

Remarks by David Thorne, U.S. Ambassador to Rome

Thank you for inviting me to this panel discussion in such illustrious company. Franco Frattini and Lamberto Dini are two experts when it comes to the European Union, and I am delighted to hear their insights.

I would like to congratulate Prof. Federiga Bindi on the publication of this new book. Rather than speak in an academic manner about whether the European Union's foreign policy is real or imagined, I thought I would speak briefly about how I in my work deal with the reality of the policies of the European Union every day.

I would also like to start out by saying that for President Obama, who has sought at every turn to be multilateral in his approach, the European Union is an essential partner. In fact, I myself sometimes wonder why there is so much handwringing over the importance of Europe, because from the perspective of this administration, Europe is real, and Europe matters.

For those of us who work for the USG, then, the foreign policy of the European Union is no myth, but it is a foreign policy borne both of the common interests of European countries and of the interests of individual states. For the United States or any other country to influence the European Union's foreign policy, therefore, means engaging both in Brussels and individually with each of the Union's members. This means that our dealings with Italy, as with all EU countries, are automatically double-pronged: we want to have input into relations bilaterally, but also to leverage each EU country's influence in Brussels on issues of strong interest to us.

Our Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Phil Gordon, acknowledged this when he spoke before Congress, putting his finger on the essential dilemma when it comes to EU foreign policy: "given that the role of member states is undiminished, those who would seek to influence developments in the EU find best results by engaging with Europe through *all channels*—through high level officials, member states, EU institutions and through NATO."

In other words, there is still no one "phone number" for Europe, but that does not mean there is no real foreign policy with which we must contend. And the new European architecture perhaps makes the situation more complex; as you Europeans work through its kinks, we will take our cues from you.

I thought I would speak briefly about just a few major areas in which EU foreign policy is vital: defense, the economy, the Middle East Peace Process and Iran.

Defense

There is a Yiddish saying "A burden shared is a burden halved" [look for Italian equivalent—"Mal commune, mezzo gaudio?," or other.] Nowhere is this more true than on defense. President Obama has made it clear he supports a strong European defense. The US needs Europe to play its full role as a provider of international security and crisis response, both regionally and globally. However, there are serious challenges. As the US Defense Secretary Gates pointed out in a recent speech, defense spending budget limitations in Europe relate to a larger cultural and political trend affecting our alliance with NATO and Europe. "One of the triumphs of the last century was the

pacification of Europe after ages of ruinous warfare," he said. "But...the demilitarization of Europe – where much of the general public and political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it – has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st... the resulting funding and capability shortfalls making it difficult to operate and fight together to confront shared threats."

Not all conflicts require military intervention, and we rely heavily on Europe's very important partnership in humanitarian and development assistance. In my view, however, the budget limitations on defense spending hamper the credibility and reach of EU foreign policy and put us all in a difficult position. Scarcer resources and little public appetite for defense spending mean that EU may not be strong enough to accomplish the tasks it sets for itself.

Economy

Europe's success as an economic union has been extraordinary. There is no need to talk here about the transatlantic economy, the largest in the world. This interdependence makes it essential that we work together to coordinate trade and financial policy. Indeed, the coordinated fiscal and monetary response pursued by the US and Europe through the G20 was a crucial factor in stabilizing the world economy earlier this year.

When it comes to issues such as trade policy, Energy security, Climate Change or Terror Finance, the EU has a strong role to play.

On Climate Change, for instance, the European Union plays a crucial role in negotiations. It is thanks to the EU that we agreed in Copenhagen on a goal of limiting worldwide temperature increase to 2 degrees Celsius.

On energy security, EU policy leadership is imperative, as it is in the support for and strengthening of a rules-based trading system.

Now the recent financial crisis in Greece is a good example of one of the challenges confronting the EU, and here again, we in the US will take our cue from you as to how you will deal with this crisis.

Middle East Peace Process

The European Union, via the Quartet, has an important role to play when it comes to the Middle East Peace Process. Special Envoy Mitchell stops through Brussels regularly for consultations, and together the US and EU put our best strategies forward. In the meantime, it is important to provide assistance to the PA, and the EU has been the largest provider of this assistance.

Now Italy has a foreign policy that is very much its own on this issue, having deliberately cultivated close friendships with both Israel and all of the key Arab states. In our view, therefore, Italy is a key ally in the formation of European policy, acting as a leader in trying to moderate views and work toward helpful statements that give both sides room to maneuver.

Iran

In the security sphere, one of the paramount concerns for the US and Europe is the Iranian nuclear program. The EU3+3 has been a crucial channel for engaging Iran, and European leaders such as Javier Solana have been key conduits for dialogue. The EU recognizes the important role it has to play when it comes to the need for stiffer sanctions. High Representative Ashton recently confirmed that "Iran is of great importance to us... We want to have dialogue, but six years of dialogue by [my predecessor] has not brought us to the outcome that we would wish. And so we do have to consider what else needs to be done, and we stand ready to do that."

But again, we know that we must also work with countries bilaterally, because when it comes to voting on EU sanctions, every country will have its say. Here in Italy we have had extensive dialogue with the Italian government and with industry leaders, and I am happy to say that thanks to our strong partnership, the US and Italy are as close to being on the same page as we have been in recent years. And we believe and hope that Italy will in turn use its influence within the EU to

stimulate a bolder effort reflecting the urgency and necessity of holding Iran to its international obligations.

Conclusion

I haven't even had a chance to mention democracy and human rights, but needless to say, the US and the EU see eye to eye in this arena, and work together throughout the world to promote these values.

What is clear to me and to Secretary Clinton is that a strong Europe is critical to our security and our prosperity. Much of what we hope to accomplish globally depends on working together with Europe.

There is no zero sum game here. The US wants to see Europe succeed and considers a strong EU and US working together to be a win-win. So that while for the moment, the process of dealing with the European Union is akin to dealing with a multilateral organization – meaning, frankly, that it is sometimes a headache -- Europe remains the US's essential partner and we continue to support the increased integration and strength of its policies.