

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RT HON LORD OWEN CH TO THE POLISH  
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, WARSAW  
ON MONDAY 14 MAY 2007

**“THE FUTURE OF EUROPE AND OF THE EU”**

Ever since I became a candidate for the Westminster Parliament in 1962, I have supported the European Common Market. Ever since the Community of Six became Nine in 1973, building a Europe of democratic states that would work together for the common good, Europe has been an important part of British political life,

What I believe we have been building over these years is a Europe of confident nations who respect diversity and yet know the value of solidarity. A European Union that can pool sovereignty, if and when it is appropriate, but not because of a wish for integration for its own sake. A European Union that does not pretend to be a country, but is confident in being a unique venture.

The European Community was not founded to be one country, despite the dreams of some of its founders and present day supporters. Differences between countries and different approaches will always be present on this issue. The ways of handling the dreams of the integrationists will continue to define the character of the EU Member States.

The problem Heads of Government should be facing in June 2007 is that the European Union's record of achievement over the last 50 years, which is considerable, is not recognized to be such by our own people. Heads of Government need to ask why this is so? They have not taken advantage of the period of reflection imposed on them by French and Dutch voters over the Constitutional Treaty. Instead they are embarking on an exercise to repackage and 'cherry pick' that Constitutional Treaty in a manner designed to increase the European public's disillusionment. Their whole approach needs to be challenged.

A far more important and immediate challenge for the EU is to address its popularity and credibility with its citizens, particularly young people. We need more attention to correcting the failings of the EU as it is, winning back public support, not restarting an old and failing belief in the engine of constitutional and institutional reform. The weakness is not in structure so much as in pretension. The EU must stop the sense of “perpetual motion”, the feeling that all meetings must be followed by new initiatives; that the only form of progress is further integration. Attention needs to be focused on returning power away from Brussels and back to national capitals, less EU legislation, not more; creating more discipline in taking on new responsibilities. The EU will fail if it does not succeed in helping reduce the appallingly high levels of unemployment amongst some Member States’ young people. The EU can, and in fairness is trying to, do much more to harness the commitment of our young people to safeguard the environment in which we live. It is vital to them and for their vision of the EU’s global role that we start to reduce carbon emissions and address global warming. The young, indeed everyone in Europe, is bored by constitutional change. Yet they are being manipulated and bypassed by their politicians and in many cases not allowed to express their views by referenda.

If we are honest with ourselves, the EU is slipping back when compared with the US and also being overtaken by India and China. We need greater excellence, more world class universities, and far more research based industries in the EU. It is vital for the EU’s prosperity that we fully implement the Lisbon programme of bench marking better performance by all Member States.

Diversity between Member States has been our strength economically in the EU, not a weakness. There will be differences of approach and there should be differences of approach within the EU on taxation, social security provision, redistribution, incentives and immigration policies. Continued diversity must be maintained to face the challenges of the world economy over the next 50 years. Different countries have different needs from EU membership. Different political parties are chosen from time to time to lead their countries with different policies

and emphasis to their predecessors. The EU cannot be allowed to block such democratic initiatives if they are in accordance with the Treaties. This is why no EU Treaty should prescribe social policy, nor seek to adopt the term Social Market, which I favour, or Social Model, with all the rigidity of the word which I dislike. Different viewpoints often reflect the size of the country, its parliamentary traditions, its historical development, its readiness to respond with discipline to a recession as well as a call to arms, its economic strengths, as well as its economic weaknesses. There is no rigid EU constitutional box in which all this can ever be placed.

Besides the economy, what are the big issues, the priorities, that face the EU today? There are three: Enlargement, EU-NATO relations and Common Foreign and Security Policy.

#### 1. Enlargement

When Foreign Secretary in 1977 I took through Cabinet a paper which argued that enlargement of the European Community was good for Europe and good for the UK. It was not done in the belief that widening would weaken the EU. I believe we have shown widening deepens the EU. One of my proudest moments as President of the Council of Ministers in the early summer of 1977 was to start the process of admitting Spain, Greece and Portugal, all of whom had relatively recently lived under Fascist rule. No-one today doubts on democratic grounds that that was the right decision but it has also proved itself economically. The economic and social policy advantages of a further enlargement to bring in Austria, Sweden and Finland were self evident and they were also popular. So too was the enlargement, mainly on democratic grounds, from 15-25 which took in your country, Poland. The most significant reason for welcoming that enlargement and the reunification of Germany, which was itself a form of enlargement, was that it brought in former states who had lived under Soviet Communism.

