

**BERLIN**

DR. HANS-GERT PÖTTERING  
 VORSITZENDER DER  
 KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG  
 PRÄSIDENT DES  
 EUROPÄISCHEN  
 PARLAMENTS A.D.

5. April 2017

[www.kas.de](http://www.kas.de)

# “The Bratislava Declaration, the Malta and Rome Summits, and the Future of European Integration: A View from Berlin”

SEMINAR BY THE GEORGE C. MARSHALL CENTER “EUROPEAN SECURITY UNION AFTER MALTA AND ROME: LAST HOPE OR FALSE PROMISE FOR A CONTINENT UNDER PRESSURE?”

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The European security situation has changed dramatically in the last few years. Both from without and within, the European Union and our principles of liberty, peace, and prosperity are under pressure.

From without, Europe is faced with an arc of crises. Russian aggression in the East, especially the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, has undermined the European order established after World War II.

In the South, civil war, bad governance, and fragile state structures have given rise to mass migration and Islamist terrorism.

At the same time, the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and populist movements in various EU member states have called into question the longevity and effectiveness of European institutions.

One could go into great detail painting all the nuances of this bleak picture. And yet, my message to you today is one of cautious optimism.

Because after years of involvement in the European project and, more specifically, the European Union's security affairs, I see at least as much light as there is shadow.

For instance: Today, shortly after the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty, I am

reminded of the situation the European Union faced ten years ago.

At its 50th anniversary, in 2007, the EU found itself in a period of reflection. That was brought about by the people of France and the Netherlands who had refused the EU constitution. At the time, this was considered a massive setback for European integration.

In response, the EU institutions adopted the Berlin Declaration. I signed it as the President of the European Parliament. The main theme of the declaration was “United for the Better” – a strong commitment for a united European Union.

This declaration helped to re-ignite the engine of European integration. It later led to the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union's current judicial framework.

It proved: The European idea is strong and flexible. European integration does not continue despite public criticism. In truth, public concern and open, constructive debate help Europeans to design an ever-better Union.

I see a similar mechanism at work today. In Bratislava 2016, the EU heads of state and government agreed on the best way to counter disenchantment with the European idea: We need an EU of results. We need a

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.**

**BERLIN**

DR. HANS-GERT PÖTTERING  
VORSITZENDER DER  
KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG  
PRÄSIDENT DES  
EUROPÄISCHEN  
PARLAMENTS A.D.

**5. April 2017**

**www.kas.de**

European Union that demonstrates clear added value to its citizens. We need an EU able to deliver.

In a wise decision, European leaders focused on the field of security. Given the increasing threat of domestic and international terrorism, enhanced cooperation of police and intelligence services across the European Union is a necessity. It also addresses a key concern of European citizens.

What is more, there is a growing understanding that domestic and international security are increasingly intertwined.

Before addressing the implications for international security, let me emphasize the political significance of the Bratislava process for the future of Europe. It has led, directly or indirectly, to numerous initiatives.

They include

- the European Commission White Paper outlining five scenarios for the European Union's future,
- the statement of the heads of state and government of France, Germany, Spain and Italy in Versailles which argues for a multi-speed Europe,
- several papers of the European and national parliaments all contributing valuable ideas to this reflection process,
- and, as the formal end point of the Bratislava process, the Rome summit.

The Rome summit declaration is particularly important. It fulfilled four key functions central to strengthening the European idea.

First, it was a demonstration of unity. The prospect of the United Kingdom leaving the Union naturally creates uncertainty, even anxiety. The remaining members, however, are determined to create an even stronger, more capable European Union. It is

therefore a particularly strong signal of ownership that the declaration has been signed by all 27 EU member states.

Second, the Rome summit delivered a strong commitment to our common values. Democracy, liberty, human rights, and rule of law remain centerpieces of the European idea.

Third, it highlighted the benefits of European integration. Be it environmental standards or technological transformation, the promotion of equality between men and women or the preservation of cultural diversity: the contributions and achievements of the European Union are numerous and should give us confidence in the European project.

Fourth, it formulated a credible promise to deliver results in key policy areas. Besides economic development and social solidarity, the Rome Declaration emphasizes the protection of EU citizens and the European Union's role as a global actor. It is exactly in these security-related fields that the EU can make the most progress and make its benefits more obvious to the people.

