

# Transcription of the interview with Álvaro de Vasconcelos (Paris, 17 December 2013)


**Caption:** Transcription of the interview with Álvaro de Vasconcelos, co-founder and Director of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (IEEI) in Lisbon from 1981 to 2007, special adviser to Portuguese Defence Minister Fernando Nogueira from 1993 to 1995, special adviser to Portuguese Minister for Internal Administration António Figueiredo Lopes from 2002 to 2004 and Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies from 2007 to 2012, carried out by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) on 17 December 2013 at the home of Álvaro de Vasconcelos in Paris. The interview was conducted by Verónica Martins, a Researcher at the CVCE, and particularly focuses on the following subjects: Portugal in the European Union (EU) and Western European Union (WEU), the workings of WEU, the gradual transfer of WEU's powers to the EU and its contribution to European defence, WEU's contribution to EU foreign policy, EU foreign policy in the Euro-Mediterranean region and Latin America, and the importance of France and the UK in the EU's European security and defence policy.

**Source:** Interview d'Álvaro de Vasconcelos / ÁLVARO DE VASCONCELOS, Véronica Martins, prise de vue : Alexandre Germain. - Paris: CVCE [Prod.], 17.12.2013. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (01:52:01, Couleur, Son original).

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### 1. Portugal and the European Union

[**Véronica Martins**] Mr Álvaro de Vasconcelos, firstly, thank you very much for giving us this interview and for welcoming us into your home in Paris today, 17 December 2013. Let's begin.

On 28 March 1977, Portugal was the 11th country to apply to join the European Communities. Did you follow that process? In your opinion, what were the key reasons for Portugal to apply at that time?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] In 1977, Portugal had just emerged from an extremely serious crisis — its transition to democracy between 1974 and 1975.

During the 1974/75 crisis, there were two opposing models of society or plans for the future of Portugal. Firstly there was the plan put forward by the democratic forces led by Mário Soares, by the Socialist Party, but supported by a group of democratic allies, such as the PSD and the CDS. Then there was the Communist Party and its allies, with a plan that the democratic parties objected to.

For the Communist Party, the Soviet Union was the 'light of the world', an expression used by Álvaro Cunhal, who said: 'The light of the earth was the Soviet Union'.

For Mário Soares, the future of Portugal was the European Union. It was Europe and the European Communities. Mário Soares said something at the time that struck a chord in Portugal, which was: 'Having left the Empire and the tragedy of the wars in Africa, Portugal has a new destiny. Portugal's new destiny is Europe.'

The forces that won the political battle of the Portuguese transition to democracy were pro-European, and felt that joining the European Communities was essential for consolidating Portuguese democracy. That's why the desire for accession was so strong from the beginning of the transition to democracy.

What's more, the European democracies strongly supported the consolidation of Portuguese democracy during the 1974/75 crisis.

Mário Soares was a socialist and saw that a number of socialist leaders were in power in Europe at the

time, such as Willy Brandt in Germany, Callaghan in the UK and Olof Palme in Sweden, and European leaders were extremely active in Portugal's transition to democracy.

During the 1974/75 crisis, in the summer of 1975 I think, there was a huge campaign in Portugal under the slogan 'Europe with us', there were posters all over the place declaring 'Europe with us'.

President Mitterrand came to Portugal — he became President later and was leader of the French Socialist Party at the time — (the French President at the time was Giscard d'Estaing) ... came to Portugal ... President François Mitterrand, leader of the Socialist Party, came to support the Portuguese democrats. The European democracies were very heavily involved. The Portuguese political parties, the PS, PSD and CDS, were strongly supported by the German foundations that had become established in Portugal: the Friedrich Ebert Foundation supporting the Socialist Party, the Konrad Adenauer supporting the CDS, and the Neumann supporting the PSD.

Europe was now very heavily involved in the Portuguese transition, so it was the most natural thing for the Portuguese who wanted to consolidate their democratic process to apply to join the European Communities.

**[Véronica Martins]** And what political reactions were there to Portugal's accession to the European Communities? And from a personal point of view, what was your experience of that time?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** Perhaps we should start with the political reactions. As I said, there was a great divide in political reactions in Portugal. For the Communist Party and its allies, accession to the European Communities was a defeat for its political plan.

A historian very close to the Communist Party wrote at the time that, if Portugal joined the European Communities, it would become a colony of Spain. This idea, which was very strong among those close to the Portuguese communists, let's say, was also paradoxically strong among the Portuguese right, the traditional right that had supported the Salazar dictatorship, which had always viewed Europe with enormous mistrust.

Salazar famously said: 'The European project is impossible, because a set of monarchies and republics can't join together.' He was thinking of the Belgians and the Dutch, monarchies that were going to unite, and the Luxembourgers, who were going to join a group of republics, i.e. France, Italy and Germany. And he said: 'This is impossible, democracies, republics and monarchies cannot unite.' And he always looked on European integration with great mistrust and developed a policy of 'alone in isolation'.

So for the extreme right and for the Communist Party, accession to the European Communities was contrary to their plan for Portuguese society. In addition, their rhetoric was very anti-Spanish, and a central issue of Portuguese accession to the European Communities was the attitude towards Spain.

Portuguese nationalist policy always made Spain the enemy. 'De Espanha nem bom vento, nem bom casamento' [literally, 'From Spain, neither a good wind nor a good marriage', i.e. nothing good ever comes out of Spain] — as Portuguese nationalists used to say.

There were no bridges on the borders between Portugal and Spain. There were ... one or two bridges ... on the vast border, and people crossed the rivers in boats or ferries because Spain was considered to pose a threat.

So that debate in Portugal involved three major opposing political currents: the traditionalists who were against accession (for the reasons I've mentioned), the communist left, who were against accession (also for the reasons I've already mentioned), and the socialists and democrats in general, the democratic front of Portuguese political parties that was in favour.