In admitting Romania and Bulgaria so quickly the EU was courting some unpopularity, in the main because of doubts about their economic performance

and compliance with democratic and other aspects of the *Acquis Communautaire*. Now that enlargement has taken place I am confident we can resolve any residual doubts. This enlargement was also questioned by some because they, quite correctly, saw it as an implicit acceptance of enlargement for the Balkan states. Enlargement to include Bulgaria and Romania, to some extent also implied enlargement further east to Turkey and also to the Ukraine. Personally, I stand firm in believing the Ukraine, the Balkan states and Turkey should all become members of the EU.

Yet as a social democrat who wants enlargement I must face facts. A significant percentage of the EU population are not yet ready for their governments to sign up finally for Turkish EU membership. Reasons vary but we have seen in the last few weeks that Turkey has yet to demonstrate that their secular order is a democratically settled issue. The EU is not going to let the Cyprus precedent happen again, of admitting a country when basic political issues are not resolved.

The French are now re-committed after the Presidential election, under President Sarkozy, to holding a referendum on Turkish enlargement but not on his mini Constitutional Treaty. Where there is such public controversy, as there is in France over both enlargement and the constitution, referenda seems to me a reasonable democratic commitment. Those of us who want enlargement have to accept the responsibility of changing EU public opinion over Turkey. EU member governments have become all too used to pushing ahead on EU projects with scant regard for their own population's views. This is an issue which Heads of Government should discuss openly in June and accept that enlargement has to be done against a background of popular support and, where Member States wish, decided by referenda.

In principle, in the longer term, I see no objection to enlargement to the Russian Federation, Moldavia and Belarus. For a time in the early 1990s it looked as if that was the direction in which many people in these countries wanted to go. It is a sadness to me that that prospect looks much less likely. An EU-Russia Centre

poll in February 2007 showed that 71% of Russians do not regard themselves as Europeans. Half think that the EU is a potential threat and half think that Europe sees Russia in the same way. All of this shows we have to redouble our mutual effort to deepen contacts and widen understanding with Russia from the solidarity of EU membership. Russia may never want EU membership.

Nevertheless, the greatest single test for the EU is going to be how EU-Russian relations develop, particularly in energy, foreign and security matters. No country, apart from Germany, is likely to be more important within the EU in the handling of all these complex questions surrounding these issues, than you here in Poland. Anyone who reads President Putin's PhD thesis<sup>1</sup> knows that the state sector will be dominant in gas, oil and pipelines. A privatized energy market is an EU dream but we can, if we wish, pay world energy prices and not authorize long term fixed contracts. These are issues that an EU-Russian dialogue must grapple with.

As part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the EU, a few weeks ago I went to Estonia and spoke at Tartu University and said there that our EU did not enlarge to create a new cold wall of indifference or rivalry between our neighbours in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, Serbia and Turkey. The EU exists to reduce and eradicate historic enmities. We offer all these countries, genuinely and in the spirit of enduring friendship, the prospect of EU membership.

## 2. EU-NATO relations

The dismantling of the Soviet Empire, the re-establishment and creation of new States came about because together the US and European democratic states hammered out policies of détente, dialogue, deterrence and disarmament. From negotiated agreements came confidence building measures and inspections. Through these same well founded practices I expect NATO to resolve with the Russian Federation any differences about missile defence in Europe which have

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<sup>1</sup> Harley Balzer, *The Putin Thesis and Russian Energy Policy*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2005, 3, p.210-225.

recently emerged. Just as I believe the EU and the Russian Federation must resolve differences over energy policy and can help resolve other matters that from time to time flare up and cannot be resolved always bilaterally. We know in the UK how the EU helped us resolve the vexed and difficult issues in Northern Ireland but in fairness Washington, too, helped Dublin and London to reach agreement, particularly from 1995 onwards. Atlantic cooperation – for all its ups and downs - remains a positive good. I believe that Russia-EU relations over the next 50 years will also be a positive good. After 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall and the emergence of the Russian Federation we are not going to become ‘Cold War warriors’ once again.

