

THE FEDERAL TRUST
Enlightening the Debate on Good Governance

Our Europe

Jacques Chirac
Speech given at the
Bundestag, 27 June 2000

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Introduction

Like mercy, the quality of debate should not be strained. It should proceed evenly, rationally, with give and take on all sides, points made and conceded, progressing coherently but inexorably towards its reasonable conclusion, whatever and whenever that may be. But, regrettably, real life is not like that, and the debate about the future of Europe belongs to real life. That debate is now well and truly underway, and it is proceeding at a pace.

For some observers the debate began years ago and has been the subtext of every treaty revision since the 1950s. Indeed, some would argue the original Treaties were themselves milestones in this great debate, and the Treaty of Nice, due to be concluded in December, will be just another marker along this road.

But a new impulse was given to the contemporary European debate by Joschka Fischer's speech at the Humboldt University in May (see European Essay No. 8) and by the range and vehemence of reactions to it, especially in France and Germany. Now we have the response of the President of France, also delivered in Berlin, in the Reichstag, during his recent state visit in June.

It comes as no surprise that the President lays great stress on Franco-German cooperation, which is in his

words one of the 'most powerful driving forces' of the European Union. As the current Intergovernmental Conference draws to a close under French presidency later this year, the President promises to reach 'the absolutely vital reform of our common institutions' with 'the support of our German partners'.

But it is the longer term vision of the President which stirs opinion in this 'existential' debate. The President spelt out his assumptions clearly. First, enlargement is a positive development. Second, there is to be no dilution of the degree of integration achieved in the Union so far. Third, progress towards greater integration depends on a growing popular identity of people as European. And fourth, nations will remain central reference points even as the states pool aspects of their sovereignty for mutual advantage in the Union.

His proposals go further, arousing mixed reactions among those steeped in the European debate. Greater democracy is needed, he argues, involving both the European parliament and national parliaments. A clear division of responsibilities and competencies is required between Brussels and the member states, making subsidiarity a reality. The Union must not be held to ransom by some states not yet willing to integrate as far as others. And finally the IGC must agree an 'effective and legitimate decision-making mechanism' with majority voting reflecting the relative weights of the Member States.

Success at the IGC for President Chirac is not just a 'bare minimum' or a 'cut-price agreement' at Nice. But Nice will be the start of what he calls the 'great transition period' at the end of which the EU's

institutions and borders will have to have been stabilised.

As a first stage he envisages a 'pioneer group' of member states, using the enhanced cooperation procedure to be defined at Nice, forging closer ties. He pinpoints coordinating economic policies, strengthening defence and security policy and fighting organised crime as three areas where this inner core of states could get to work immediately the Treaty of Nice is agreed. To support them he wants a small secretariat - but no new Treaty which, he fears, could introduce division in the Union between those in the inner core and those not yet ready for more.

Then he outlines a larger agenda for the years while the Union enlarges. First, a clarification of the Treaties, clearly defining central and national responsibilities, together with a review of Europe's 'ultimate geographical limits', the nature of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and also greater effectiveness and democratic control of the Union. The President concludes that at the end of this discussion: 'which will very probably take some time' - governments and the people of Europe will give their verdict on what will amount to the first 'European Constitution'.

It is a bold vision and a big agenda, and those open to federal ideas will welcome much of it. Even the President's insistence on the nation states as points of reference within a future European identity can sit comfortably alongside his insistence on the need for a clear - and clearly federal - division of responsibilities between the states and the centre. What note of caution can be heard in political and media reaction to date

has referred mainly to the proposals for a 'pioneer group' and to the difficulty of applying 'enhanced cooperation' in a way that is not divisive within the Union. Yet this, too, may prove more positive in the long run if it allows the Union to enlarge and without excessive delay without imposing impractical burdens of even closer integration on the accession states.

The welcome extended to so many of these ideas would only turn to disappointment if the debate became onesided, stressing inordinately the intergovernmental aspects of the vision at the expense of the federal elements in this speech. President Chirac's speech deserves close attention, and will inform the debate over coming months, both on the continent and in Britain. It raises pertinent questions to which British as well as other continental leaders need to find constructive replies.

