ALBERT H. GORDON Lecture

"MARS AND VENUS RECONCILED: A NEW ERA FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS"

by JAVIER SOLANA
EU High Representative
for the Common Foreign and Security Policy

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Mr President,
Dean,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to thank everyone who has given me this chance to talk to you today:

- the Minda de Gunzberg Center for European Studies, and in particular Renée Haferkamp,
- the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs,
- the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs,
- and, of course the Kennedy School of Government for hosting this event.

The war in Iraq makes this is a difficult and painful time for all of us. It is a time of high emotion. Many of you will have friends or family members somehow involved in this war. My thoughts are with you. My thoughts are with those called upon to serve your country. And my thoughts are with those many innocent people caught up in the horror of war. Now that the war has started, we want the coalition to succeed quickly. We all hope that lives lost will be few. And I know that your Administration is doing its utmost to limit Iraqi casualties. This is a time for honest reflection and thought among friends. That is the spirit in which I want to talk to you today.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President who gave his name to this great School of Government once said, "we (Americans) do not regard a strong and united Europe as a rival but as a partner." He even proposed that a declaration of interdependence be made between what he described as "the new union emerging in Europe and the old American union." Such sentiments seem far removed from the mood today.

Some subtle and thought-provoking analyses of our differences have been made recently, including that of Robert Kagan. Popularising subtle ideas is never easy. It has led to some rather amusing exaggerations and simplifications. Europeans and Americans it seems no longer inhabit separate continents, but separate planets - divided by a fundamentally different world outlook. I am from Venus, which, according to its detractors, is faint-hearted, soft-headed and militarily and politically weak. You are from Mars, which I am told is powerful, virile, dynamic: a land of moral clarity and resolute action. In the real cosmos there is a planet that lies between the two. It is the Earth, a planet that we will have to share for the foreseeable future.

Why does President Kennedy’s suggestion of interdependence seem so out of place today? Do we really face a crisis in transatlantic relations? If so why and what can we do about it?
I want to begin by offering some perspective. The first perspective is that of history. Outlooks on the two sides of the Atlantic, while often similar, have rarely been identical. We have had our differences before, and will no doubt have them again. Nor is this the first time in recent history that transatlantic views have differed on the wisdom of using force. And it would be wrong to characterise Europeans as being overly cautious legal zealots. Just a few weeks ago in the middle of the Indian Ocean a rather daring military operation took place. A ship was boarded from helicopters on the high seas. It was carrying missiles from North Korea to the Yemen. What happened? The lawyers in another country got together and decided that action was illegal and had to be called off. Who were the people who boarded the ship? They were Europeans, Spaniards as it happens. Who were those who insisted on the operation being ended because of international legal norms. The United States Government.

Perspective comes also from acknowledging that a spectrum of views exists on both sides of the Atlantic. Our attention is drawn to extreme positions. We often fail to notice the overlaps, the middle ground. There is no denying the fact that on the issue of Iraq the centre of gravity of our public opinions differs greatly. But public opinion is not monolithic. There are opponents of the war here in the United States, here on this campus, just as there are supporters of the war in Europe. If one asks about the aim of Iraqi disarmament, rather than the means chosen, there is a very great overlap of views. Broader polling data is unequivocal: a very substantial overlap of transatlantic opinion persists. It is deep and it is wide. Not many on either side of the Atlantic want to see a world dominated by an imperial USA, an "American Rome" so to speak.

From the economic perspective we have to conclude that, declaration or not, the interdependence that President Kennedy proposed has arrived. There is today an unprecedented degree of economic integration between the United States and the European Union. If you are not convinced, consider the following facts, (published recently in a study by Joseph Quinlan of the Center for Transatlantic Relations):

- for all the talk about NAFTA or the “Asian century,” over the past eight years American investment in the Netherlands alone was twice what it was in Mexico and 10 times what it was in China.

- There is more European investment in Texas than all the American investment in Japan.

- More than twelve and a half million Americans and Europeans owe their livelihoods directly to the $2.5 trillion transatlantic commercial relationship.

Politically also, there has been a real intensification of policy co-operation. I could mention many areas. Let me choose just one: the Balkans. Think back to the early and middle 90s. Europe was
divided, the UN was divided, NATO was inactive, transatlantic relations were in terrible shape. And the Balkans was the scene of tragedy and atrocities. And then fast forward to the present, a solid transatlantic consensus. Daily co-operation between the European Union and NATO. The UN playing a useful role with the full backing of the major powers. And the European Union active, united, and pursuing a long term strategy.

Why then, against this very positive background, do we have a sense of crisis? It is I think because we are at a turning point. Of course, ever since the end of the Second World War people have been telling us that we are at a turning point in history. This time I think it is true. Europeans find current events profoundly unsettling, and all the more so since they detect that these events herald the arrival of a new era. New eras are always unsettling.