Peace in Europe and prosperity in Europe over the last fifty years has come from the EU and NATO. We need them both. NATO by linking Europe across the Atlantic has added to our strength when, at times, Europe came close to losing its nerve on defence. Big political questions sometimes have to be consistently championed and fought for. It is no secret that I argued semi-publicly, even as the EU negotiator, for NATO to be used in Bosnia to enforce a settlement from July 1992 until NATO was eventually used, after Srebrenica, to enforce a settlement in August/September 1995.<sup>2</sup> I supported NATO’s involvement in 1999 over Kosovo and believe NATO and the EU must both stay involved in Kosovo and in the Balkan states for more years yet.

The EU will not serve our ideals if we are only ever prepared to exercise soft power. We need the strength of NATO’s proven command structure and not the illusion of double counting and claiming we have European defence forces across NATO and the EU as well as contributing to the UN. Those forces are all drawn from the same national source. To prefer to operate militarily alone in Europe as EU citizens and to shun the US and Canada is a folly. Disillusionment over Iraq may tempt some down that path today but they do so at their peril for tomorrow. In 1917-1918, in 1942-1945, in 1947 and 1963 over Berlin Europe needed the power of the US.

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<sup>2</sup> David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1995)

### 3. EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

Poland's history tells you that foreign and security policy presents tough choices. I believe today that the UK and Poland should work together very closely on EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. I may be proved wrong but I sense that there are few countries in the EU which have the same commitment to the basic essentials for a credible CFSP.

Your democratic governments of different political persuasion have already established a record within the EU of being ready to choose and to fight for policies they feel in the national interest. Fervour for integration at any price allows some countries, particularly Belgium and Luxembourg, to fall for make believe. To think that an EU appearing united on foreign policy is better than one ready to live with genuine differences is, however, a sizeable danger for our own citizens and for the world. The integrationists will go on pressing for a European Union position on all aspects of CFSP. The reality is that most people who are involved in foreign policy in Poland, I suspect, well know this will become the lowest common denominator. A weak policy that pretends to speak for all is, in the eyes of the integrationists, better than a failure to agree.

It is paramount that we maintain the pillared approach of the Maastricht Treaty which defines CFSP as intergovernmental and resist "pillar collapse" which seeks to erode the separation between supranational and intergovernmental in the present Treaty.

It is also paramount that we maintain NATO as the principal vehicle of common defence for those EU members who also choose to be members of NATO, and understand the exercise of hard power. For that reason vigilance is necessary to ensure nothing is done to undermine NATO as the EU develops ESDP in the exercising of soft power.

It is not an accident that Poland and the UK have our soldiers fighting in exposed positions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This commitment stems from both countries' acceptance that foreign and security policy is more than just rhetoric and passing resolutions. It needs from time to time a readiness to use force, to accept casualties.

There was a time when NATO was not prepared to move away from European territory, not willing to send its troops "out of area". It is an amazing transformation that NATO today has committed itself to Afghanistan, but success cannot be guaranteed. This is a very difficult country in which to fight. I hope that it will not be long before Germany and other NATO countries lift their restrictions on where their troops can fight in Afghanistan. ISAF command and control now covering the whole of Afghanistan needs all NATO countries contributing as and when they are needed.

It was to the credit of the Dutch Government that after careful thought and consultation with their public they were ready to increase their NATO role in the areas of Afghanistan that present the greatest risk. This is a country solidly committed to the exercise of hard power through NATO but not yet to a coherent CFSP. I hope that their government, having misjudged public opinion on the Constitutional Treaty, will not lightly abandon the use, once again, of a referenda to ratify any further constitutional changes. There cannot be a *single* foreign and security policy in our EU, one 'single telephone number', qualified majority voting. Sensible EU countries must cut through the pretence and define a CFSP for the real world.

Let us reflect – even if our Heads of Government will not – on how EU constitutional change impacts on these big issues.