Martyn Bond

Director, Federal Trust

July 2000

Our Europe

**Speech by M. Jacques Chirac, President of France,
to the Bundestag, 27 June 2000**

Thank you for this momentous occasion which neither I nor my compatriots will forget. Thank you for inviting me to address Germany's Parliament, here, in this palace which bears the scars of your country's suffering but which, today radiant with light, is the image of modern Germany.

For half a century, a gaping wound at the heart of divided Berlin, in ruins, the Reichstag, never rebuilt, remained as the symbol of the pain and expectation of a whole people. As the symbol of a Europe torn apart. And, of course, when Germany, and subsequently our continent, was once again reunited, German democracy was reestablished here, picking up the threads of history and finally closing the tragic parenthesis.

As you said, I am one of those who always hoped and always awaited the moment when Germany would regain its unity and its capital. So you can understand my emotion at being the first foreign head of State to address, from this podium, the whole of Germany! Germany, our neighbour, our adversary yesterday, our

companion today! United Germany! Germany back home!

Today, I think of all those who made possible the realisation of this dream of generations of Germans. Of those men of conviction and vision who helped their people believe in their future. Of those who gave the Federal Republic, in the city on the banks of the Rhine which gave it a home, its institutions and values. Of those who raised the country from its ruins, rebuilt and gave the world, thanks to their boundless skills, efforts and infinite sacrifices, first-hand evidence of an extraordinary success. Of those who have restored Germany to its place in the front rank of the world's nations.

But I'm thinking first and foremost of the statesmen who, in your country as in ours, set in train the historic reconciliation between Germany and France. What audacity and courage they needed, in the immediate aftermath of the war, to speak to each other the language of trust and cooperation. The miracle is that, at each essential stage, our two countries found the men to consolidate the rapprochement and go ever further.

At the outset, there were Konrad Adenauer and General de Gaulle who had the vision to keep their appointment with history and open up, I would even say, force open the road which we are travelling together.

I'm thinking of Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou.

I'm thinking too of Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who strengthened Franco-German solidarity and enabled Europe to go further.

Finally, I want here to pay tribute to Helmut Kohl and tell him that the immense work he accomplished with François Mitterrand in strengthening Europe's cohesion and identity still further remains engraved on the memory of the French and Europeans.

It will soon be forty years since General de Gaulle, visiting the Federal Republic of Germany, talked about the Franco-German friendship and declared: 'It is so that we may work together that we embarked on our rapprochement, then our Union - two of the most striking events history has ever seen. The union, so that there may exist on the old continent a strong structure whose power, prosperity and authority will equal those of the United States. The union, too, so that, when the time comes, the whole of Europe can ensure its stability, peace, development. The union, finally and perhaps above all, because of the immense task of human progress which the world has to carry out and in which the combination of Europe's values, in the first place, ours, can and must play the major role.'

Ladies and gentlemen, forty years have passed. To a large extent realised, the ambition remains.

Prosperity first of all. The European Union is today the world's leading economic and trading power, it's a research and innovation giant. Franco-German cooperation, emulation, synergy have been one of its most powerful driving forces. Today, at a time when we're seeing the formation of groups capable of outperforming their international competitors, the Germans and French are looking quite naturally to each other.

We passed a historic milestone with the adoption of the euro, a project also supported from the outset by the Franco-German tandem and which is a success. With the euro, we have set the seal on the unification of the large European market and given ourselves a tremendously powerful catalyst for trade. We are firmly rooting in our fellow citizens' minds the sense of belonging to a single economic - and over and above that a political and human - entity. The Europeans now have their currency.

Secondly, stability, peace and development for the whole continent. The key evidence of the success of the European enterprise has very probably been this tremendous force of attraction exerted on those Europeans who remained for so long separated from us. The brilliant success of Europe made daily more absurd and unbearable the maintenance at its gates of totalitarian regimes and the division of our continent, and first of all of Germany. The whole of Europe remembers those magical hours when, braving the wall of shame, East and West Berliners joined together, sending out the signal of freedom to the oppressed peoples.