My position ... and how I experienced that time. I had come from France. I was in exile in France

between 1969 and 1974. I was in Belgium from 1967. I'd lived in exile in Europe since 1967. When I went back to Portugal, many people who had lived in exile went back with me. They included Mário Soares, who was living in exile here in Paris. I lived in Paris myself at the time, and lots of Portuguese had lived in political exile in Europe.

We went back with an idea of what Europe was. Some had more illusions about Europe than others, but for us, the 'new foreigners', we went back to Portugal to support the democratic tradition. Portugal's integration with Europe or Portugal's exit from Europe was a natural fact. Previously, there had been people who were more concerned about what that would mean for the Portuguese economic and social development model. At the time, I was (I'll say I was part of that group) one of those who used to say: 'But a Portugal that's had a revolution might have a more advanced (...), a more socialist social model.' And some saw Europe as a natural consequence of the ideas they were already supporting in Portugal.

But Portugal was the destiny of Europe, that was clear for many people who came back from exile.

Another very important factor that we haven't spoken about yet was the colonial war. When Portugal became a democracy, it also brought a long colonial war and the colonial empire to an end. For many of us, our motivation was anticolonialist and democratic above all, but very strongly anticolonialist. And Europe, the most advanced European states that had been colonial powers had also decolonised. So Portugal would be joining a Europe that was in a stage of historic transformation, not only involving economic integration but also abandoning its colonial dreams. This all made sense for many of us, but essentially what made sense for us at that precise moment was the battle against the Communist Party, because, keeping clearly in mind the nature of the Portuguese crisis and the gravity of the confrontation between the Communist Party and the democratic forces, seeking allies outside Portugal, having international support to consolidate the new Portuguese democratic regime and facing up to the Communist Party and the Soviet Union was generally, let's say, highly motivating, both for me and for many like-minded people at the time.

[**Véronica Martins**] You're a specialist in international relations. So how would you define Portugal's development since its accession to the Communities, and what, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages of Portuguese accession?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] The main advantage was without doubt the consolidation of Portuguese democracy. It could be argued that Portuguese democracy might have consolidated without accession to the European Community, we can't say it was an essential condition, but it made a very important contribution. We can't remake history today ... what would have happened if Portugal hadn't joined the European Communities?

I'd say that if it hadn't been for the prospect of accession — irrespective of accession itself — the prospect of accession and the very strong European support at the time, I don't think Portugal would have become a 'Cuba' of Europe, as Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho proposed, but it would have been a more or less neutral country, a kind of European Third Worldism, a distant country. And if Spain had joined in the meantime and Portugal hadn't, Portugal would have been hugely isolated because there's no alternative to Europe. We could say that it would be Africa, as the dictatorship thought, or Brazil. They aren't alternatives, they're important components, but they didn't give Portuguese society a plan. In that sense, I think it was an enormous political advantage to provide a model and a framework.

In terms of economic and social development, I think there was huge modernisation in Portugal between 1974 and today, despite the Portuguese crisis that I'll touch on soon.

We have to remember firstly that illiteracy was widespread in Portugal. Around 1974, almost 30 % of the population was illiterate, 27 % I think, an extremely high number.

There was no social security, and the Portuguese had to emigrate to find a new future. In the 1960s, almost 1 million Portuguese came to France, and generations of Portuguese had emigrated.

It was a country without infrastructure, and Portuguese roads were really dangerous. It was just over 300 km from Lisbon to Porto. It was very risky, and people died on every bend. What's more, the minister at the time, who was, to some extent, against European integration, said that Portugal shouldn't focus on infrastructure because motorways and roads were no use ... 'The Portuguese should still ride donkeys,' he said publicly.

So there was extraordinary development. What did we see? We saw illiteracy disappear in Portugal, the development of social security, an extremely important medical system, a good modern health service — with problems as we all know — but it was good. We saw significant numbers of Portuguese people taking university degrees and doctorates and doing lots of research, and we saw something that I think is very important — the emancipation of Portuguese women.

One of the characteristics of the Salazar-Caetano dictatorship was discrimination against women [...]. It wasn't just the dictatorship, it was a historic thing in a country where macho culture was very strong and where women had very few rights.

Until the mid-1960s, women had to ask their husbands for permission to leave Portugal. Without their husband's permission, they couldn't leave. The number of women employed was very small, whereas nowadays Portuguese women play an active part in political and social life and have jobs (when there are any, given the crisis). Women became emancipated, that's another extremely important component.

So the development of Portuguese society was huge and was achieved in a period of democracy and accession to the European Communities. I think it's fair to ask which was more important: democracy or accession to the Communities. I think democracy was absolutely essential, and accession to the Communities strongly supported that process at political, economic and social level.

What were the disadvantages?

We could talk firstly about disadvantages in terms of international politics, because that's the subject of our conversation.

Until 1974, Portugal was an internationally isolated country, a country involved in a long colonial war with over 300 000 Portuguese soldiers on three battlefronts: Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau.

It was a country that the international community considered to be archaic, embroiled in a futile colonial war and successively condemned by the United Nations because of the crimes it was committing in Africa and because of the colonial war. The liberation movements had gained a great deal of momentum and international prestige, while the Portuguese Government continued its 'proudly alone' policy. Portugal didn't really have a Mediterranean policy, and relations with Brazil were what I've called 'nostalgia trade' — we sold olive oil and wine, which was trade for the Portuguese who had emigrated to Brazil. But that was over and was disappearing: from 'nostalgia trade', we had progressed to 'nostalgia for trade', because there was virtually no trade. And the Brazilians too, who were from a Third World country, a developing country, a country that had earned self-determination and become independent from Portugal. Brazil clearly supported the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. So it was a country that was isolated internationally and from Europe. It's true that it had joined EFTA, which had raised its international profile a little, and was a member of NATO, but essentially it was an isolated country.