The defeat of the Constitutional Treaty in Holland – traditionally one of the most integrationist of EU nations – was a great shock for the EU. In France too Chirac failed by a large margin to carry support for the Constitutional Treaty. A warning

note had, however, already been sounded in 1992 when Mitterrand only won by the narrowest of margins a referendum on replacing the franc with the euro. The so-called period of reflection from EU Heads of Government on further constitutional change was, we now see, a public relations device forced on EU political leaders by the French and Dutch people. Not only did very few reflect, some appear to resent having to acknowledge the legitimacy of referenda in other Member States, particularly those that turn up the wrong result from their own viewpoint. In the words of the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, on constitutional change, "If it's a Yes, we will say 'on we go', and if it's a No we will say 'we continue'.<sup>3</sup>

The idea that a new Constitution or even a simplified Treaty is necessary to allow enlargement is not true. The desire to bring back the Constitution is driven not by concerns over enlargement – which is opposed by many of the politicians most in favour of a new treaty – but by an ideology that sees further integration as the answer to all of Europe's problems.

The integrationists never stop demanding Treaty amendments. The EU has been having so many IGCs that they are in virtually permanent session.

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<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 26 May 2005

## Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs)

Since the inception of the European Union

<b>Opening IGC</b>	<b>Signature Treaty</b>	<b>Treaty</b>	<b>Approx duration</b>
09/05/1950*	18/04/1951	ECSC Treaty	11 months
01/06/1955	25/03/1957	Treaties of Rome (EEC & Euratom)	22 months
23/09/1963	08/04/1965	Treaty merging the institutions	18.5 months
22/04/1970	22/04/1970	Treaty amend. cert. budg. provisions	1 day
22/07/1975	22/07/1975	Treaty amend. cert. fin. provisions	1 day
22/07/1985	17&28/02/1986	Single European Act	7 months
04/12/1990	07/02/1992	Treaty of Maastricht	14 months
29/03/1996	02/10/1997	Treaty of Amsterdam	18 months
14/02/2000	26/02/2001	Treaty of Nice	12.5 months
30/09/2003	29/10/2004	Treaty establishing a constitution	11 months

\* Schuman declaraton taken as starting point

\*\* 2 IGCs: Economic and Monetary Union and Political Union

For the last 20 years institutional reform has dominated the public perception of what the EU is about. The public have institutional indigestion! Examining one's own naval is never a recipe for success. No wonder people are disillusioned in many countries, turn out in small numbers for EU Parliamentary elections and show in opinion poll after opinion poll little enthusiasm for further constitutional change. It is time that those governments who do not want continuous changes in

the Treaty refuse to accept another open-ended EU intergovernmental conference [ICG] in June at the European Council.

We now know the depth of cynicism that lies behind Chancellor Merkel's approach from the letter she sent to Heads of Government. She wants any mini Treaty to use "different terminology without changing the legal substance". To preserve the content of the rejected constitution by making only the necessary "presentational changes". Giuliano Amato, the Italian Interior Minister and Vice-Chairman of the European Convention which drafted the Constitution, has argued that EU leaders should "change the name, but not the substance" of the EU Constitution in the new text. He joked that the "good thing about not calling it a Constitution is that no-one can ask for a referendum on it!"<sup>4</sup>

Do EU leaders really believe that simply by changing the name of Sarkozy's proposed mini treaty they can "fool" the voters? They want the major features of the Constitutional Treaty to remain in the mini treaty.

A new President for the European Council who is not a serving Head of Government, is by any standard a significant Treaty amendment, not just a tidying up amendment. Making the High Representative for CFSP also a Vice President of the Commission is more than a minor adjustment and a significant Treaty amendment. As is changing the weighting of Member State voting. These all have far reaching implications for further integration. So does any new voting arrangements which are particularly and understandably sensitive here in Poland. So does depriving all Member States from having one of their nationals as a Commissioner.

#### An appointed President of the European Council

The integrationists always disliked the creation of the European Council. They initially did not want to break the link of an elected Head of Government serving as

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<sup>4</sup> Speech at the London School of Economics, 21 February 2007

President of the Council. Then they changed their position. They began to see that an official who had no independent national democratic base was likely to be captured by the relentless pressure from Brussels to push for ever further integration. They began to see this as “the single telephone number”, the person who would meet the President of the US, who would speak for the whole EU. Some, initially hostile to the idea, came round to it believing that eventually the President of the European Council could be double-hatted with the President of the Commission. That legal interpretation of the proposed Treaty language was specifically endorsed by the Dutch government.<sup>5</sup> The British government tried hard to exclude such an interpretation but the wording still risks being interpreted by the EU’s Court of Justice on the side of the integrationists.

