



INTERNATIONAL EU AND USA CONFERENCE

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I am undoubtedly among those who believe that, without the ideas that underlie political activity, we are left with nothing especially desirable. When there is no conviction, there is only opportunism, populism and demagogy.

Throughout the eight years my party, the Partido Popular, sat in Government, it attempted to translate our ideas and principles into policies.

Our principles led us to confront terrorism with resolution and without concessions. Terrorism is the greatest negation of individual freedom. It is an attack on the very foundations of democratic society. We must defend ourselves from those whose ultimate aim is to destroy us.

Last August we witnessed another terrorist massacre, this time in Russia. Hundreds of people fell victim to fanatical murderers; women and children were tortured and then shot in the back.

In light of this terrible attack and in light of 11th September in the United States and 11th March in Spain, I believe it would be a good idea to reaffirm certain ideas.

Terrorism does not originate in poverty, but in the moral misery of those who practice it, defend it or justify it.

Terrorism does not originate in injustice. The greatest injustice would be if terrorism went unpunished.

Terror does not achieve anything in favor of any cause, but delegitimizes the cause by associating it with the bloodiest methods.

I believe it is essential that all anti-terrorist policies should be founded on a fundamental premise. Terror must never be rewarded for its crimes. Never. It must never achieve any of its objectives.

We are experiencing the very worst that global terrorism has to offer. Iraq, Israel, Russia ... people from these countries, but also those from France, Italy, Britain, the Philippines and Nepal, have all been the victims of terror over a period of just a few months.

I believe it is obvious that a global threat requires global answers. I also believe the European Union should work harder and better in the war against terrorism. Furthermore, I believe that Europe should respond more rapidly and in conjunction with America. This form of cooperation, which should be unreserved in the defense of our shared values, would be the worst news terrorists could possibly receive.

I have always believed that the West must be a unified whole, that Europe and America cannot function without each other. However, in the current climate I am even more convinced of this idea.

When we face enemies that seek to destroy our basic values and are capable of doing anything to achieve it, cooperation is even more essential.

The war against terror requires action and determination. We cannot simply sit back and wait for further attacks with our arms folded. We cannot waste our time by speculating on the causes of terror, thinking that the danger will dissipate with concessions and friendly words.

I often read and hear some very worrying theses.

It seems that some observers are prepared to distinguish between forms of terrorism that are based on a cause and others that are causeless, between forms of terrorism based on noble or ignoble origins. It seems that we are supposed to view the murder of dozens of innocent people in an Israeli bus and the murder of dozens of innocent people in a Spanish train, differently.

I believe that with this form of reasoning we hand these criminals their first victory. Because, let us not forget, that is what it is all about. The aim is to achieve victory, to defend ourselves, to guarantee the security of our citizens; the aim is to secure the victory of the universal values we believe in.

Declarations of solidarity mean nothing unless they are backed up by action. We must actively defend our civilization from terror.

Europe is called to play a leading role in today's world. Europe must be true to itself, to the values that have shaped its political and cultural identity over the centuries.

I am talking about values and principles that are now universal, but have nevertheless developed and shaped Europe's identity over centuries: respect for the individual and for the rights that are inherent to each of us; democracy as the only legitimate system of political organization; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We must thank God that these principles and values have become firmly rooted in other parts of the world, in particular on the other side of the Atlantic, and that today they undoubtedly have a global influence.

However, in order to successfully exercise this global role, Europe must be aware of the threats that exist and the current situation in which we find ourselves.

The 11th September 2001 was a brutal demonstration of the threats we face. We saw how those groups that seek to eliminate our democratic systems, abolish our free and open societies and end our individual rights and freedoms, are active in their desire to sow terror and destruction everywhere.

We witnessed this in New York and Washington in 2001 and we have since seen it repeated in Bali, in Casablanca, in Istanbul, in Madrid on 11th March and in Beslan last August.

For this reason, I believe Europe's priority at the present time must be to assume its role in the global war on terrorism with all the loyalty, courage and determination it can muster. The very existence of our freedom-based societies depends on the success of this war on terrorism.

It is evident that the history of Europe, the history of the integration process that has been carried out on this continent over the last fifty years, has been an unprecedented success. In my opinion, this success is based on three constants which have all played their part since the end of the Second World War.

First of all, it has only been possible to build the Europe of today thanks to the existence of a strong Atlantic link, one that has successfully faced a succession of challenges to our shared security at different times. There is no doubt whatsoever that, over the more than half a century that constitutes the history of European integration, the two sides of the Atlantic may have held diverging opinions regarding specific aspects of our security, regarding the decisions that needed to be taken. However, over and above these disagreements, a clear awareness always existed that a higher interest was at stake, namely our shared security.