The war in Iraq is something new. It may be the first war of a new era. It is a dramatic display of America’s dominance at a time of an unprecedented sense of America’s vulnerability. For America, this is a preventive war. Many Europeans wonder whether war may have been prevented, whether all the possibilities for peaceful resolution had been exhausted. For all of us the war raises a serious question - how to deal with the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

The Iraq question has divided the European Union, NATO and the United Nations. It has divided in some cases governments from populations. Those European governments that support the war have done so against the tide of their public opinion, and at some political risk. Very large parts of European public opinion have not been convinced by the arguments of the US Administration. We have had some rather “frank exchanges”, as they say, at very senior levels. Some of these things have happened before but I do not think they have ever happened together, or that the divisions have been quite so sharp.

On the European side of the Atlantic these divisions cause the deepest unease. There is a strong wish to end them. European scepticism should not be mistaken for hostility, anti-Americanism, or pacifism. It must be possible to disagree and still remain friends and partners. So we must work together to re-establish civilised dialogue and common approaches. That is part of the reason I am here in the United States at this time. But we must also see this point in time as an opportunity. It is an opportunity to address some profound questions that we need to sort out together if we are going to construct a transatlantic relationship that is up to the challenges of the 21st century. Some of these questions – to put it rather dramatically – are about the world order.

The first thing that strikes me about the problems of today's world is that they are common problems: weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, state failure, the Middle East crisis. All these affect both Europe and the USA profoundly.

Europe will come within range of potentially hostile missiles from many countries of concern long
before the US does. Some of those missiles could carry weapons of mass destruction as warheads. We are also subject to terrorism and have been for many years. We have not suffered the same kind of catastrophic attack that so profoundly changed America 18 months ago but it could happen to us too at any minute. Failed and failing states present real problems, as we saw in Somalia and in Afghanistan.

The great crisis in the Middle East, which affects the whole region in different ways from Afghanistan to Morocco, has been a central item in foreign relations for both the US and Europe for many years now. The US has been the dominant power in the Middle East since the Second World War. But the Middle East is our neighbour and whatever happens there has a deep impact on Europe. We have been working on this together for quite some time now. I was a member of the Mitchell Committee two years ago. The ideas put forward then were right. We knew where we had to go, but the fact is that we did not get anywhere; the train has simply got stuck in the station. Meanwhile, more than 2,000 people have died. It is time to break the stalemate and to start moving. I therefore welcome what President Bush has had to say about the roadmap. Now is the time to implement it, to "get on the road", that is.

These are common problems and if there are going to be solutions they will have to be common solutions. It is not just the US and the EU that are involved. We need the support of Japan, Russia, China, and many others in dealing these questions. But I cannot imagine that we will be able to tackle any of them unless we have a common purpose across the Atlantic and the most intimate and detailed co-operation.

How can we re-establish this sense of common purpose? We can do so by re-committing ourselves – on both sides of the Atlantic - to four key principles. First, we are allies and partners. Second, we make fair contributions. Third, we tackle causes and not just symptoms. Finally we act together to sustain a world based on rules. These are not new ideas. They have constituted the bedrock of our relationship for more than fifty years.

We must begin by reaffirming that we are partners and we are allies. Treat your friends like allies and they will behave like allies. Partnerships and alliances bind. They allow for and legitimise leadership by providing a forum for talking and for listening, for defining common tasks and identifying the means to accomplish them. The alliance should determine the mission. This is not code for a de facto European veto on American initiatives. It is the best hope of restoring our joint sense of purpose. The alternative is to pick your partners, as you would select tools from a toolbox. Sometimes there may be no alternative. But in the long run it is not a recipe for restoring common purpose. Most of us would prefer to be called an “ally” or a "partner" than a “tool” in a box.

Effective alliances and partnerships need effective capabilities, to which all members contribute. That must be our second principle. It follows from the first. Contribute like an ally and you will be
treated like an ally. There has been much American criticism of Europe for not doing enough on defence. Some of that criticism is justified. It is a criticism I myself make when arguing that Europe needs to spend more and spend better.

But let me say a few things in our defence. Europe's leaders recognise that military capabilities need to be upgraded and be made more inter-operable. They set themselves targets in Helsinki in 1999 to encourage that process. Real progress is being made. But, as far as contemporary security is concerned, there is no standard "unit of account". How much additional security does an aircraft carrier bring? Is it more or less than spending the equivalent amount of money on peacekeeping or the reconstruction of failed states? Security today is a multi-dimensional concept. Bringing peace, stability and order is an effective way of "draining the swamp". Nation building is not for wimps, as we have found out in Afghanistan and as we will be reminded in Iraq. And Europe's security contribution and her ambitions are relevant and useful.

My third principle is that we use our shared capabilities to address causes as well as symptoms. That is just plain common sense. Applying that common sense is not always as easy as it would seem. President Bush was right to point out that “we must confront the worst threats before they emerge... that if we wait for these threats to materialise, we will have waited too long". This, in our view, certainly applies to issues such as climate change, sustainable development and regional conflagration. We need active policies to address and anticipate these problems. We must see these issues in terms of their potential for security, and consequently adopt preventive strategies.