The advocates of this change say the new President of the European Council will simply serve the interests and views of all the Heads of Government. The weak ones may, the strong ones will define their own path. Inevitably there has been tension between Heads of Government and the President of the Commission over the years but that tension is legitimized by the intergovernmental and supranational provisions in the Treaties. The first tensions a new post of President of the Council will create is when they want to assert their authority over the High Representative. The new post will be seen by the incumbent and powerful integrationists as the Union President. That is implicit in the proposed name change for the Special Representative to that of Union Foreign Minister. The main advocate of this post, Tony Blair, initially saw it as a post he might fill. According to the *Financial Times*, he still apparently sees this as possibly his future in 2009 when he expects a mini Treaty to come into operation.<sup>6</sup> But Tony Blair’s personalized style of “sofa government”, diminishing the role of the Cabinet, neglect of Parliament and belief in appointing single people – Czars – to preside over public bodies has been tested and found wanting in the UK. The EU democratic basis is weak enough without compounding it further by bringing in personalization of power.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.eu2007.de/en/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> *Financial Times*, 4 May 2007.

### A Union Foreign Minister

Another major institutional reform proposed in the Constitutional Treaty involves the High Representative becoming the Union Foreign Minister, already mentioned. This name change is pure integration. It was no accident that the Treaties have always called members of the European Commission, Commissioners *not* Ministers. Previous Heads of Government know that by tradition and practice, the name Minister is ascribed to someone who serves in a nation's own government. It is both a pretence and a pretension to call the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy a Minister when we all recognise this cannot be their function nor can it be an accurate title. No doubt in search of a cosmetic adjustment the British will be allowed a titular victory and this title will be dropped. But the thinking behind the title will remain when it comes to the next institutional reform, double-hatting the High Representative and Commissioner for External Relations.

### Double-hatting the High Representative and the External Commissioner

There is a certain tidiness behind the proposal for a "bureaucratic redesign of the relationship between the Commission and the Council"<sup>7</sup>. It is claimed that it will tie in the financial resources of the Commission behind the foreign policy of the Council. But there is an old truism "that it is difficult for one person to serve two masters". Making the High Representative also Vice President of the Commission responsible for External Affairs does not of itself eradicate the tension which will from time to time inevitably arise between the two quite separate institutions – the supranational Commission, responsible for International Trade and Development, and the intergovernmental European Council, responsible for Foreign and Security Policy.

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "What Can we learn from the collapse of the European Constitutional Project", *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 47 Jg 2006 HEFT 2, S. 237.

I have great admiration for Javier Solana and the way he has established the role of High Representative. We, in the EU, have been fortunate to have him and his previous experience as Secretary General of NATO has been invaluable. We need to let him and his successor continue to evolve this role and as Secretary General of the European Council he can and has legitimately built up his influence.

There is no obvious foreign policy need for a Commissioner for External Affairs but it has developed into a major representational role for the whole Commission internationally. That role does not stand easily with Solana's personal negotiating role as High Representative. We have seen in Macedonia and Montenegro, how very valuable Solana was. We are seeing his negotiating role develop in relation to Iran's nuclear weapon programme. The US would be most unlikely to accept this for anyone other than the High Representative. In representing the EU on the Quartet for the Israeli-Palestine negotiations it is necessary for Solana to attend when the US and Russian Foreign Minister and the UN Secretary General attend. A High Representative who tries to reflect the Council and the Commission on some issues will end up pleasing neither. For many years to come, judging by four major issues in front of us – Kosovo, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan – the High Representative will have their work cut out reconciling genuine differences amongst Member States over these, let alone Commissioners. In truth they will not always be reconcilable. I wonder increasingly, therefore, whether it is wise to bring together into one post these two different jobs. Also if there are differences to be resolved between the Commission and the Council I think it will be easier for a serving Head of Government as President of the Council to resolve them with the President of the Commission than any appointee. Also easier if an elected Foreign Minister, drawn from the trio or quartet countries, chair the General Affairs and External Relations Council and not the High Representative whose role could be part of a dispute between Member States.