Finally, Europe, campaigning for and engineering progress in the world. What has united Germany and France and their partners is, of course, their peoples' deep aspiration for peace. But it's also, and perhaps primarily, a certain idea of man which has given the European enterprise its vision of freedom, dignity, tolerance and democracy. That's why belonging to the Union means wholeheartedly adhering to the ideas and values underpinning it.

Beyond its borders, the European Union is making its voice heard. It is arguing for a fairer international organisation of trade, mindful of the need to improve individuals' well-being and paying due regard to the world's cultural diversity. It is arguing for genuine solidarity between rich and poor countries and setting an example through an active development aid policy. It is arguing for peace and an end to barbarism, and is working to that end.

I'm thinking of course of our joint commitment in Bosnia and Kosovo which clearly reflects the deep significance, for you like us, of our European enterprise, this obligation to act ethically which brings us together and, in our view, while honouring Europe's alliances, justifies it now giving itself the capabilities to pursue its own foreign and security policy.

Here, in the Bundestag, I want to pay tribute to the historic decision of the Germans who, for the first time for over half a century, agreed to send troops to a foreign theatre of operations. They did so out of respect for the dignity of every individual. France wishes to see Germany's commitment, its rank as a major world power, its international influence, recognised by a permanent member's seat on the United Nations Security Council!

Ladies and Gentlemen, in three days, France will be taking over the presidency of the European Union. It will have the responsibility of wrapping up decisions which bind us for the future. I am thinking of course of the first of these: the absolutely vital reform of our common institutions which we shall steer with, I know, the support of our German partners.

It will have to take Europe forward in many important areas. That of European defence. We are hoping to make Europe go further, make headway commensurate with the considerable progress achieved in the space of a few months, particularly under the German presidency.

We want Europe also to be closer to its citizens. Everyone must be able to see for themselves the benefits of our Union in their everyday lives. Today, admittedly, many Europeans deem it a bit abstract, too far removed from their real concerns: growth, jobs and training, justice and security, the battles against drug trafficking and against illegal immigration networks, the environment and health, others too. In all these areas, the next six months must allow us to push forward.

But going beyond these immediate tasks, the responsibility incumbent on us founder members is continually to pose the question of what Europe means, the direction in which it should move and its future, and never to allow our determination to weaken. I salute the profoundly European spirit which prevailed here, very recently, at the relaunch of a debate whose issues are, in the true sense of the term, existential. A debate which is engaging our nations and our peoples, their history and their identity and concerns the very organisation of our societies, the Europeans' will and ability to go further in the Union. It's no trifling matter! There are moments when you have to be able to take risks. Go off the beaten track. That's the price we'll have to pay to pursue the great Community adventure!

I would like, here in Berlin, to scout out the way, tell you what I firmly believe, offer you some ideas for the way forward.

First of all, I believe that the European Union's enlargement is a great ambition, one which is both legitimate and necessary. It is under way. It will be difficult, for both the candidate countries and member States. But tomorrow we shall be thirty or more represented in Brussels, in Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

That's an achievement! For peace and democracy, entrenched on our continent and making our joint venture wholly meaningful. For the candidate countries, buttressed in their fight for freedom by the hope of joining us. For the Union itself which, as a result, will become stronger, politically and economically.

But, for all that, the obligation is clear. The enlargement won't go ahead regardless. We shall not allow the unravelling of the European enterprise to which you and we, with our partners, have devoted so much determination and energy for almost half a century. And which, in return has brought us so much, not just peace, but also economic success and thus social progress. Which has proved, for us all, tremendously empowering. Our Union won't be quite the same tomorrow. But it won't be diluted, nor will it take a backward step. It will be our responsibility to ensure this.

I believe too that the pace of European construction can't be decreed. It is to a large extent dictated by the increase in the strength of the feeling, among our peoples, of identity and of belonging to Europe, of their wish to live together in a mutually supportive community. And I am confident since this feeling is growing stronger and stronger, especially among the young.

Finally, I believe it is necessary to provide an informed background to the debate on the nature of the Union. It's misrepresenting the truth to say that, on one side, there are those who are defending national sovereignty and, on the other, those who are selling it off. Neither you nor we are envisaging the creation of a super European State which would supplant our national States and mark the end of their existence as players in international life.