We all knew that each party had to assume his responsibility and that the essential issue at stake was to first contain, and then defeat, any threat to our free societies. We can find as many examples of this as we like, ranging from the Berlin Blockade to the deployment of Euro-missiles. The common characteristic within the field of security over the fifty-year history of European integration, has been our joint contribution to Atlantic security against an enemy whose objective, nobody with any sense of responsibility could possibly deny, is to destroy free societies based on democratic systems and a respect for human rights.

Second, Europe has been a success because it was able to create the conditions required to promote economic growth. This was made possible thanks to a framework of political and economic security that overcame any temptation to fence in the economy as a supposed recipe for growth. Europe prospered because the economic approach that has operated over fifty years has tended to make Europe a free trade area featuring healthy competition among the various economic partners.

Third, Europe has become a legal project, one in which regulations have been respected. Europe is a community based on the rule of law. The essential principle that underlies this idea is that freedom must be based on the existence of general laws for all, laws that, in turn, must provide a guarantee of citizens' freedoms.

In my opinion, these are the three basic principles that explain the success of the European project over the more than five decades since it was founded.

One of the events that marked that success was the Fall of the Berlin Wall, whose Fifteenth Anniversary we are currently celebrating. The FAES Foundation I preside over is sparing no effort in commemorating that veritable “freedom revolution”.

That victory was a reward for the efforts of many Germans in their search for freedom, although many important world leaders also had a decisive influence, figures such as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Vaclav Havel, Helmut Kohl and Pope John Paul II, who refused to capitulate in the face of tyranny.

The logical consequence of this historic event was precisely the reunification of the continent, the incorporation of the majority of the countries that had been oppressed by Communist tyranny into the European project. Millions of people today live in freedom and enjoy the prospects of hope and prosperity within a system based on the free-market economy.

Europe must live up to its economic ambitions. In Lisbon in the year 2000, European Heads of State and Government set themselves the following objective: that by 2010 Europe would be the most dynamic and competitive economic area in the world. Almost half the period we established to achieve this goal has now lapsed. However, I do not believe that we have progressed towards our proposed goal with sufficient pace and endeavor.

It is always difficult to introduce reforms. However, this is the only way to move forward. Political leaders must have the necessary sense of clarity when it comes to establishing objectives and showing the necessary determination to achieve them.

In an economic sense, Europe must introduce further reforms, in spite of the fact that many may prove unpopular. We must make our economies more flexible if we wish to grow more rapidly. Our social protection programs must be compatible with the growth we aspire to. Europe must open itself up to the rest of the world with greater determination. And in order to do this, in addition to being more active within the framework of the World Trade Organization, it should work alongside the United States.

I am in favor of creating an Atlantic Economic Area, which will provide the backbone for a true Atlantic Market, focusing in particular on the regulatory aspects that prevent the economic activity that exists between the two sides of the Atlantic from achieving its full potential. This economic area would have to be open to other parts of the world and could begin with specific sectors of the economy such as financial and aeronautical services.

I believe that Europe's role throughout the world must be based on an active commitment to promoting democracy, human rights and the State based on the rule of law.

Europe, which provides the largest amount of Development Aid in the world – aid that is not always administered with appropriate criteria – must maintain a strong and effective policy, for which it has more than sufficient resources. It must support the creation of States based on the rule of law, promote democratic government, help to create stronger institutions and encourage respect for human rights.

The road to development can only be based on democracy, respect for human rights and the free-market economy. We must resist the temptation to seek formulas that history has shown to be erroneous or simply base our approach on populism, which only leads to isolation and failure. In this respect, by working together, the United States and Europe can establish an enormous force for good throughout the world.

Here in the Czech Republic, as in Slovakia, you are well aware of the value of freedom.

Not so long ago, and within the space of just a few years, you were forced to endure the invasion and occupation of two of the most tyrannical régimes in history. And this happened in one of the few European countries, Czechoslovakia, that still preserved its democratic institutions in 1938.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall was a key moment in the Freedom Revolution. It is thanks to this revolution that my country, Spain, today stands side by side with your country as a partner and ally. I am very proud to have played a part in the process whereby the countries of Eastern Europe were invited to join the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. It was, above all, a question of justice. If the Soviet Union's tanks represented a threat to the countries of Western and Southern Europe, they were a tragic reality for you, one that suppressed your most fundamental rights.

I would ask you to stand firm in your endeavors to protect the freedoms that finally reign supreme throughout our entire continent. I know that you will do so with a passion and conviction that I sometimes miss in countries which never suffered the Communist nightmare. I wholeheartedly share the values and principles of freedom that you uphold. And more than that, I share your passion to defend and protect them.