### Fifteen Commissioners

Let us now reflect on the proposed reduction of Commissioners from the present 27 to 15. Since the Dutch and French referenda doubts about this proposal have grown. At a time of popular disillusionment how do you convince people, clearly worried that the EU is not democratically accountable, that it makes sense to deprive twelve existing countries, and later more countries, of having their own Commissioner? The democratic arguments for every nation within the EU having one of their own nationals as a Commissioner are compelling. The Commission, under the Treaties, has the right to initiate legislation and it is intimately involved with the European Parliament and the European Council with the legislative process. When EU legislation covers so many aspects these days of the lives of Member State citizens, any country, however small, should not be excluded from having a voice in that process. Again, the integrationists have long wanted to get rid of the very idea of a national from every country on the Commission. They believe in reducing all identification with the nation state. They cloak this argument on grounds of a large Commission being inefficient. Yet many Cabinets in Member States contain more than 20 members and the system of Vice Presidents allows for some grouping of Commission responsibilities. I do not want Commissioners bound to support their home government's wishes, but I do want a representative Commission and as at present an informal arrangement where a Commissioner at least presents inside the Commission the views of their home state even while making it clear, if they wish, that they do not agree with the position.

Is there an alternative to a mini Treaty? Yes.

Sensible voluntary grouping of countries to form a Presidency can create a new way of chairing the European Council without the need for another IGC. Virtually everybody accepts that the rotation of the Presidency of the European Council between Member States every 6 months is far too frequent and that a period of 18-24 months would be both more efficient and conceptually more enriching. The

problem exists yet the solution proposed in the Constitutional Treaty was a typically bureaucratic or managerial solution. In the period of reflection I believe more and more citizens have begun to question abandoning the concept of an elected Head of Government being President of the Council. Angela Merkel has shown how Germany, during its Presidency, can use its position of influence to lead the EU. Even if I personally do not agree with her attachment to reviving all that she can of the Constitutional Treaty I can see merit in grappling with the issues, after all a majority of Member States have already ratified the Treaty. There is a problem out there which has to be settled one way or the other.

Yet the more I reflect, the more it seems to me a certain recipe for conflict to create a new President of the European Council for two potential terms of 2.5 years each. The EU already has the President of the Commission and a growing role for the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy who is also Secretary General of the European Council. If someone else is brought in from outside the European Council and is not a Head of Government, they will want to make their name, they will want to develop their own agenda. A power struggle is inevitable. Whereas the President of the Council coming from one of the EU's Head of Government is a proven mechanism. It can easily be retained within a grouping of countries that provide the overall Presidency for periods of eighteen months or two years.

Today a mechanism already exists which, with some minor adaptations, could settle who is the President of the Council for 18 or 24 month periods. The first step has already been taken, when in September 2006 the Council of the European Union laid down the following in its amended Rules of Procedure: "Every 18 months, the three Presidencies due to hold office shall prepare, in close cooperation with the Commission, and after appropriate consultations, a draft programme of Council activities for that period."

Germany together with Portugal and Slovenia, submitted a joint programme for their 18 month period, drawn up in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, to the

General Affairs Council in December 2006. The aim of this cooperation was to enhance the continuity of the Council's work and to make the initiatives dealt with in the Council more sustainable.

In June an opportunity exists to build on this concept. A trio and, where appropriate, a quartet grouping could agree that only one country would be President of the Council for eighteen months or two years respectively. It would mean Portugal and Slovenia agreeing to give up their entitlement to be for six months President of the Council and allow Germany to continue to chair the European Council for a further 12 months. Another trio grouping which would include France, the Czech Republic and Sweden could then take over in July 2008 for a grouped Presidency and it be agreed that France should be the President of the Council for eighteen months.