With accession to the European Communities, Portugal became well integrated in Europe, and from the platform of Europe, it developed a new policy towards Africa, towards the Portuguese-speaking countries that became independent. It changed its relations with Brazil, which I'll talk about later, and began to have a Mediterranean policy that it hadn't had before. Portugal had always thought that the Mediterranean was for the Spanish and the other Europeans.

The change was most significant in relations with Spain, however, Portugal's big neighbour. But the



Portuguese dictatorship's isolationist and nationalist policy had severed Portugal's ties with Spain, and trade relations with Spain were virtually non-existent — despite being neighbouring countries — representing less than 6 % of Portuguese trade. But with accession to the Communities, Spain became Portugal's first trading and economic partner — first it was a political partner — Iberian summits began to be held, and the Portuguese started to go to Spain. There was an enormous transformation in attitudes in Portugal, also because of accession to the European Communities, and so Portugal became integrated into the world.

The disadvantages of accession: I think one of the disadvantages was connected to attitudes. Portugal is a country that has always been a rentier economy. It used to be based on gold from Brazil, spices from India, and then the African colonies for much of the 20th century. Europe was seen by many Portuguese as new money: new spices from India or new gold from Brazil, in other words, the money that came from Community aid was seen from a perspective that was less 'developmentalist' for Portugal than it should have been, and a series of programmes. So Portugal didn't have the shock of having to do something that was difficult to do; accession to the European Communities made life easier. Clearly, this had all the advantages that I've just mentioned, but it also had a disadvantage from the point of view of attitudes which, to some extent, explains the current crisis, but I'll speak about that later.

**[Véronica Martins]** So, Portugal had already held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union three times since 1986: in 1992, 2000 and finally 2007. In your opinion, what importance does Portugal attach to holding the Presidency, and what is the Portuguese view of the stable Presidency of the European Council?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** Let's start with 1992, an extraordinary year for Portugal. On the one hand, it had begun to grow economically, it was a member of the European Communities, there was an extremely strong pro-European ideology in the country, support for the European Union and the European Communities was extremely strong, and the Presidency confirmed all this. Portugal prepared the Presidency meticulously, and well before taking office, perhaps over a year before, a group and a diplomat were tasked with preparing the Presidency and began to establish objectives. Portugal wanted to make the 1992 Presidency of the European Union the great occasion for cementing European Portugal. And, as we know, the Belém Cultural Centre was built as the headquarters of the Presidency. They worked really meticulously for the Presidency, and it turned out to be highly effective and successful. Portugal defined some of its own objectives, but it prioritised European objectives. It was also the period in which the single market was established.

So it was a very special time, and from an international policy perspective, I'm going to tell you an interesting fact about the 1992 Presidency which I experienced personally.

What was notable was Brazil's attitude, which is significant in Portuguese/Brazilian relations, and in how Brazil saw Portugal and the Presidency. Well before the Presidency, or perhaps not long before, Vitor Martins, who was State Secretary for European Affairs at the time, invited me to lunch at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a delegation from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [...] led by its Secretary General — I think it was Ambassador Seixas Correia, but I'm not sure now — that came for talks with the Portuguese. The Brazilians came to the talks with an agenda of what they wanted to achieve during the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union and the European Communities.

For Brazil, the Presidency identified Portugal as a European country and as a country that could support closer ties with Brazil within the European Communities. In these talks, Brazil very clearly planned to launch the Mercosul project, and during the Portuguese Presidency, there was a Council of Ministers of the European Communities with the ministers of Mercosul.

The Council took place in 1992, in Guimarães — the Brazilian Foreign Trade Minister at the time was Celso Lafer — and I organised a meeting at the Belém Cultural Centre, the seat of the Presidency, entitled ‘European Union — Mercosul’, perhaps one of the first meetings to be held there on a more academic basis of discussion of the major issues, but attended by the Brazilian and Portuguese Ministers for Foreign Affairs, who went on to Guimarães to meet their partners. In terms of international policy, the Portuguese Presidency contributed towards a leap forward in relations between the European Union and Brazil. And what’s more, the Treaty of Accession of Portugal and Spain stated that accession would facilitate the development of Portuguese and Spanish relations with Latin America and European relations with Latin America.

The first Portuguese Presidency clearly took a step in that direction.

The following Presidency, in 2000 — when António Guterres was Prime Minister — continued along the same lines: we were going to contribute to a leap forward by Europe. Mr Guterres, who had meanwhile discovered Brazil, undoubtedly had very significant objectives at the time in relation to Mercosul, and Portugal had very significant investments in Brazil.

And again, I organised a seminar with the Institute for Strategic and International Studies, at the Belém Cultural Centre, with Mr Guterres, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the President of Brazil, and European Commissioner Marin, to discuss relations between the European Union and Mercosul and the idea of a free trade agreement that never came to fruition.

Something odd happened during the 2000 Presidency, however. It was an extremely successful Presidency. Mr Guterres presented innovation as one of the major themes, and the European Council, with Maria João Rodrigues (who worked with Mr Guterres at the time), produced a project that would enable Europe to take great strides in developing innovation up to 2010. In 2010, Europe was to be as advanced as the United States in terms of technological innovation, though in fact it fell a long way short of that target.

But there was that stimulus and a great eagerness for major goals, something Mr Guterres took on very successfully, to such an extent that, towards the end of his Presidency, the consensus in Europe was that Mr Guterres should be President of the European Commission, and he was offered the position. However, since he was leader of the Socialist Party, the Socialist Party was afraid of losing the subsequent elections if Mr Guterres relinquished that post, so he didn’t accept it. He came under a great deal of pressure to accept the Presidency of the European Commission. Another Portuguese national, Mr Durão Barroso, later became President of the Commission, which was essentially again the result of the same success, and, to a large extent, I think that’s true for the Presidencies themselves.