Our nations are the source of our identities and our roots. The diversity of their political, cultural and linguistic traditions is one of our Union's strengths. For the peoples who come after us, the nations will remain the first reference points.

Envisaging their extinction would be as absurd as denying that they have already chosen to exercise jointly part of their sovereignty and that they will continue to do so, since that is in their interest. Yes, the European Central Bank, the Luxembourg Court of Justice and qualified majority voting are elements of a common sovereignty. It is by accepting these areas of common sovereignty that we shall acquire new power and greater influence. So, please, let's stop anathemising and over-simplifying and at last agree that the Union's institutions are, and will remain original and specific!

But let's recognise too that they can be improved and that the forthcoming major enlargement has to be the opportunity for us to think more deeply about our institutions, go beyond the issues dealt with by the Intergovernmental Conference. With this in mind, I would like us to be able to agree on some principles.

First of all, the need to make the European Union more democratic. The task of building Europe has, to too large an extent, been solely that of leaders and elite. It is time our peoples once more became the sovereigns of Europe. Democracy in Europe must be more dynamic, particularly through the European parliament and the national parliaments.

Then, to clarify, but without setting it in stone, the division of responsibilities between the different levels of the European system. Say who does what in Europe, bearing in mind the need for the answers to be provided at the best level, the one closest to the problems. In short, at last apply the principle of subsidiarity.

We must also ensure that, in the enlarged Europe, the capacity for forward momentum remains. There must constantly be the possibility of opening up new avenues. For this, and as we have done in the past, the countries which want to integrate further, on a voluntary basis and on specific projects, must be able to do so without being held up by those who, and it is their right, don't wish to go so fast.

Finally, there's the Europe as a world power that we so want to see - this Europe, one which is a strong player on the international stage, has to have strong institutions and an effective and legitimate decision-making mechanism, i.e. one in which majority voting is the rule and which reflects the relative weights of the member States.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are the main guidelines which, I believe, must govern the process of remoulding the EU's institutions. The face of the future Europe has

still to be shaped. It will depend on the debate and the negotiations. And, of course and above all, on the will of our peoples. But we can already, at this stage, map out the route.

The first, inescapable, step is the success, under French presidency, of the Intergovernmental Conference. Let's not underestimate the importance of this conference. The four essential points on its agenda, including the development of the enhanced cooperation procedure, will enable us to tailor the EU's decision-making mechanisms to its future composition. The success of the IGC is an essential prerequisite for any progress. And neither you nor we could be satisfied by an agreement on the bare minimum, what I would call a cut-price agreement, which would lead the Union to paralysis for the next few years!

After the Intergovernmental Conference, the end of the year will see the opening of what I would describe as the 'great transition' period at the end of which the EU's institutions and borders will have to have been stabilised. During this period, we will have to work on three major projects at one and the same time.

Firstly, of course, the enlargement. It will take a good few years to conclude the accession negotiations and ensure the successful integration of the new member States. Then there's the deepening of the policies, on the initiative of those countries I was talking about just now and which wish to go further or faster. Together with Germany and France, they could form a 'pioneer group'. This group would blaze the trail, by making use of the new enhanced cooperation procedure defined by the IGC and forging, if necessary, cooperation in

spheres not covered by the Treaty, but without ever undermining the Union's coherence and acquis.

This is, of course, how the composition of the 'pioneer group' will emerge. Not on an arbitrary basis, but through the will of the countries which decide to participate in all the spheres of enhanced cooperation. Thus, starting next year, I would like the 'pioneer group' to be able to set to work inter alia on improving the coordination of economic policies, strengthening the defence and security policy and increasing the effectiveness of the fight against organised crime.

Should these States conclude a new Treaty together and give themselves sophisticated institutions? I don't believe so. This, we should realise, would add an additional level to a Europe which already has plenty! And let's avoid setting Europe's divisions in stone when our sole objective is to maintain a capacity for forward momentum. Instead, we should envisage a flexible cooperation mechanism, a secretariat tasked with ensuring the consistency of the positions and policies of the members of this pioneer group, which should, of course, remain open to all those wishing to join it.

