
NATO: Unique Alliance Today—and Tomorrow

By

Javiar Solana
NATO Secretary General

[The following is a reprint of the remarks of Secretary General Solana at American University, in Washington DC, on July 24, 1997. This article was originally published in *Defense Issues*, Volume 12, Number 39. *Defense Issues* is available on the Internet via the World Wide Web at <http://www.defense;link.mil/pubs/di_index.html>.]

This remains true: Europe needs the United States, but the United States also needs Europe. As long as the United States wants to remain a global power, it will have to remain fully involved in Europe.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here at American University. This is, of course, a challenging assignment. Many high-caliber statesmen, including several U.S. presidents, have made major policy speeches here. The one by John F. Kennedy in 1962 continues to be a reference point in the history of the Atlantic alliance.

Your university epitomizes the dynamic trans-Atlantic relationship. The popularity of your numerous exchange and overseas programs is living proof of an institution that is creative, forward-looking and constantly rejuvenated, just like NATO itself. American University is thus an ideal platform for the secretary general of the Atlantic alliance.

During the past 50 years a shared destiny has cemented America and Europe together in a community that is unique in history. It is a community based on many factors: on emotions, ancestry, cultural affinity and shared interests. Yet what has made it so durable is the fact that it has always been based on strong shared values: democracy, human rights, and freedom. What has made our North Atlantic community so successful is that for many decades we kept the light of freedom burning, while in the east of Europe basic freedoms and human rights existed only as a distant memory.

The North Atlantic alliance is therefore unique. It is not only a military alliance, it is also, and more importantly, a moral alliance. It is not like alliances of the past which came together for a single purpose, then disbanded when that purpose was achieved. No, . . . this alliance has kept together beyond the fall of the Berlin Wall, to achieve new tasks and meet new challenges.

Indeed, I believe that never before on this globe has there developed a closer network of cooperation, trust, and interdependence than between Europe and North America. In the United States, Europe finds a dynamic partner and leader. In Europe, North Americans find friends ready to work with you to make the world a safer place. In short, Europe and North America form a community of values geared for joint actions to pursue common purposes.

This unique alliance is as important today as it was in the past. Yes, the Cold War has ended, and we are thankful for that. We wanted it to end, and it was first and foremost our trans-Atlantic solidarity that brought it to an end. But the need to stand together has not disappeared.

If anything, the challenges we face in common have multiplied: helping democracy and prosperity take firm root in Europe's east; creating a true partnership with a democratic Russia; building new security relationships all across the Euro-Atlantic area; coping with the challenge

of proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons; and—perhaps most urgently—managing the new crises and conflicts that still haunt the old continent.

For Europe and North America to tackle these problems in isolation from each other would run against all our shared strategic interests. Not only would it overtax the Europeans' capabilities, it would also deprive the United States of a major source of influence in shaping this new Europe. For even after the Cold War, peace and stability in Europe remains a vital interest for the United States. Instability in Europe would endanger the global trend towards democracy, the free market, and the rule of law.

Moreover, Europe is of increasing importance to the health of the U.S. economy. The U.S. sells over \$120 billion in goods and services to the European Union each year, and one-half of its foreign investment is in Western Europe. The United States and the European Union are successful trading partners with common interests in an open world economy and access to global markets. And the United States will not find better strategic partners than in Europe for dependable cooperation in coping with new global challenges.

So it is and remains true: Europe needs the United States, but the United States also needs Europe. As long as the United States wants to remain a global power, it will have to remain fully involved in Europe.

Nothing could illustrate better the continuing vitality of the trans-Atlantic link than NATO's Madrid Summit two weeks ago. The summit was bold, innovative, and it showed leadership. It confirmed that NATO remains at the very center of European security. We have set out the policies and the vision for the next century, and we have put in place the elements of a new security order for an undivided Europe.

What are the key elements of this new order, and how are we going about to put them in place?

The first element is, of course, the opening of our successful Western institutions to those nations who had been deprived of their free choice 50 years ago. That is why NATO's recent decision to invite the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland [to join NATO] is so crucial. It is the most visible sign that our Atlantic community is growing.

I do not know how much paper and how many trees it has taken to argue about NATO enlargement in newspapers and periodicals. I do not think it is necessary to dwell at greater length on the pros and cons. To me, this is a settled issue. Enlargement is as inevitable politically as it is necessary morally. It will remove the invisible barriers that still divide Europe. It will give the new democracies to our east confidence in their future political and economic development. And it will prevent the expensive and potentially dangerous renationalization of their defense policies. Enlargement is therefore about much more than military interoperability. What we are doing is building "political interoperability" across the continent.

So the decision to invite Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join NATO marked a real watershed and a new start for a new reshaped Europe.

But what about those who have not been invited this time? Simple answer: enlargement is an open process, not a single event. No democratic country will be excluded from consideration. So those who want to join—and there are still nine of them—will and should continue to advance their case. They will continue their political and military reforms, and they will continue to improve relations with their neighbors.

What about costs? Yes, enlargement of our alliance will add costs. But I believe these costs will be manageable. At Madrid the allies agreed to make available the necessary resources.