What was the odd thing that happened?

The 1992 Presidency was a huge success from the European point of view, but also from the internal point of view. At the end of the Presidency, the Portuguese were more pro-European and supported the Government, which was led by Cavaco Silva at the time ..., more strongly than at the beginning of the Presidency.

Mr Guterres had enormous European success, but for the first time — perhaps — the Portuguese began to look at Europe with mistrust. All this European success was possibly making us weaker internally. Mr Guterres was very active in Europe but was increasingly neglecting Portugal. This was not an issue previously, because being active in Europe meant taking good care of Portugal.

In the 2000 Presidency, European activism and success began to be seen as something that was weakening Portugal in terms of economic, social and political development. And when the Presidency of the European Union concluded, he was less popular than he had been at the beginning, and in talking to him — which was something I did — he didn’t understand how that could have happened. But then, if we look at the numbers, it becomes clear that, in 2000, Portugal began to stagnate in terms of economic development and growth. Portugal has virtually not grown since 2000. Clearly this was

nothing to do with the Presidency, but, for the Portuguese, it very much was.

Also in the 2000 Presidency, as I've said, Portugal always broke even. In terms of European needs, what a Presidency does is to take on common needs rather than national interests, but with some specifically Portuguese interests. The major meetings between the EU and Africa began during the 2000 Presidency. This was the product of the Portuguese Presidency's action, which was repeated in the 2007 Presidency. That part of the European agenda was clearly assumed by Portugal, and, at the same time, the Portuguese agenda was taken on by Europe, and European concern for economic growth, jobs and employment was also strongly accepted by the Presidency with the project for Innovation, Competitiveness and Employment approved at the Lisbon Summit in 2000.

The 2007 Presidency came around at a completely different time, when Portugal was no longer growing. Enthusiasm for Europe had waned. And it continued to be a very effective Presidency, with a less ambitious agenda, both from the European and the international point of view, but, in any event, I believe it was a success, and it showed that the small presidencies, the small countries, are very effective in that role when they run it with the professionalism shown by the Portuguese. It's because ... the Presidency is very important for them, it's a time of 'Europe with us', we are the Presidency of Europe, something that's much less significant for Germany or for France, for a large European country.

## 2. Portugal and WEU

[**Véronica Martins**] Let's turn to Portugal's membership of WEU now. How did the application procedure develop? Why was Portugal accepted by the organisation? Do you think there was a consensus on the process, or were there obstacles?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] The whole process of Portuguese accession to the European Communities and later to WEU, but to the European Communities in particular, raised certain obstacles represented by European Union Member States that considered the process of accession to be a time when the European institutions were being watered down. It was true for the European Communities. I don't think it was true for WEU, because WEU had been on *veilleuse* [on standby, dormant] (to use the French expression) for a long time, it was an organisation that was undergoing something of a renaissance when Portugal applied to join. The question of accession was not one that had been raised previously.

Portugal, a member of the European Communities, was very enthusiastic about Europe and European policy. The decision to join WEU raised more obstacles in Portugal than it did in Europe. For Europe and for the WEU Member States, for France, Great Britain and the other states, the moment coincided with the renaissance of WEU. The fact is that Portugal, Spain and then Greece wanted to join and did join. So that was a time of growth for WEU.

There was a debate on this question in Portugal because Portugal had a very Pro-Atlantic policy. There was a whole movement in the military in particular, which was very influential in foreign policy, particularly in terms of the defence of Portugal. There was a current that was opposed to Portuguese integration into the European Union. According to the 1986 military strategic concept (the strategic defence concept), which was secret but everybody knew about it (everybody in that field), in the year that Portugal joined the European Communities accession to the European Communities made Portugal highly vulnerable. It was a threat to Portuguese independence. Also, according to the



military strategic concept, Spain continued to be Portugal's enemy.

This was in 1986 in relation to the European Communities. Accession to WEU for anti-European and pro-Atlantic military sectors was a continuation of this process of watering down Portuguese integration into Europe, which was regarded as a serious vulnerability, particularly because Spain was also in the process of joining. Spain had previously joined NATO, and that was also viewed with serious misgivings in Portugal.

I'll give you an example that clearly illustrates the sense of those misgivings. General Firmino Miguel, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Minister for Defence in one of the governments during the transition to democracy, wrote a short book entitled '*Portugal, a Espanha e a NATO*' [Portugal, Spain and NATO]. In this book, he said that Portugal's accession to NATO and Spain's accession to NATO should be welcomed by Portugal and would allow greater cooperation in the Iberian peninsula, and that a single command might make sense. General Firmino Miguel, Commander-in-Chief of the army, was attacked as a traitor, and his book virtually disappeared. I organised a debate with him that focused on his book. Afterwards he said: 'This is very difficult, I'm not going to continue to discuss these matters' (sadly he's dead now), and he stopped supporting that point of view in public because of the heavy criticism.

There was a pro-Atlantic current in the Armed Forces in Portugal. One of the strongest and most ideological figures involved was Commander Virgílio de Carvalho, but also Ambassador Franco Nogueira, who had been a minister under Salazar, who had exactly the same point of view and who saw the whole process of accession and Portuguese integration into the European institutions, particularly the defence institutions, as contrary to what the Portuguese option should have been: a pro-Atlantic option, and therefore with strong links with Great Britain and the United States, with Portuguese-speaking Africa and with Brazil (this was the policy during the Salazar dictatorship) and against Europe. So there was a concern in Portugal, among those who had triumphed in the 1974/75 crisis, among Europhiles such as Mário Soares and Jaime Gama, who was Foreign Minister at the time, to negotiate accession to WEU.

