

## Address given by Martti Ahtisaari on Finland's role in the European Union (Paris, 21 February 1995)

**Caption:** On 21 February 1995, Martti Ahtisaari, President of the Republic of Finland, delivers an address in Paris on Finland's role in the enlarged European Union.

**Source:** Speech by Mr Martti Ahtisaari, President of the Republic of Finland in Paris on February 21, 1995. [ON-LINE]. [Helsinki]: The President of the Republic of Finland 1994-2000, mise à jour 18.02.2000[28.07.2003]. Available on [http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/tpk/eng/speeches/speech\\_texts-1994.html](http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/tpk/eng/speeches/speech_texts-1994.html).

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## Finland in the new Europe

Scholars and decision-makers alike have been discussing the political and strategic repercussions of the end of the Cold War. They have not come to common conclusions. This has impaired the ability of the international community to manage the overall change.

The collapse of the totalitarian regimes in Europe has brought along both hope and agony. We will be faced with a complex security situation for years to come. Ideological confrontation has been replaced by ethnic strife, border disputes and ecological concerns. Now we need a dynamic concept for security.

The end of the bipolar order constituted a turning point in the modern history of Europe. Raymond Aron characterized the 20th century as "The century of total war" in his book forty years ago. He wrote his study just after Stalin's death and predicted that the collapse of communism could mark the end of that particularly violent epoch in human history.

Today we know that his prophecy was strikingly correct. Profound social transition has led to a kind of revolution in international relations as well. A new Europe has emerged: a continent of deepening cooperation instead of military confrontation.

Our task is to manage this change and to create an area of cooperation stretching from the Atlantic to Vladivostok.

Finland's destiny has been closely linked to the upheavals of Europe. France has played a major role during these periods. The birth of the Finnish nation was the only lasting result of the alliance between Napoleon and Czar Alexander confirmed at Tilsit in 1807. This alliance facilitated a Finnish national project leading to the full independence of my country a century later. The recognition of Finland's independence by France as one of the first countries was indeed crucial for us in 1918.

The end of the Cold War gave a new momentum to European integration. It made the enlargement of the European Union inevitable. Throughout the accession process France facilitated our negotiations. I wish to express my gratitude to the French Government for this invaluable support. Finland and France are now partners in a community of nations which aims at an ever closer union between the peoples of Europe. We are now working closely together in the European project. This is a challenging task and a momentous opportunity.

Union membership has brought about a true "Francophonic Renaissance" in Finland. Language centres are fully booked by students eager to learn French. I hope that the Finnish Cultural Institute, established here in Paris five years ago, will be further strengthened as a focal point for cultural interaction between citizens of our two countries.

Finland has always looked for cooperation and interaction with other countries. The Nordic Countries have a long-standing tradition of close cooperation. We want to build on that experience and apply it to new circumstances. Finland wishes to preserve and develop the achievements of Nordic cooperation in so far as they are compatible with the process of integration in Europe. Finland's specific interests include the environment, equality, consumer protection, labour and social policies as well as openness and transparency.

As a northern European country, Finland also pays great attention to the challenges and opportunities inherent in relations with our other neighbours, Russia and the Baltic states.

I would like to elaborate three key issues relevant in the evolution of the new Europe: first, the roots of social transition ; secondly, the prospects for stability and for a cooperative security order; and thirdly, the role of the European Union in this context.

The international community has been undergoing a historic change for at least a decade. This process takes place primarily at two levels: inside states and between states. As a whole the international community is in

transition.

The totalitarian regimes have collapsed and have been replaced by governments moving towards democracies and market economies. In Europe this has led to the deepening and widening of integration. On the global level East-Asian economies are on the rise changing the conditions for economic competition worldwide.

Europe consists basically of three main categories of states: the European Union, countries in Central and Eastern Europe having established evolving relations with the European Union and Russia as well as other countries belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). All of these states should be joined by new, dynamic security structures.

Now we must ask whether we are capable of organizing Europe economically and politically to meet these continental and global challenges. We are faced with a threefold task: First, to enhance stability by strengthening integration; secondly, by creating a dynamic and cooperative security order; and thirdly, by providing sufficient means and arrangements for national defence.