For the new allies, what is important is that for the first time in their history, they will be joining a strong, stable collective defense system. They know the strategic significance of this step. That is why I am confident that our future new allies will be ready to make their full contribution.

But what they bring to the alliance is equally important. They will add to our military resources and our political clout. So the benefits of NATO enlargement far outweigh the costs. And if the history of the 20th century has told us anything, it is that the costs of indifference and neglect are ultimately going to be much greater than the investment in a strong, effective alliance.

Together, the allies have also made tremendous progress in putting in place another key element of a new security order—a new relationship with Russia. Only six months ago, many commentators were arguing that we would have to choose between NATO enlargement and Russia. We have since learned that we can have both—first class new members of NATO and a transformed NATO-Russia relationship. Last May, NATO and Russia established a new relationship by signing the so-called NATO-Russian Founding Act. This act marks a fresh start for relations with Russia. If we succeed, and Russia continues its progress in democracy and economic reform, everyone will gain.

NATO has created a new joint permanent council with Russia in which Russia and NATO will meet regularly to discuss issues of common interest and concern. Of course, no mechanism, not even this NATO-Russia Council, is a guarantee for perfect harmony. Russia cannot expect to block NATO's own decision-taking. But what it can expect is that NATO will listen and take their legitimate concerns seriously.

The Permanent Joint Council had its first meeting last week. Already it became clear that Russia is determined as we are to make it work. The procedures are in place; the agenda is in place. A first ministerial is planned for the second half of September in New York.

So our desire to build a security architecture with Russia is a genuine one. And I believe we have conveyed this point to Russia convincingly. This is the basis on which to make further progress in our relationship.

As well as starting the enlargement process and opening a new chapter with Russia, NATO has launched Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. These initiatives span the Euro-Atlantic space from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Within just a few years, they have led to ever closer military cooperation and political consultation among over 40 countries—an achievement unprecedented in European history.

Our enhanced Partnership for Peace allows partner countries to familiarize themselves even more intensively with NATO's structures. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council allows them to consult even more extensively with the allies. Never before has NATO's pan-European vocation [been] more visible. Through the alliance's cooperative approach, almost all countries in the Euro-Atlantic area are now bound together in a common commitment to a more peaceful, stable future.

This commitment is not just rhetorical. It is having a visible effect in Bosnia, where soldiers of more than 30 countries are united in a true coalition for peace. In my visits to Bosnia, I can see not only American and Russian soldiers patrolling together, I can also see soldiers from Ukraine, a country we have also established a distinct partnership with. There are soldiers from Poland

and the Baltic states, and from Finland and France. NATO's partnership initiative enabled them to work together. They have reconstructed thousands of miles of road, built or repaired over 60 bridges and opened up the railway system and airports.

So the country is coming physically together. Clearly, the job of changing attitudes, overcoming fear and hatred, is a long-term project. But what better example is there than the cooperation we demonstrate through NATO?

So in the new Europe there is a platform for everyone. And the trans-Atlantic community has grown accordingly.

Of course, there are many problems that can still arise before we reach the final goal of a Europe whole, free, and united. Bosnia has reminded us of the dangers and horrors of neglect and indifference. Yet Bosnia also has shown what can be achieved when North Americans and Europeans unite in the cause of peace. The power of unity is a lesson we should never forget.

This brings me to the last element of a new security architecture: a new distribution of responsibilities—a new trans-Atlantic bargain.

The changes that we see happening in Europe today are not confined to the east. Western Europe, too, is changing. The European Union is trying to develop a common foreign and security policy—to become a strategic actor in its own right. This is a welcome development, as it provides us with a unique opportunity—to have the Europeans take more responsibility in upholding security and stability in Europe and beyond. The new NATO post-Madrid will reflect this European vocation more visibly. We will create the genuine capacity for the Europeans to take on more responsibility, drawing on NATO assets and working with the United States.

No longer will the alliance be caught in a false choice between U.S. engagement or no engagement in a crisis. Where the alliance—and I stress, the alliance—agrees that an operation can and should be led by Europeans, it will, for the first time, be a realistic option.

I believe also that as Europeans begin to take on greater responsibilities for their own security, they will be in a better position to support the United States in contingencies beyond Europe. In short, a new trans-Atlantic bargain is in the making—a bargain that will reflect the new realities of a new century.

Ladies and gentlemen, 1997 has been a most extraordinary year for this alliance. Within just a few months, we invited new members into our alliance, established a new relationship with Russia and Ukraine, enhanced the Partnership for Peace, created the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, gave more visibility to the Mediterranean dialogue, and made progress on NATO's internal adaptation. The Madrid Summit two weeks ago brought these elements together. It showed the world that the North Atlantic Alliance is as determined and dynamic as ever.

Yesterday in Vienna, 30 nations achieved a Framework Agreement on the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. It clears the way for the modernization of the Treaty on Conventional Forces. As such, it is yet another sign of a Europe with a new sense of direction and purpose—a Europe that sees its future in a strong alliance with North America.

So the trans-Atlantic link is not just in good shape, it is shaping history. We have a real chance to make the 21st century a much better one for Europe than this 20th century we are now leaving behind.