Accession to WEU meant joining yet another European club. I remember that I and a friend of mine at the time, John Chipman, Director of the IISS in London, organised a conference to discuss Portugal's accession to WEU, and he was astonished at the enthusiasm for accession to WEU shown by the researchers at the discussion. He wrote me a little note (I don't know if I've still got it, but I had it for a long time) in which he said: 'There is there a club, so I want to join it' [*sic*]. The idea that there was a club that the European family was building and was joining in various ways, and that Portugal should be amongst the most advanced of all the members of European integration and would therefore be able to overcome its marginality and influence European decision-making, was very clear among Portuguese parties at the time. And there was opposition, as I said, but the overwhelming consensus was in favour. That was also the case with Schengen; Portugal wanted to be in Schengen from the outset, and in WEU, where there was a European club, as John Chipman said, that Portugal should be a member of.

**[Véronica Martins]** What advantages did Portuguese membership of WEU have for the country's defence?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** That's a virtually impossible question, because WEU, as you know, was an organisation that became rather active in the 1990s and that played a role in European security with its participation in the Gulf War, with the development of EUROMARFOR and EUROFOR. It helped Portugal and the Portuguese military, whose experience was essentially African and which subsequently had had very extensive internal political experience, to externalise and to Europeanise, and they also had very strong NATO experience, but they didn't have European experience. In that sense, I think it helped, if we really want to find an answer to your virtually impossible question,

because, in terms of security, the Portuguese military, a part of the Portuguese military (I remember it was EUROMARFOR), contributed next to nothing to Portuguese security. For the Portuguese military, however, for the Portuguese Navy, which was very pro-Atlantic, the fact that they had participated in a European naval group and had sometimes had the opportunity to command the European naval group was extremely useful experience for them. I heard the vice-admirals who had taken part in EUROMARFOR say: ‘We’ve already been in the Mediterranean, during the first Gulf War’, and that ‘Portugal had a role and began to talk with its European colleagues.’ There was a process of Europeanisation, and, in undergoing that process, the Portuguese military were looking outwards, they were being more democratic, more European. So the risk of anti-European and anti-democratic soldiers ... that process as a whole contributed towards the democratisation and normalisation of political and military relations in Portugal, which was a major problem in the country because, as we know, the Revolution was a soldiers’ revolution. In that sense, I think so ... in the sense that European security and Portuguese security, and because WEU must have contributed to European security, it clearly contributed to Portuguese security. But Portugal’s direct security was a problem that was not in fact raised; it had been raised during the Cold War because there was a general Soviet threat. So all this European effort in the area of defence contributed towards security, but during the Cold War Portugal was not a member of WEU. So this problem was not raised in relation to WEU, NATO and the European Communities.

### **3. The workings of WEU, the gradual transfer of its powers to the European Union and its contribution to European defence**

[**Véronica Martins**] Along the same lines, how do you assess WEU’s legacy in terms of defence? You spoke a short while ago about Article 5 of the modified Brussels Treaty. Do you think the mutual assistance clause in the Lisbon Treaty has the same binding force?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] It clearly doesn’t have the same binding force, because its signatories made it clear that it didn’t have the same binding force, due to British objections and objections from other more pro-Atlantic Member States, who want the main elements of European defence, in terms of defence against an external attack on European Union Member States, to remain with NATO. The credibility of an article comes not only from its content but also from the willingness of those who sign it to show that that’s the case and to take the measures necessary to enforce it.

If, from the drafting point of view, let’s say, of the content of the article, the Lisbon Treaty article is less binding or weaker than the WEU Treaty (the WEU Treaty was even more advanced than the NATO Treaty, because in the NATO Treaty the states have to decide how they will support a Member State, and they can do that in very different ways), it was clear that the latter provided for a collective response to an attack against a Member State.

If that’s true, the article in the WEU Treaty, from the point of view of a potential adversary of Europe, where [...] a European Member State [...] had no credibility at all, because Western European Union didn’t have the means to make Article 5 credible. It hadn’t created common forces, it didn’t have structures that would make the article credible. Why does the European Union article have some credibility? Not because a European defence had been created that has given the article credibility, but because the integrating links are so strong that there can’t really be any question that, if a European Union Member State were attacked, there wouldn’t be a common European response — it would be the end of the European Union! Let’s consider the example that’s always been discussed in these

cases, that if Finland had been attacked in the past, or if today a deranged Russia were to attack Finland and Europe didn't react ... Europe would disappear! There's an existential deterrence, an unwritten deterrence that doesn't need to be written, which is the awareness that Europeans have that the degree of economic integration and political solidarity that exists among the Member States means that one of them can't be attacked without a collective response. Now, it's the credibility of the response that's debatable, precisely because the European Union hasn't equipped itself with the means to respond if it had to respond collectively to an attack on one of its Member States. So today, the response to an attack on a Member State continues to be decided by NATO. It's Article 5 of the NATO Treaty that potentially supports deterrence against attacks on a Member State, precisely because NATO has all the structures and resources to respond. It has a response strategy, something the European Union hasn't yet been able to ensure.

**[Véronica Martins]** The Standing Armaments Committee was wound up in 1989, a victim of states' lack of political will. WEU Parliamentary Assembly activity, however, was persistent in terms of the need to promote European cooperation in the field of armaments. What is your verdict on European action, whether by the EU or WEU, in terms of the production and 'standardisation' of armaments?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** I think it's a story with few very significant accomplishments, because armaments policy is a very national policy, there's competition in this field between Member States and the European Defence Agency, which has inherited what WEU was doing in that area.

The European Defence Agency is an important structure, it manages to develop projects that bring the industries of the Member States together and bring the Member States together in the field of armaments, but it's also had very limited results that have fallen well below European Union expectations.

I'd like to say a word about the WEU Assembly (I don't know if it's on your list of questions). It was something I followed very closely, and I was even a neighbour of the WEU Assembly for five years when I ran the European Union Institute for Security Studies (which was in the same building as WEU).