A key element in order to achieve this goal will be the enhancement of the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy, CSDP.

I know that among experts on international security – as the Marshall Center has assembled here to today –, CSDP is not always held in the highest regard. For decades, the European Union's initiatives on security and defense have fallen short of the expectations generated by ambitious politicians and demanded by hard-nosed analysts.

I share some of that frustration. Security and defense is a crucial element of national sovereignty, and progress has often been slow.

However, as someone who has witnessed and at times helped shape the European Union's long journey from humble beginnings of zero impact on defense issues

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.**

**BERLIN**

DR. HANS-GERT PÖTTERING  
VORSITZENDER DER  
KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG  
PRÄSIDENT DES  
EUROPÄISCHEN  
PARLAMENTS A.D.

**5. April 2017**

**www.kas.de**

to where we stand today, I must say: Progress may have been slower than we might desire, but progress has indeed been made.

Especially since the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has become an actor in all aspects of international affairs, also in security and defense.

What is more, our citizens expect the European Union to contribute to the security of the continent. The EU must help the member states to strengthen their security by generating more capabilities and to do so more efficiently and with greater effectiveness. So say 66 per cent of Europeans asked in an EU-wide poll in 2016. The number jumps to 82 per cent when asked about more EU action in the fight against terrorism.

The people understand that security and defense is not alien to the European project but a fundamental part of it. As you know, plans for a European Defense Community have been discussed since 1952 – a mere seven years after World War II.

Also, the easy deference to NATO as the more relevant provider of defense and security is no longer appropriate. For one thing, CSDP is no longer seen as a competition to NATO – certainly not by the United States.

To the contrary, U.S. Presidents since Bill Clinton have asked European members of NATO to step up their military contributions to the Alliance. And they have accepted that CSDP is one way of doing so – especially if it is understood as a driver of European capabilities, not just of empty structures or hollow slogans.

I believe NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg is right: A stronger CSDP will ultimately lead to a stronger NATO.

Given the uncertainties and ambiguities accompanying the new American administration and the broader strategic consequences of Brexit, I think it is exactly the right time for continental Europe to

invest in Euro-Atlantic security – but to do so through strengthening both organizations, NATO and the EU, at the same time.

The year 2014 has stressed why exactly this twin-track approach is necessary. The migration crisis has tested the political cohesion of the European Union and of our national societies. It is evident that the root causes of this crisis lie in a complex mixture of factors in Africa and the Middle East. These causes are not easy to address. Yet we must do so in order to protect our interests and live up to our values of solidarity and common humanity.

In most respects, NATO is not the premier tool for addressing the ills of this region, this crucial part of the European neighborhood. The right venue is the European Union, with its unique skill set of economic, cultural, political, and also security instruments.

NATO, of course, can and should play a supporting role. But it is in the EU that we must formulate and implement a common strategy vis-a-vis Africa and the Middle East.

Also in 2014, Russian aggression in Ukraine shook the European security order to its foundations. Here, the roles of the EU and NATO were reversed. Through its sanctions regime against Russia and its political support of Kiev, the EU played an important part. The key organization in terms of European security, however, was NATO.

Its strategic adaptation at the Wales and Warsaw summits strengthened deterrence of further Russian aggression and reassured all members. In doing so, the security guarantee of the U.S. nuclear umbrella is an indispensable factor, giving NATO unique value and relevance.

As these examples illustrate: There is no competition between NATO and the European Union's CSDP. We need both.

So what do we have to do now in order to make CSDP a success?

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.**

**BERLIN**

DR. HANS-GERT PÖTTERING  
VORSITZENDER DER  
KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG  
PRÄSIDENT DES  
EUROPÄISCHEN  
PARLAMENTS A.D.

**5. April 2017**

**www.kas.de**

I believe that we must dare to take a realistic assessment of past successes and shortcomings of CSDP. This is not the right place to do so in considerable detail, but allow me just a few brief observations.

We should admit that the successes of CSDP are sometimes overlooked.

Be it the mission in Aceh, be it the intervention during the elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or be it the maritime mission at the Horn of Africa – in all of these instances, the European Union has made a difference through military force. The loose talk about the EU being structurally incapable of hard power projection is simply false.