European nations have failed miserably in preventing conflicts in our own continent during the political convulsions of the 1990's. Efforts are currently being undertaken to set up negotiations to settle the ongoing conflicts. Most urgently our efforts must be directed towards the open conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus region.

France is deeply involved in these efforts. Finland is also making a contribution. This is a burden that we must continue to share.

Russia is both a European and Eurasian state. Due to its size and capabilities, it will be a centre of growth and attraction also in the future but it is now plagued by problems of transition inherited from its Soviet past: political and economic instability, outright violence and human suffering. Still, there are signs of gradual social and political normalization and of economic progress.

Security in the new Europe is based on partnership between states committed to common principles and objectives. This includes refraining from violence and respecting basic human rights. We have to meet the challenges of security in the spirit of this partnership. First steps have been taken on this road.

Through Finnish membership, the European Union has acquired a long common border with Russia. We see this as a stimulating challenge and an opportunity for the Union.

Despite uncertainties, the prospects for a cooperative security order for Europe do exist. We are guided by the common principles enshrined in the Charter of Paris for a new Europe, adopted in this city at the CSCE summit meeting in November 1990. They include democracy, market economy, the respect for human rights and rule of law. These principles have created the foundation for pluralism which is an intrinsic part of Europe's patrimony.

Finland has consistently aimed at enhancing security and stability in its immediate environment and in Europe as a whole. It is on this basis that we have responded to the challenges of the European transition. Membership in the European Union has given us new methods and new resources to continue this policy.

As part of this policy we have created working relationships with organizations and arrangements essential for the strengthening of cooperative security in Europe. In this vein, Finland became an observer of the Western European Union two weeks ago. Earlier, we had acquired an observer status in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Last year we joined the Partnership for Peace Program. All this gives us good possibilities to concretely contribute to European security.

Finland has accumulated considerable experience in participating in UN peace-keeping operations. The strengthening of the capabilities for crisis-management is now called for. A natural role for the Organization of the European Security and Cooperation(OSCE) can be found in the field of preventive diplomacy and crisis management. The OSCE lacks the logistics and resources to carry out efficient large-scale operations in the field. It is of great importance that the OSCE could benefit from the experience of the United Nations in this respect.

Sufficient national defence capabilities and appropriate arrangements remain crucial for enhancing European stability. For some countries the Partnership-for-Peace may contribute to the establishment of a credible national defence capability in the long run. We know, however, that for a number of countries the Partnership-for-Peace is not enough but they are seeking membership in NATO. We understand their goal. However, membership in European and Euro-Atlantic institutions alone would not safeguard anybody's security.

The necessary preconditions of the further strengthening of European security are created at the level of bilateral relations between states. The Stability Pact, to be concluded in a month's time here in Paris, will facilitate the positive development of good-neighbourly relations.

In the long term, we have to create a European security area where the threat of military force is eliminated as a means of solving political disputes. We need increasing cooperation in the field of military security.

Membership in the European Union is for Finland significant in terms of security. We are willing to participate constructively in the elaboration of a common foreign and security policy of the Union. At the intergovernmental conference in 1996, we will be ready to analyse and discuss interests and needs concerning military cooperation within the framework of European integration.

In the current circumstances, however, Finland's main contribution to security and stability is in our policy of military non-alliance and the maintenance of an independent and credible defence.

With France and other Union partners, Finland now shares the task of defining common policies for managing the change. We have much to learn from the older Union members. But we also believe that we have much to contribute.

We consider the European Union as a multidimensional geographical entity. We do not see a contradiction between the need to devote attention both to Mediterranean and to northern European issues. Simultaneously the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and minding the transatlantic relationship will require increasing attention.

The geographic multidimensionality and the global cultural and economic presence of the Union constitute a viable basis for the further development of the role of the Union in international affairs. This can best be implemented through an intensive dialogue with third countries and established regional organizations.

We face the challenge of gradually developing the capabilities and efficiency of the Union. These issues will be addressed at the intergovernmental conference. Finland would like to see the Union as a well-functioning and efficient community of states with democratic and open institutions. At the same time it should be maintained as a union of sovereign states.

Finland has accepted the "finalité politique" of the Maastricht Treaty. But there is no final blueprint for the Union, much less for the whole continent. The new Europe must be a dynamic, living structure, open to change, open to the world.