The WEU Assembly was an important component of the European debate on defence. It had a significant weakness, however: the national representatives of the WEU Assembly were not all from the National Defence Committees of national parliaments, far from it in fact. Many of them were representatives of the Council of Europe, and the fact that they were representatives of the Council of Europe wasn't ... it meant that, at national level, anyone who was going to the Council of Europe or the Parliamentary Council [...] wasn't concerned about defence [...] but was concerned about culture and human rights, so the debate on defence had less of an impact at national level than it should have had.

But there was a European parliamentary framework for discussing defence issues involving the national parliaments. The European Parliament is another matter, they aren't national parliaments and defence policy was again above all a national parliament responsibility.

So the fact that there was a discussion on defence issues in the European Parliament, in a European Parliament subcommittee, doesn't have significant implications in the national parliaments, while in the WEU Assembly it did.

So I'd recommended ..., I drew up a report to that end with Nicole [...] and Stéphane Sylvestre for the WEU Institute for Security Studies on the need to consider a European Defence Council involving representatives of the national parliaments, and we argued at the time that the WEU Assembly and its representatives should be from the Defence Committee at national level.

This didn't come about, and it's still absolutely essential to replace the WEU Assembly by a European structure involving national parliament defence committees in a policy discussion on Europe, which is

essential for building consensus and a European defence culture in national parliaments.

[**Véronica Martins**] In the year 2000, Portugal held the Presidency of the EU and WEU at the same time. Do you know anything about the internal debates on the gradual transfer of powers from WEU to the EU? Perhaps you could stress the positions of France and the United Kingdom, if you have any idea ...

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] Yes. We have to remember that European defence policy really grew out of the new European defence policy, which was linked to the European institutions. It came to light first in Saint-Malo, in the 1997/98 Franco-British agreement, and so the fact that the French and British had re-launched European defence policy, that the British had abandoned their opposition so that significant European effort could be put into defence, made it much easier to speed up not only the WEU process, but above all the gradual transfer of WEU capabilities to the European Union. And the debate at the time between the French and the British and what Portugal's position was in that debate reflected the problem of compatibility between the diminishing European defence effort and the problem of NATO.

One question in all of this has a very specific cause — the lessons of Bosnia, in which Portugal was also involved: the Bosnian conflict, the fact that war had returned to Europe, that the French and the British had been powerless to stop the Serbian nationalists, the image of British and French soldiers besieged on Bosnian bridges, the humiliation they underwent in the former Yugoslavia. The French and the British had to make a joint effort that led them to conclude that NATO wouldn't always guarantee their defence, and so they re-launched the defence policy. It was like a process of communicating vessels: the stronger or more likely (the process began with Maastricht in 1992) it was that cooperation could be developed in the area of defence in the European Union, the more WEU (which had been re-launched) was 'running out of steam' because responsibilities were being transferred to the European Union.

Portugal and the European Presidency in 2000 heavily underscored two things with respect to the European Union. The development of the 'Headline Goals' that had been decided in Helsinki and that were not to get off the ground, according to Jaime Gama, who was Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2000. He has a particular enthusiasm for defence and was one of the first to be involved in the national defence law in 1982, he was heavily involved in defence questions, he was a member of the Portuguese Parliament's Defence Committee and then Defence Minister and Foreign Minister at the same time. Jaime Gama paid a great deal of attention to the matter of defence at the Feira Summit and the Lisbon Summit, but particularly at the Feira Summit (the European Summit), where defence was an extremely important concern. Ambitions for European defence were huge at the time. It had been decided in Helsinki that Europe was to develop a very significant number of brigades and a force of 180 000 men, with the capability to deploy 60 000 men, if possible, over a distance of 4 000 km, with transport resources ... there were huge ambitions for defence policy, because Saint-Malo had allowed it. There is no European defence policy without cooperation between the French and the British. And the 'green light' — maybe not 'green light', the 'amber light' — was an 'orange light' that the British gave to the European defence policy which allowed that development.

The mission in Feira was for Jaime Gama (Portuguese defence paid a great deal of attention to the Feira Council) to try to bring this overly ambitious dream to fruition, this dream that Jaime Gama told me at the time was too ambitious, because it was virtually impossible for Europe to take such a leap forward in defence policy that it would be able to have a rapid intervention force of 180 000 men that would be capable of transporting 60 000 men 4 000 km. But that mission existed, and he worked hard to achieve that objective, as a defence specialist and member of the Portuguese Presidency. That was one of the objectives. The other Portuguese concern was that the European defence force and NATO should be compatible, because although Portugal had relied on the European Communities, on WEU

and then on the common European defence policy, it never abandoned the idea that NATO was essential for Portugal and that compatibility was necessary. So then the Portuguese Presidency began to discuss in depth how to address relations with NATO. Clearly, there were still people in Portugal who thought that all this European effort was anti-NATO, and who focused more on compatibility with NATO than genuinely on the development of European defence policy.

Remind me of the other part of the question that's slipped my mind in the meantime ... there were a lot of subparagraphs.

**[Véronica Martins]** It was whether you could actually highlight the French and British positions. It's just a matter of the internal debates, but concerning the French and British positions.

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** The French were very clear: France wasn't a member of NATO's integrated military structure, and European defence was a national project with a consensus. The transfer from WEU began to be seen by Western European Union as a structure from the past, because it was an essentially military structure that didn't have the components that the European Union had (external economic policy, aid for economic development). And, from the French point of view, the European Union was going as far as it could, and the French were the great drivers of the creation of the Committee on Common Foreign and Security Policy, the structures of the NATO Military Committee; the first heads of the NATO Military Committee were French. France gave high priority to the development of structures within the European Union, to the creation of policies in the European Union to develop a common security and defence policy.