Looking at causes also means addressing the political environment from which terrorism grows with the same determination that we address acts of terrorism. No cause justifies terrorism, but there is no justification for ignoring the causes of terrorism. Potent threats are the product of a combination of motivation and capabilities. While not ignoring the capabilities of our enemies, we must also address the motivations that drive them to acquire those capabilities. We are right to be concerned about the dangers of weapons of mass destruction coming into the hands of terrorists. It is a nightmare that we must do everything to avoid. But as September 11 tragically showed us, armed only with the crudest of capabilities, the motive of mass destruction has dreadful potency.

Getting others to want what you want can be much more efficient than getting others to do what you want. I do not need to lecture you on that point. It is a point that others here today can make more eloquently than me. However, I can give you a compelling illustration of the power of this argument. Next week I will have the honour to attend a ceremony at which ten countries will sign the treaties for their accession to the European Union. Eight of those countries are part of what we used to call the Soviet bloc. The prospect of EU membership has been a wonderful incentive for those countries, and for the others that will follow in their wake, to transform large parts of their political, economic and legal systems. We have helped them and given them encouragement. But the motivation to reform has been theirs and the extent of their successful transformation all the
greater for that fact. More than regime change has been achieved: system change has been achieved.

This leads me to my fourth and final principle: that we act together to sustain and strengthen a world based on rules. No other route offers a better way to remove the destructive motives and capabilities that we fear.

Some people pretend that there is some kind of opposition between power, the US method, and law, which is the European method. In fact law and power are two sides of the same coin. Power is needed to establish law and law is the legitimate face of power. Sometimes European countries have tended to forget that law and international norms have to be backed by force. And occasionally I have heard American voices that seem to have forgotten that, if it is to have lasting effect, force needs to be backed by legitimacy. The successful defence and promotion of transatlantic values depends on a common advocacy, acceptance and enforcement of rules and norms.

We have too quickly forgotten how powerful legitimacy can be. It was one of the keys to success in the Cold War. The progress we have made on weapons of mass destruction so far is due in part to the fact that we have established a taboo on nuclear weapons. This does not solve the hard cases but it creates a background against which we can get ready to act on them. We have been less successful in this respect for biological or chemical weapons. But there will be no solution to these problems unless we can maintain and reinforce the legitimacy of our position and the actions we want to take. Similarly, making sure that the fight against terrorism is seen as legitimate is a key to its success. Legitimacy depends on creating a wide international consensus.

A rules-based approach is not a ploy to constrain the US. Americans wrote much of the great body of international law that has served us so well in the post-war period. Upholding and strengthening the rule of law is the best means for America to preserve her position as the benign world power and to continue to project her values. Alternative strategies are not very attractive either for the US or for her allies:

- US isolation? It's been tried, it wasn't very successful then and it would be a disaster now;

- Dominance through force? We must be prepared to use sticks sometimes, but do we want a wholesale return to the politics of the caveman, where the guy with the biggest stick carries the argument (until he turns the next corner)?

Issues of rules, force and legitimacy have come together in the case of Iraq. Not everyone sees the war as legitimate – a fact we need to face. We must make sure that the peace is seen as legitimate. That is why the role of the UN in the political reconstruction is important. Otherwise we face what
Hegel described as “the impotence of victory”, when talking of Napoleon in Spain.

Power is a relative concept. American power is also European weakness. We are addressing this, and it is important that all of us, Americans and Europeans, accept that it is in both of our interests to do so. It will take time, but so did the construction of the US. The construction of Europe is a very different kind of project, but in some ways the progress achieved in the first fifty years of European construction is more spectacular than in the first 100 years of the United States. The US after all adopted a single currency only in 1862, and established a central bank only in 1913.

I realise that the European Union is not always an easy body to deal with. Despite this, it would be a mistake for the US to "cherry-pick" from among its European allies. To do so would ignore the fact that, collectively, the EU has capacities that its individual members lack. Historically, the US has brought an enormous contribution to ending the quarrels between European countries. It would be your loss and ours if we were to start quarrelling again. Attempts to divide Europe only strengthen those who argue, misguidedly, that European identity lies in opposition to the US. A policy of “divide and rule” would become “divide and fail”. What we want is more Europe, not less America.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We do not have the luxury of living on separate planets. On this small planet, whose problems abound, neither the United States nor the European Union will find an alternative substantial partner which shares to such a complete degree values and interests. A little perspective and a re-commitment to some guiding principles are modest but useful starting points if the most successful partnership of the 20th century is to prove itself up to the challenges of the century ahead.

Finally, although my training is in physics and not the classics, I seem to recall that it was only in the arms of Venus that Mars found peace. And was their beautiful daughter not the goddess Harmonia?

Thank you.