

# **Together we are Stronger**

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Dr. Brady, President of the University, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Dr. Thomas, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, or should I say *go raibh maith agaibh*.

It is a true privilege and a high honour to receive the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from University College, which is Ireland's largest university and alma mater of James Joyce and five Irish Taoisigh (Prime Ministers), among countless other distinguished alumni.

I am especially pleased to receive an honorary doctorate in Law. Most of my professional life I have worked to create and develop institutions, relations, based essentially on laws. It is my deep conviction that the rule of law is the only possible cornerstone of social life and international relations. Once again thank you to University College Dublin for this great honour.

It is always a pleasure to return to Ireland. Robert Schuman once wrote that an Irish saint, Columbanus, was "the patron saint of those who seek to construct a united Europe".

Ireland has always been at the heart of Europe. I am most grateful for inviting me to speak to you today, and I want to congratulate the Dublin European Institute for their fine research on the European Union.

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Lord Mayor, Mr. President, distinguished friends,

I have come to talk about Europe. About why we embarked on the journey of European integration.

About what binds us together and what we have achieved. And why we need to continue this journey together. From building peace in Europe to promoting peace around the world.

After the tragedy of World War II, European countries wanted to find new ways of working together to end the cycle of war and division. They removed barriers to trade, developed common policies and steadily enlarged their numbers from 6 to 12 and then, 15. The end of the Cold War opened the way to the reunification of the whole continent and the Union grew to 25 and now 27 member-states. Fifty years on since the start of the integration process, the results are impressive. Europe is enjoying the longest era of peace and prosperity in its history.

The Union includes 27 sovereign democracies, collectively numbering 500 million citizens. Not very long ago citizens of some of these countries lived under dictatorships

and totalitarian regimes. The EU played a central role in their successful transition to democracy.

The 27 EU governments have created the world's largest economy. They have also established the world's largest area of free movement across national borders. Most EU countries are members of the Eurozone. This is a particular relevant point in the current, painful severe recession. The common currency, the euro, is providing significant stability. All this is based upon strong institutions and a continent-wide legal order. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world.

Ordinary citizens have benefited most in the European Union. Without restrictions they can travel across 27 countries to find a job, get an education, invest in a business. Without any doubt, the EU is a unique experiment in world history.

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But why, some ask, does the EU need a foreign policy? Why does it not concentrate on its internal market? My answer is simple: Europe is not, and cannot be, an island of peace and prosperity in a turbulent world. We share common values and interests. We want to promote those values and protect those interests. But in today's world they face challenges and threats – whether the abuse of human rights, flows of migrants escaping conflict and failed states, disputes over natural resources, or international terrorism. Most of these challenges are generated beyond our borders. An EU foreign policy is needed because no country in Europe can cope with them on its own. By acting together we can achieve much better results.

Successive Irish governments have understood this. Thirty four years ago, the first Irish presidency of the EU in 1975 negotiated the Lomé Convention, a landmark trade and aid agreement with 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

The EU has since become a major actor in a world that has radically changed and become more interdependent. Unless all of the world's major actors work together we cannot tackle the global economic crisis, the environmental emergency, or international security challenges. The EU is at the heart of this collective effort.

Global interdependence means others increasingly ask for our help. The EU has responded to these calls. The EU is leading international efforts to fight poverty in Africa and keep the peace in the Balkans. The EU is monitoring a ceasefire in Georgia and training the Afghan, Iraqi and Palestinian police forces as they try to re-build their societies.

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What ties all these things together? In other words, what is EU foreign policy ultimately for? The answer is equally simple: the aim of EU foreign policy is to replace the law of force with the force of law.

This comes naturally to us. The EU, after all, has always been a peace project founded on democratic values and respect for laws. The EU wants a world order based on the rule of law.

I do not need to tell an Irish audience about the importance of international law. W.B. Yeats warned us of the consequences of a world without laws in *The Second Coming*:

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world*

Ireland was a forceful advocate of the League of Nations in the 1920s and 1930s. And it has been a strong supporter of the United Nations since it joined in 1955.

The core goal of the European Security Strategy, which EU governments adopted in 2003 and recommitted themselves to last December, is “effective multilateralism”. The EU does not just want international laws to be written. It wants those laws to be respected and implemented.

Of course, we are not always successful in each and every case. And we need to ensure that we practice what we preach. But surely Europe is right to try strengthen the rule of international law and to advocate more effective global governance.

All this explains our support for strong institutions – from the WTO to the African Union to the OSCE – and rules for specific issues: from human rights, to non-proliferation, to climate change.

It also explains why EU governments co-ordinate their policies at the United Nations, and strongly support UN efforts to stop conflicts and manage crises. EU countries pay 40 per cent of the UN peacekeeping budget. At the UN’s request the Union has sent peacekeepers to Bosnia, Chad and Congo. In short, we work hand in glove with the UN.

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Foreign policy is not just about what you say. It is as much about what you do, and how you do it.

The EU is unique in this respect. It is not a military alliance, like NATO. NATO is for most EU member states the cornerstone of their territorial defence. This is not the EU’s objective. Rather, EU security and defence policy is a crisis management policy, which forms only one part of a much broader EU foreign and security policy.

Plus, the implementation of the EU's security and defence policy uses the full range of resources available to us: from diplomats and development workers to judges and police, and – but only when necessary – soldiers.

Let me illustrate this with some figures. Since 2003, the EU has initiated 23 crisis management operations. Only six of those missions have been military operations. The other 17 operations have been civilian, deploying police, judges, border guards, customs officials and other experts. Ireland, for example, has sent eight Gardaí to Kosovo to participate in the EU's rule of law mission there. There are also four Gardaí in Bosnia, and an Irish policeman formerly headed the mission there.