The British gave the green light to strong Franco-British cooperation in that area but were against the development by the European Union of a common defence policy with an article similar to NATO's Article 5, to the effect that an attack against the members of the European Union would be an attack against all of them. This was a clause that existed in the WEU Treaty, so one of the reasons why WEU was not wound up sooner was because, until the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union's Treaties had nothing similar due to strong opposition from the British, and what the British wanted was peace missions, the 'Petersberg missions', which were WEU missions. So they were peace missions and crisis management missions, but not missions for common European defence, which still doesn't exist either, but the Lisbon Treaty created a solidarity clause among Member States that can be said to come close to the objective of common defence.

That difference between the French and British hasn't disappeared and continues to be the essential difference, i.e. the French count on European defence as a way of ensuring Europe's independence from the United States in the area of defence. The British continue to believe that the Atlantic Alliance has been much more important than the European Union in terms of defence, and object to a development of European defence policy that, in their view, calls into question or might weaken transatlantic relations. Portugal and the Portuguese fall between these two positions: the most avid pro-Europeans support a position close to the French, but I'd say that the consensus in Portugal is closer to the British than to the French. Whenever Europe evolves towards a defence policy, Portugal wants to be present. That's the difference from the British. The British are opposed; Portugal follows the British opposition, but if Europe goes forward, Portugal doesn't want to lose it all, it doesn't want to remain outside the most advanced sectors of European integration, irrespective of the area, including defence.

**[Véronica Martins]** So, we've talked about the transfer of responsibilities from WEU to the EU, but I'd like you to summarise and give your view on the role WEU played in that period when you were there, when its responsibilities were gradually being withdrawn, up to its winding up.



[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] I think the end of WEU was rather sad, because ... I've already mentioned the importance I think a parliament that works on defence has in raising awareness of defence and cooperation among Member States (and national parliaments are essential for that). But the demise of WEU represented some people's wish to persist with a structure that the Lisbon Treaty and the development of European defence policy had made less relevant, while others wanted to sustain it at all costs. Instead of being an end that we could all agree on (in essence, what was left was basically the WEU Assembly), the WEU Assembly was going to close and change into something new. That had been a moment of glory, let's say. 'No, it's not going to change into something new, it's just that jobs will be lost.' So the great concerns, the great discussions ... it wasn't what was going to be done from the point of view of content to continue the parliamentary debate on defence among national parliaments, it was what's going to happen with the pensions of the people who used to work in WEU and what's going to be done? What compensation will there be? What will become of the archives? What will become of the structures? What will become of everything that existed? There was much greater focus, and the Member States were much more preoccupied with no longer having to support that expenditure that was their contribution to WEU as quickly as possible, rather than being preoccupied about what they could take from it, what its legacy could be (what was being done with its work), what was to be made of the existence of WEU so that the European Union can continue to have an *acquis*, and to take something from that *acquis*.

I mentioned two aspects that I thought were important in the Assembly, in connection with the work of the parliamentary assembly and the question of Mediterranean dialogue, but there were others. That discussion actually didn't take place, I mean, some Member States tabled proposals, the European Parliament discussed how to continue the work in a parliamentary setting, but the essential discussion focused on how to wind it up as quickly as possible so as not to keep on spending money that we felt was pointless. The end was a little sad, to be perfectly ... I experienced it closely because the European Union Institute for Security Studies, which is the heir of the WEU Institute for Security, was in the same building. It was in the same building as the WEU Assembly, so I experienced it on a day-to-day basis.

#### 4. WEU's contribution to a European Union foreign policy

[**Véronica Martins**] So both the Council and the WEU Assembly held debates on foreign policy. After examining the debates, the parliamentary reports and the reports on meetings of the Council, it was clear that the Middle East and the Mediterranean were always high on the organisation's agenda. Bearing in mind the historic interests of France and the United Kingdom in this area, how would you classify the role of WEU in addressing the problems inherent to the region?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] I think that the EU is a rather interesting legacy of WEU, and that it was WEU that opened a dialogue on security with the Mediterranean countries, and that WEU dialogue with those countries provided a measure of trust for Europe to understand what its southern neighbours' intentions were in terms of security, and for European Union Member States to understand security policy better and vice versa.

So there was regular dialogue. That WEU dialogue in the area of defence is an important legacy of WEU, which the European Union did not take up with the countries of the South. So the fact that WEU has been wound up has weakened the Mediterranean policy of dialogue with the southern

European Union countries because nothing has replaced it yet. I think this was a significant legacy.

Whenever Portugal held the Presidency of WEU, it attached importance to such dialogue on defence, whether within the framework of WEU (obviously it was in the WEU framework), but also in the 5+5 framework of the Conference on Security in the Mediterranean, the plan for the Conference for Security in the Mediterranean in the Mediterranean Forum, as it was called. So Portugal was very sensitive to matters concerning dialogue in the area of defence and security and also in the framework of WEU. I think so, from that point of view ... and then a number of reports were drawn up by the WEU Assembly on the question of security in the Mediterranean, several of them of high quality.

I remember, for example, that a member of the Portuguese Parliament, Pedro Roseta, drafted one of those reports. At the European Union Institute for Security Studies (before I was Director, when the Director was John Roper, from the UK), we organised a discussion on that report, which was clearly a high-quality report. Mediterranean issues were continuously monitored by the WEU Assembly and by the WEU Institute for Security Studies (because we mustn't forget that the European Union Institute for Security Studies started life as the WEU Institute for Security Studies, and the European Union Institute for Security Studies is part of WEU's legacy).

The Mediterranean was always an important component, and a range of texts exists that I was involved in (shared papers on security in the Mediterranean) that were drawn up by European specialists, but also by specialists from southern countries, on topics such as western Mediterranean security, on perceptions of the myth of security, the Gulf War and the lessons learned from that war, which constitute a legacy that proves that WEU played a very important role in that framework, and which is interesting because ... it was a niche that was not filled, and since WEU was looking for a role, that unfilled niche was filled by WEU, and wasn't clearly taken up again by the European Union common foreign and security policy.