A Council Decision of 1 January 2007 set out the order in which the Member States shall hold the Presidency of the Council from 1 January 2007 as follows and a natural grouping of three or four states holding the Presidency:

<u>Germany</u>	January-June	2007
Portugal	July-December	2007
Slovenia	January-June	2008
<u>France</u>	July-December	2008
Czech Republic	January-June	2009
Sweden	July-December	2009
<u>Spain</u>	January-June	2010
Belgium	July-December	2010
Hungary	January-June	2011
<u>Poland</u>	July-December	2011

Denmark	January-June	2012
Cyprus	July-December	2012
Ireland	January-June	2013
Lithuania	July-December	2013
Greece	January-June	2014
<u>Italy</u>	July-December	2014
Latvia	January-June	2015
Luxembourg	July-December	2015
<u>Netherlands</u>	January-June	2016
Slovakia	July-December	2016
Malta	January-June	2017
<u>United Kingdom</u>	July-December	2017
Estonia	January-June	2018
Bulgaria	July-December	2018
Austria	January-June	2019
<u>Romania</u>	July-December	2019
Finland	January-June	2020

The Head of Government from the underlined country in each trio or quartet could, by agreement, be the President of the European Council for the eighteen month or two year period of the trio/quartet programme. Poland would, under this arrangement, be President of the Council from July 2011 to December 2012. The trio or quartet partners could agree amongst themselves the pattern of EU meetings in each other's countries, spreading them across the 18 month/two year period. Also, the President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) could be agreed to be held by the second largest country within the grouping instead of as proposed in the Constitutional Treaty another appointed person, the High Representative. It would be for the grouping to allocate the

Presidencies of all the other Councils amongst themselves as is proposed in the Constitutional Treaty. In these ways the existing 6-month rotation period, which all agree is much too short for any European Presidency, would be ended voluntarily without needing any Treaty amendment. A considerable benefit would be that the high EU profile could be maintained by all the countries in the grouping for an 18 month/two year Presidency rather than for one country every six months. Also those countries would have a special involvement in all aspects of the Presidency including a special input to the Head of Government who was President of the Council and the Foreign Minister, President of the GAERC.

There is some advantage in waiting for a few cycles of such a grouping process to see how well it works before formalizing the arrangement if countries wish by Treaty amendment. If the EU wished it could be dealt with when Treaty amendments are made for the next enlargement, which will hopefully extend to Croatia and a firm commitment to the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia.

### Referenda and Constitutional Change

I am of the firm view that the introduction of referenda for the British people to ratify constitutional change, first introduced for Northern Ireland in 1972, then in 1975 to allow for the 'wholehearted support' of Britain's membership, which was still in dispute, has strengthened democracy in the UK. When in 1980 the Labour Party committed itself to taking Britain out of the EC without the referenda they had introduced, it was seen by the British people as illegitimate and Labour lost the next three elections. When through public opinion and the threat of the Referendum Party, the Conservative Government conceded a referendum on the euro before the 1997 General Election the Labour Party in Opposition also accepted the democratic case. Today, no-one doubts that only the existence of the pledge to conduct a euro referendum stopped the UK changing its currency in the early years of Tony Blair's Prime Ministership. The overwhelming economic view in the UK is that we were wise to stay out. As for you in Poland I recognise the eurozone entry by 2009/2010 may well suit your economy.

It was public opinion that forced Tony Blair to pledge a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in 2004 before the 2005 General Election when for months he had been telling us that the Treaty did not merit a referendum. I hope the British people will prevent any future British Prime Minister trying to avoid a referendum. Prime Minister Blair said there would be a referendum regardless of the Dutch and French referenda. Then he cancelled that commitment saying there was no need as the Dutch and French had spoken for us. But he never changed the government's commitment to a referendum for the future on these constitutional issues in the 2005 General Election. Gordon Brown as Prime Minister, this side of the next election, has a moral commitment to honour the Labour government's past commitment and hold a referendum on any mini Treaty. He will pay a heavy price politically if, under pressure from Tony Blair, he abandons that commitment.

I hope your Polish Government will call a referendum on this mini constitutional Treaty if it is ever agreed in the European Council.

Consensus in the EU requires democratic support. How each Member State builds such support is up to them. I hope that on reflection more, not less, Member States will choose to call a referendum on any mini Constitutional Treaty. It would be far preferable, however, if a number of countries, this June, simply said no to any further constitutional change. Ever since the Laeken Declaration we have been obsessed with constitutional change. We have had more time, money and energy spent on endless constitutional talk than on delivering what the EU is supposed to do. The true business of the EU has not been improved by this introspection.

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