At the same time, the European Union has sometimes failed to make good use of its defense and security instruments. Too often, we have been hesitant to engage when it could have mattered most. The European Union's battle groups, a rapid reaction force created in 2007, have never been deployed.

Member states argue about burden-sharing, financing, and strategic priorities. They are right to do so. But their arguments should be constructive, leading to more efficient engagements, not idleness.

In overcoming this inertia, EU member states need to build on the Rome Declaration and last year's Global Strategy by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. They must develop a common set of priorities and realistic commitments to achieving them.

Without such a foundation, without a common policy, all efforts at building common structures or engaging in common missions will not produce the desired outcome.

In this spirit, I would like to make three suggestions of how to improve CSDP. They should serve as an impulse for our further discussions today, so please forgive me if

they might appear a bit rough around the edges.

First, decision-makers should take very pragmatic and practical steps. They should not waste energy and political capital on ambitious long-term projects or merely bureaucratic reforms. Europeans want to see a European Union that is capable of action and of producing concrete results improving citizens' lives.

To give you an example: As many of you know, I have been a proponent of a European army for a long time now. And I still believe that, ultimately, deeply integrated armed forces would make excellent sense for a European Union that is also deeply integrated politically.

However, I recognize that we are not there yet. And I understand that pushing this ideal now is not constructive. Instead, we should focus on creating greater synergy between our national armed forces, building islands of cooperation. In doing so, we would get a stronger military capability that we can actually use in the crises of the moment.

That does not mean that we should give up on the idea of the European army. But we should stick to political expedience and must not let the perfect become the enemy of the good.

Second, we do not need new treaties but should make better use of the instruments we already have.

The Lisbon Treaty, for instance, offers the tool of Permanent Structured Cooperation. It allows a group of member states who have common aspirations and capacities to move forward, effectively forming an avant-garde of security and defense that remains open for others to join later.

So far, this tool has not been used. We should change that.

I highly value the unity of the EU, and I oppose the calls for the creation of a core Europe with separate institutions. However,

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.**

**BERLIN**

DR. HANS-GERT PÖTTERING  
VORSITZENDER DER  
KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG  
PRÄSIDENT DES  
EUROPÄISCHEN  
PARLAMENTS A.D.

**5. April 2017**

**www.kas.de**

one area in which multi-speed Europe would have an added value would be the field of security and defense.

Third, Europeans must modernize and enhance their military capabilities. For almost two decades, we have enjoyed a peace dividend. Slashing defense budgets, re-directing resources elsewhere, creating hollow forces.

This must stop. The changing security environment has made that very clear to us. And in response, many EU member states, including Germany, have started to raise their defense expenditures.

With a view to CSDP, we must understand that greater synergy and cooperation is mandatory. But it is no panacea. We cannot pool and share our way out of the current predicament. In the end, you need to buy military hardware and have to pay decent wages to your soldiers.

The EU should therefore adapt NATO's goal of 2 per cent of GDP as baseline of national defense spending. What is more, at least 20 per cent of that budget should be invested in military research and development and in procuring modern systems.

The EU should do much more in supporting this turn-around. For example: A European defense semester would go a long way to better coordinating and raising European defense spending. In the area of Eurozone governance, this mechanism of a European semester is already producing results.

In addition, common funding for joint defense research should be increased substantially. Conversely, the member states should support the European Commission's suggestion to create a European Defense Fund.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure we can easily expand this list of suggestions. For instance, we could think about how to improve the European Union's partnerships with other strategic actors such as NATO, the UN or the African Union.

Or we could think about how to flesh out the Lisbon Treaty's solidarity clause in a way to make it even more meaningful – reflecting the true, existential bond of all Europeans in a way that would facilitate the development of common strategies.

I suspect one of the reasons we would be so good at producing new ideas is that, in fact, they are not very new.

Much of what I talked about has been subject to expert discussions for years. So far, however, the obstacles between developing ideas and putting them into political practice have often proved insurmountable.

So why the message of cautious optimism I spoke about earlier?

Because, as Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan might say, times have changed. Our security situation urgently requires common action, making some of our past squabbles seem rather trivial indeed.

And I, for one, am confident that Europe can deliver. Because I have seen it do so, many times over, even in times less clear-cut than today.

Thank you very much for your attention – I am looking forward to our discussion.