Thus, in this transition period, Europe will continue to move forward while the preparations are being made for the reshaping of the institutions.

Indeed, and this is the third project, I propose that, immediately after the Nice Summit, we launch a process which, going beyond the IGC, will enable us to address the other institutional issues facing Europe.

Firstly, to reorganise the treaties to make their presentation more coherent and easier for people to

understand. Then, clearly define the division of responsibilities - you emphasised this and were right to do so - between Europe's various levels. We could also, in the framework of this process, ponder the issue of the Union's ultimate geographical limits, clarify the nature of the Charter of Fundamental Rights which, I hope, we shall have adopted in Nice and, finally, prepare the necessary institutional adjustments, as regards both the executive and the Parliament, to strengthen the effectiveness and democratic control of our Union.

This preparatory discussion will have to be conducted openly, with the participation of governments and citizens, through their representatives in the European Parliament and national Parliaments. The candidate countries will of course have to take part in it. There are several possible ways of organising, ranging from a Committee of Wise Men to an approach modelled on the Convention which is drafting our Charter of Fundamental Rights.

And at the end of these discussions, which will very probably take some time, the governments, then the peoples would be called on to give their verdict on a text which we will then be able to establish as the first 'European Constitution'.

But if the European enterprise is to prosper, it is the Franco-German friendship that we must first seek constantly to deepen.

Our innumerable and so familiar areas of cooperation, the close political dialogue between our institutions at all levels, the fertile interchange between our cultures, the exchanges among young people thanks to our

thousands of twinning arrangements and language courses - all have forged a unique, irreversible and irreplaceable bond.

It is now more than half a century that we have been working together hand in glove. Between us, reconciliation is a fact. It is self-evident. A reality of daily life which is so much a part of our landscape that we no longer perceive its true dimension. And the new generation now in control receives it as their birthright after learning of it in books, without feeling the same emotional charge as formerly. So, let us rediscover our initial inspiration, the fervour of the founding fathers! The burning necessity for our dialogue! Let us provide places where we can come to know one other and venture forth together! And it's something I have been noticing since yesterday, in the streets of Berlin, the many Germans who smilingly give us spontaneous tokens of friendship, a gesture from the heart, something you don't often encounter on official journeys and which I found very touching.

What a lot we have in common, what good reason we have to pay each other more attention! While we each have our own traditions, our history, our own qualities, which doubtless explain the forms of organisation we have chosen for ourselves. While Germany feels comfortable with its federal system, which makes possible the active and lively participation of citizens at all levels of political life. And while, by modernising it, France has succeeded in maintaining a unitary tradition which helps to preserve the cohesion of its national community, the challenges we have to take up today are the same. They are the challenges of economic

growth and competitiveness, changes in our educational system, the defence of jobs, adaptation of our social systems to demographic change, modernisation and establishment of effective policies for health systems, security, the environment, immigration. One would need only to skim through the agendas of your parliaments and ours, or follow the impassioned debates going on in our two countries, to gauge the close kinship of our problems and of our peoples' expectations.

What we still lack, it seems to me, is a place where everyone can easily come together - political and economic leaders, trade union and other associations, representatives of the media and prominent people from the world of culture. Where all the components that make up Germany and France on the move, with their debates, their concerns, their aspirations, could all meet. And I propose that there should be a German-French Conference every year to bring them together. It would be the great rendezvous of our two nations where Germany and France could together embrace the future.

In the past few months, the economic world has made spectacular progress. Our major companies have forged powerful new alliances in the key fields of aerospace, chemicals, energy, insurance and services. Yesterday evening, Chancellor Schröder and I met their leaders.

I believe our priority must be to give even more encouragement to this strong dynamic of integration between our economic potentials, making the Franco-German tandem the engine of a powerful centre of European industry. And I call on our business circles, of course with the support of our two governments, to

create a Foundation where German and French leaders and managers could meet and come to a better understanding - this is perhaps what we are most lacking - of the business culture prevailing in each other's country.

