

Introductory Remarks by Coen Teulings, Chairman of Merifin Capital, Hosting a Conference Luncheon with Speaker H.E. Rockwell A. Schnabel, United States Ambassador to the European Union, at The AECA in Brussels, Belgium, on 1 July 2003

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

When America decided to go after Saddam Hussein, a modern day Hitler in Iraq, public opinion turned – would you believe it ? – against America. Obviously it is easy to be against war – nobody likes war – but it seems to have largely escaped attention, that this is a war against terrorism. If 4000 dead people on that infamous day in September 2001, in the heart of America, is not a declaration of war, please tell me what is? So America had to respond and they did. It is very little understood in Europe that since that day America is at war - against terrorism.

A war against individual terrorists seems difficult, but state terrorism is a different matter. This can and should be addressed preferably by prevention if we do not wish to wake up to another nightmare. The Allied Forces' military achievements meanwhile have been brilliant and the message has not been lost on countries in the Middle East and elsewhere. The notion that the Allies bark but do not have the guts to bite is gone. That helps.

Incidentally regime change can be good for you. Just ask a Chilean. Chile today is the most successful country in all of Central and South America. Regime change in Chile was not orchestrated by the Americans but by the Chileans themselves. This unfortunately has not been possible in Iraq.

A superpower is respected when it acts as a superpower. America, whether they like it or not, is in fact the policeman of the world and policemen are not liked. They are damned if they do and damned if they don't. But Americans at least do something whereas Europeans often conduct the world as a debating club and in the end do very little. A previous American Ambassador here, had welcomed the Euro as a done deal when the Europeans were still pondering whether they wanted it. And America looks upon Turkey already as a member of the European Union whereas the Europeans most reluctantly may just allow them in "when Turkey is ready". Well, ladies and gentlemen, no one is ever "ready", not even existing members.

Politicians often are busy playing yesterday's empire and do not fail to confuse public opinion. Politicians in Europe seem rather obsessed by trying to keep up with the Jameses : what America has, we must have too, so that Europe can compete as a superpower preferably without spending any money. This trans-Atlantic divide is most unwise and unnecessary. Everyone who is active on both sides of the Atlantic knows that we really live in one world and operate in one market and increasingly so. Europe and America share so much in values, in history, in roots as well as economic power, that cooperation between Europe and America makes a lot of sense for many reasons. America and Europe can be complementary to each other and so be stronger together.

An inspiring example of such cooperation are two outstanding people : US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick and European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy.

They represent widely different interests and do not shy away from confrontation but both of them in a personal “entente cordiale” (very important) aspire to bring down barriers to free trade (in a true definition rather than a narrow sometimes American definition : free trade for American goods).

Recent turmoil in the transatlantic relationship has also had a benefit in that it demonstrated how diverse Europe really is. This diversity should be recognised and encouraged. I do not think we would want another Napoleon. After all we got Waterloo here in Brussels already. The Scandinavians for instance, with their pragmatic and down to earth approach (and great research), already have a significant impact on the European Union, far more than the size of their population would suggest. Eastern Europe too, may well bring a refreshing contribution and – despite of all their problems – they should certainly not miss an opportunity to be active rather than keep quiet. Those countries are very European but also rather Americanised. US Aid and other agencies have been active in Eastern Europe for many years supporting an entrepreneurial and a free market environment. Millions of Americans have emigrated from those countries and kept strong ties, and quite a number are coming back, for some time or for good. Furthermore their instant sense of insecurity makes Eastern Europe look not only to Europe but certainly also to the Land of Freedom and Opportunity. The American dream is alive and well in Eastern Europe. Nato is not dead but should have a new purpose in providing a lake of stability among its members and elsewhere.

A fundamental problem in the world however is poverty. Poverty breeds instability and feeds terrorism. Wealth therefore has to be brought to the poor. Markets should open up for developing countries which have to grow sustainable economies for the benefit of many, not just a few. Yet the impression exists among developing countries that the World Trade Organisation is rather used as an excuse for the rich, to expand their own business at the expense of the poor who cannot follow. We should not wait for politicians. It is up to responsible citizens to speak out and guide the politicians and lead society. If we together cannot get a handle on poverty, the world will remain unstable.

I shall not now miss an opportunity to keep quiet myself and listen to the Ambassador, not however without concluding that I am delighted to host this AECA Conference- Luncheon for a most distinguished American, a fellow Dutchman and an old friend, Ambassador Rock Schnabel.

Thank you.