

Conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa:
Francisco Javier Solana de Madariaga

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University College Dublin
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President, Lord Mayor, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
it is a pleasure to welcome Dr. Francisco Javier Solana de Madariaga to University College Dublin, where today he will be conferred with the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.

Universities sometimes confer honorary degrees to honour distinguished scholars. And sometimes to honour distinguished public servants. It is our privilege today to honour an individual with outstanding accomplishments in both the academy and the public sphere.

Like many of his contemporaries growing up under the Franco dictatorship, Javier Solana looked abroad for opportunity. Moving to the United States on a Fulbright Scholarship, he earned a Doctorate in Physics at the University of Virginia. While studying, he also joined protests against the Vietnam War. This simultaneous engagement with scholarship and public affairs deepened considerably when he returned to Spain to take up the post of lecturer at the Autonomous University of Madrid.

At the same time that he was launching his academic career, Javier Solana became the Socialist Party's representative to the Democratic Coordination, a broad-based opposition network that was quietly laying the groundwork for a peaceful transition to democracy. This was no easy task. After four decades of dictatorship, powerful forces in Spanish society felt threatened by the prospect of democracy. But as one of his colleagues from this era recalls, "Javier embodied the panglossian spirit of the democratic transition."

In the final years of Franco's reign, and then in the tumultuous few years after his death, Dr. Solana worked tirelessly behind the scenes, and across party lines, to

banish the ghosts of the civil war that still haunted Spain. He thus contributed significantly to ensuring that when the dictatorship ended, the backlashes against democracy were few and unsustainable.

In the midst of all this, and just four years after earning his PhD, Dr. Solana was promoted to Professor at Madrid's prestigious Complutense University, where he continued to publish scholarly articles on solid-state physics and advise doctoral students for another decade and a half.

In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Solana won a parliamentary seat in 1977 and represented the Madrid region for nearly two decades. When the Socialist Party won the elections of 1982, he entered government, where he would hold three ministerial posts over thirteen years, including Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During Spain's presidency of the European Union, Dr. Solana convened the Barcelona conference, launching a process which institutionalized and deepened the EU's political, economic and cultural relations with countries across the Mediterranean region. This initiative is the foundation upon which today's European Neighborhood Policy and Union for the Mediterranean are built.

Within weeks of chairing the Barcelona conference, Javier Solana was appointed Secretary-General of NATO. This too was no easy task, with the Alliance struggling to redefine itself in an era of more complex, but no less dangerous threats to peace, security and human rights. The post itself -- far more demanding than that of 'Secretary' but far less authoritative than that of a 'General' -- required extraordinary diplomatic skills.

Over the course of the next four years, Dr. Solana oversaw the restructuring of the Alliance, negotiated a landmark agreement to facilitate cooperation with Russia, and launched the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council to improve contacts between Europe's NATO and non-NATO countries, including Ireland.

In recognition of these accomplishments, the European Union then persuaded Dr. Solana to move across town and assume the two posts that he still holds today -- Secretary-General of the EU Council and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. If any portfolio would test his formidable diplomatic skills, it was this one.

The EU had long foresworn involvement in the sensitive area of foreign affairs. Despite authorizing the new 'High Representative' post, the Member States did not agree on what role the Union should play on the world stage. Dr. Solana would thus have to create the office to which he was appointed, and every step had to be acceptable to the full range of Member States. And that's not to mention the

multiple contacts and complex negotiations on international issues that constituted his official mandate.

To state that Javier Solana has succeeded in this post would be an overwhelming under-statement.

In response to today's terrorist threats and environmental challenges, Dr. Solana drafted a European Security Strategy that sets out how the EU can be a force for a fairer, safer and more sustainable world.

When others were trying to isolate North Korea and Iran as an 'axis of evil,' Dr. Solana reached out to Pyongyang and Teheran to see if global security and human rights could be promoted through constructive engagement.

When conditions in the Middle East appeared bleak, Dr. Solana co-authored the Road Map for Peace and he continues to represent Europe in the international Quartet promoting negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

And when the UN has asked, he has mustered support for the rapid deployment of EU peacekeepers that provide security while a longer-term UN mission is organised.

For all these achievements, and many more, Javier Solana is truly an accomplished scholar and a distinguished public servant.

His illustrious career reminds us that the values of the academy – particularly the priority of reasoned communication – are also the basis for humane co-existence in the world at large.

Praehonorabilis Praesidens, totaque Universitas,

Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittantur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.