This spirit of partnership is something we must also develop in the intellectual disciplines and the arts. I salute the quality and the importance of the dialogue between our thinkers and our artists. But I am convinced that we can lend that dialogue still greater intensity, showing solidarity at a time when we must together fight the great battle for cultural diversity in the world.

Thanks to your initiative, Chancellor, we now have our Franco-German Cinema Academy, whose first session was held yesterday, in our presence. In the same spirit, we have begun to reflect together on the future of books and the development of the media.

Let us rekindle in our artists and writers the taste for composing and creating in each other's country, and give them the means of doing so, thus resuming the prestigious European tradition of travel and immersion in other cultures. And I propose the creation in Berlin of a place such as already exists in Rome or Madrid, a forum where our creative people, who seek inspiration in this city that is in the full flood of renewal, will find a welcome and conditions propitious to their reflection.

We must cultivate this spirit of dialogue between our peoples by promoting the practical study of our respective languages. As I salute the representatives of the Bundesrat who are present here, I would like to address my particular congratulations to the authorities

of the Länder who have committed themselves to this course with determination and have taken exemplary decisions. For our part, we shall see to it that the German language keeps its status of excellence and its rank among the very foremost living foreign languages taught in our schools.

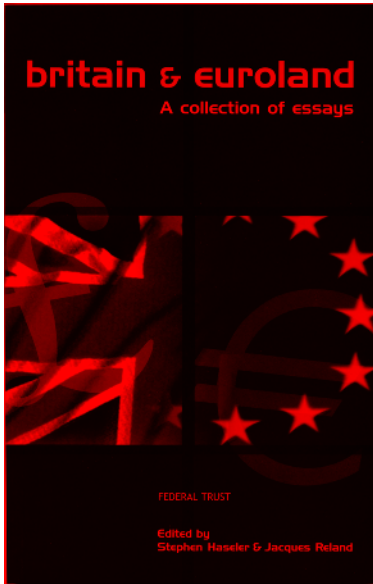
Finally, I propose that in this symbolic year we together make a powerful gesture towards our young people, by inviting 2,000 of our middle and senior school pupils to complete their first year of practical language learning with a study visit to the country whose language they have chosen, to discover the country, the people and their traditions.

What France and Germany have experienced and undergone in history is unlike anything else. Better than any other nation, they grasp the deep meaning of peace and of the European enterprise.

They alone, by forcing the pace of things, could give the signal for a great coming together in Europe. Together, as their voyage of mutual rediscovery has grown more intense, as the commitment of their peoples has deepened, they have moved the idea of Europe forward.

They alone can make the gestures that will carry Europe further, in its ambitions, in its frontiers and in the hearts of its people. Which will make the Union that great area of peace, rights and freedoms, that homeland of the spirit worthy of its heritage, that land our citizens will love to inhabit, to cultivate, to make flourish through their common endeavour.

Long live Germany! Long live France! And long live the European Union!



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Shaping Europe

Reflections of three MEPs
Lord Plumb, Carole Tongue and
Florus Wijsenbeek

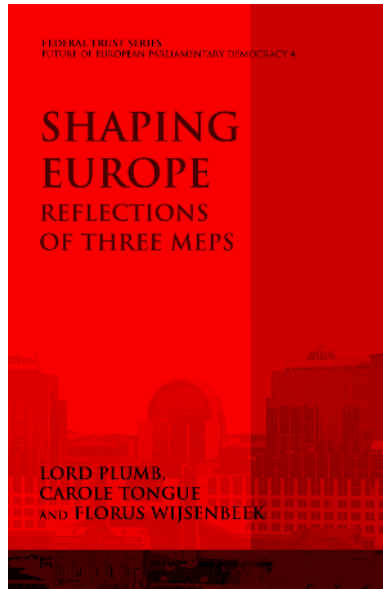
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This new Federal Trust book includes three candid reminiscences by three MEPs which blend personal impressions with an analysis of the growing power and importance of the European Parliament over the twenty years since it was first directly elected. Based on insider experience from the mainstream political traditions – Carole Tongue for the Socialists, Henry Plumb for the Conservatives and Florus Wijsenbeek for the Liberals – this book informs as well as entertains, putting a human face on the politics of power in Brussels and Strasbourg.

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