 27 countries, each with their own histories and habits, marching in lock-step. But when we do, the results are impressive. When we don't, divisions are high.

6. The world may be shrinking but remember that foreigners are different.

What do I mean? As we know, the opening sentence of "The Go-Between" (by L.P. Hartley) is "the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there". But, the present is also a foreign country where many do things differently.

They are different in terms of assumptions and ways of operating. Even in our hyper-modern and globalised world, the weight of culture, history and identity is enormous. People are more connected. But they are not automatically more alike. What we consider normal, acceptable or desirable may look very different to people half way round the globe. The so-called "cartoon crisis" brought this out. If we want to solve problems, we have to understand the mindset of others. Better not to forget this.

What about the third part of the exam question, the "next steps"? If we are serious about a more effective European foreign policy, there are many things we have to do. Let me mention just three.

Firstly, we need more capabilities for crisis management. Plus we need a greater willingness to use the ones we have. It is striking that, after we have agreed together to deploy missions in Afghanistan or Chad or elsewhere, the force generation takes longer than it should. By being smarter in how we spend on defence, we can get more usable equipment and capabilities.

In similar vein, we should expand the number of rapidly deployable and adequately trained civilians. Sometimes mobilising civilians is even harder than military, since they do not wait in barracks to be called to duty.

Secondly, when we agree by consensus on what to do, we need greater efficiency in translating that into effective action on the ground. The Lisbon Treaty will help very much. It is right that consensus remains required for decision-making in foreign policy. But once we have taken decisions, we should be able to implement them faster and more effectively.

Thirdly, and most difficult: we need to think differently about foreign policy as such. Foreign policy these days should not be just about diplomats, soldiers and development workers. And about how we can bring these "tribes" better together - although doing so is necessary.

Modern foreign policy should be broader and involve wider sets of people. From those working on energy and climate change to migration and asylum to international economics. Perhaps I could make the same point somewhat differently. If the European Union gets its act together on energy, climate change and migration, we will have created big building blocks for a foreign policy fit for the 21st century.

Let me close with a word on the role of the UK in all this. My basic message should be no surprise: Europe needs Britain. A credible European foreign policy without the UK is simply not possible. Europe needs your contribution in terms of ideas, resources and relationships, including with the US. Your organisational capacity, your global mindset and your armed forces.

We know that the euro and the Schengen zone of passport-free travel can and do work without the UK. Better though for me that the UK would be in. But the same is not true in foreign and defence policy. Here the UK has a decisive contribution to make. It can and should help to lead this project.

But the converse is also true: Britain needs Europe. The world I described is also your world. The choice between trying to shape the world or be shaped by it is also your choice. It is of course up to the people and leaders of Britain to make that choice. Not once, but day after day.

I am certain of the benefits to Britain, Europe and the wider world of you making the right choice. And I am confident that you will.

Thank you very much.