The EU's holistic approach to international security is more similar to that of the United Nations than any other international organisation. This is all part of the growing international consensus that today's international security challenges cannot be addressed using only, or even predominantly, military means – a truth which President Obama and his administration have also emphasised.

Development policy is another key instrument. Collectively, EU governments and the European Commission are the largest spenders on development aid in the world, totalling some €46 billion in 2007. That is proof of the continued compassion that Europeans have with those who suffer.

But we cannot have development without security. In countries emerging from conflict, it is human security that matters. That includes the rule of law, protecting human rights, effective governance and the chance of finding a job in a growing economy.

The EU aims to combine its defence and development policies, so that they are more effective at protecting the vulnerable. EU peacekeepers worked closely with more than 70 development NGOs on the ground in Chad. A primary goal of the current EU naval operation off Somalia is to protect World Food Programme ships from attacks by pirates.

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If we want Europe to meet the expectations of being a solid promoter of peace, then we need the Lisbon Treaty. For that treaty would make EU foreign policy more effective. It would streamline our institutions, helping us to bring together our diplomacy with our defence and development policies in a more coherent way. It would also mean that once a foreign policy decision is taken, we should be able to implement it more quickly and more effectively. It would ensure greater continuity, coherence and credibility in our dealings with third countries such as the US, China and Russia. It is vital for all of us that the Union should continue to make a credible contribution to international deliberations on major issues. We have given a lead to the global community on the crucial issue of climate change. With the Lisbon Treaty in place, we will be better equipped to play this kind of constructive global role.

One important fact the Lisbon treaty would not change is that the 27 governments are, and will remain, in charge of EU foreign policy. That is why the EU foreign policy decision-making process is based on consensus. So, EU foreign policy can only work if there is a convergence of 27 national interests. This means the decision making process can be slow and difficult. But it also means the opinions of all 27 are taken into account

before any decision is made. One side of the coin is that any member State can block a decision. But the other side is that all have the capacity to actively contribute to shaping common policies. Ireland, for example, has consistently and effectively pressed for respect for human rights to be an integral part of EU relations with countries of the Middle East, Sudan and Burma/Myanmar amongst many others.

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EU foreign policy does not just need the agreement of the 27 governments. It also needs their resources. But governments contribute on a voluntary basis. The EU cannot force governments to spend more on development aid or send more soldiers to peacekeeping operations. It is up to each government to decide whether and how it might contribute to any given operation. The Lisbon treaty would not change this fact.

For instance, we need more civil resources for our peace-support operations. But finding the right personnel for civil operations is difficult. Not least because police, judges, doctors and administrators are also needed at home. And they do not stay in barracks to be called to duty.

Ireland has been strongly supportive of the civilian aspects of ESDP, and has looked to overcome these shortages by pragmatic and flexible means, for instance by seeking experienced personnel from outside the ranks of serving officials. As a case in point, the Irish members of the Georgia and Afghanistan missions are all volunteers who had originally expressed an interest in taking part in the humanitarian and developmental activities of Irish Aid's Rapid Reaction Corps. I also applaud the Irish Government's decision to develop a national strategy to develop its capacity to do more in the civilian area.

On its own, the EU does not have any military resources. The Union does not have an army nor are there any plans for it to have one. The EU cannot conscript the citizens of any Member State. Nor can the EU tell Member States how much money they should spend on defence. Each government retains full control over its armed forces. It must decide for itself if it wishes to contribute to any given peace support operation, in accordance with its own national laws and procedures -- in your case, the so-called "triple lock".

But we do all agree that by acting together, on a voluntary basis, we can achieve more than each on our own. The Irish army consistently has one of the highest Member State figures for the number of troops on international duty as a percentage of armed forces. An Irish General – Pat Nash – commanded the EU's successful peacekeeping operation in Chad, which protected over 400,000 displaced persons and refugees fleeing from the Darfur conflict, before handing over to a UN force in March. I personally saw the Irish contingent in operation and can testify to their remarkable effectiveness. You can be proud of it.

But, even when they do manage to deploy their soldiers, European countries often find they lack the right equipment. The peacekeeping mission in Chad was hampered by a severe shortage of helicopters.

EU governments created the European Defence Agency to help co-ordinate their equipment plans, so that national governments, acting independently, can find ways to reduce the costs of acquiring equipment. This is sensible. Demand for EU peacekeepers is growing. But equipment costs are rising and European defence budgets are falling.

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In conclusion, in today's changing world Europeans can only make their voices heard if they speak together. And EU foreign policy can only work if we act together.

If I can make a sporting analogy with the Ryder Cup: After World War II the British and Irish golf team usually lost badly to the Americans. This continued until the Irish-British team invited other Europeans to play with them in 1979. The Europe team – including a number of fine Irish golfers, as well of course as some brilliant Spaniards - has since held its own with the Americans.

It is a similar story with EU foreign policy. It was born out of a mix of idealism and pragmatism. It marries the collective resources of EU governments with their common values and interests. And even though it has a long way to go, it is beginning to work on the ground.

The world around us is changing fast. New problems and crises are emerging. Power is shifting. This all calls for a more united European response.

The Lisbon treaty would help us develop a more effective EU foreign policy. I am convinced that a more effective EU foreign policy would benefit Ireland, Europe and the whole world.

Friends, we should remind ourselves of the wisdom of an old saying from the Irish language:

*í neart go cur le chéile.*

In unity there is strength. Together we are stronger.

Thank you.

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