**[Véronica Martins]** Energy has always been central to the history of European integration. Let's not forget that the ECSC was the first community to be established. WEU launched a number of debates on the idea of a European energy policy, particularly after the first oil crisis. Do you think those debates could have contributed to a growing awareness of the need for a common policy?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** Those debates and many others certainly took place after the first oil crisis and helped to give Europeans an idea that we had problems in terms of energy, because they aren't oil-producing countries and because coal is a polluting energy source, and this is mirrored by the growth of environmental movements in Europe and much greater awareness that climate change is a serious problem and that ecology is central to the future of humankind. All this has helped, let's say, to raise European awareness of the importance of energy issues. But from that point to taking the step that was the mission of WEU and the European Union in those debates, namely to develop a common energy policy — that was a step that was not taken.

I recently took part (I was Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies) in drafting a report on monetary trends in 2030 which I edited for a European Union interinstitutional task force composed of the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the External Action Service. I visited many countries around the globe and went to several European Union Member States to draw up that report. I'll tell you what conclusions I reached.

While people are aware that energy is a serious issue, and in particular that combating polluting energy sources should be a European Union priority, there seems to be very little likelihood of a common energy policy. In the talks I had with the Germans, and I mean Germans who are responsible for German government strategic thinking, what they told me when I asked them if they saw a common energy policy when they looked into the future was that they didn't see a common energy policy, they saw a German energy policy and a French energy policy, which are different, and they're

different because France continues to count on nuclear energy as an important component of its energy model, while Germany has decided to abandon nuclear energy and rely on renewables.

When President Sarkozy visited the countries of North Africa, one of his objectives was to sell nuclear power stations. The Germans are involved in a huge solar energy project in the Sahara, in cooperation with the countries of North Africa, a ‘monster’ investment! There is clearly a division in policies in this respect that makes convergence very difficult. A search for European reconciliation and European policies might be expected in relations with oil- or gas-producing powers or countries. This would be particularly important in relation to Russia, because there’s a certain dependence, or rather interdependence, between Russia and Europe because Europe imports, and between Europe and Russia because Russia exports.

But there are major energy projects with Russia, and the major project involving the pipeline that comes via the sea from northern Europe is a German rather than a European project. So the awareness that the European Union has an energy problem and that there’s a need for a certain ... and that a common policy would make political sense is at odds with the importance of national policies in that area and with the fact that policies are fundamentally national. So the debates that took place in the past, like the debate in Europe, helped to sound a warning about energy, but the consequences are not a European Union common energy policy, and apparently, according to our report, the likelihood of this arising in the next 20 years is very low.

## 5. European Union foreign policy in the southern Mediterranean and Latin America

[**Véronica Martins**] You said that the Euro-Mediterranean Regional Community, the Euro-Mediterranean Union you present in your article in IEMed in 2007 was above all *‘un projet des pays du sud de L’Europe et que c’est avec eux que les partenaires méditerranéens peuvent recréer l’élan fervent du partenariat en 1995’* [a project for the southern European countries, and it was with them that the Mediterranean partners were able to recreate the momentum of the partnership in 1995]. How might the Euro-Mediterranean space develop, bearing in mind the objectives put forward by the Barcelona Process? And what might the role of the southern European countries be, particularly Portugal and Spain, in that new context?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] That’s also a good question. I will summarise.

The European Union has a very important neighbour to the south, the Mediterranean, which is a natural border of Europe. Let’s not forget that the Straits of Gibraltar are 15 km wide, and both separate and unite, and that 15 km is nothing in geographical terms. North Africa is extremely close. We aren’t always aware of this, but reality is objective. The south coast, the Portuguese Algarve is 140 km from the coast of Morocco, which is very close. That proximity requires the European Union to have an economic, political and social integration policy within the bounds of what it can achieve with those countries. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched in Barcelona in 1995 was not really capable of developing a significant political plan for the countries of the South at that time and in the years that followed, up to 2008, the time of the French Presidency of the European Union, which abandoned the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and transformed it into the Union for the Mediterranean. It was not capable because the countries of the South were dictatorships and the European Union was actually in practice supporting the dictatorships. So since European countries are democracies, a political relationship with dictatorships was very problematic, and European civil society and the civil society of the countries of the South were shocked that Europe was abetting

dictatorial regimes, the basic problem being the enormous mistrust Europeans had and have of political Islam. They knew that the opposition to Ben Ali, to Mubarak, to the authoritarian political leaders of the South, was above all the Islamist parties.

In recent years, since 2011, there's been a democratic revolution in the countries of the South.

I had argued, with others, that we should work towards a Euro-Mediterranean community of democratic states within the framework of the Barcelona Process, and that Europe would strengthen that. We had proposed this (support for democratic change) in 2005, and said that, in order to do so, we should lose our fear of political Islam, try to understand what these parties were, what their objectives were, and to differentiate between the different parties, to understand that they were evolving. Islamist parties were becoming democratic and wanted to take part in the electoral game, but Europe always found it very difficult to find a consensus among all its Member States on a policy of that type. When the revolutions came, we entertained hopes that Europe would enthusiastically support the democracies and would develop towards a Euro-Mediterranean community of democratic states, as we had proposed in 2005. That didn't happen, because the same mistrust continued, and processes of democratic transition are very complicated. In Egypt, we saw the community connection hamper the process of transition to democracy. So I'd say now that Europe still wasn't capable of responding to the democratic aspirations of the countries of the South.

Portugal always played an important role in the Mediterranean policy of the European Communities and then of the European Union, as a country of the South. The other southern countries drove many European initiatives to a large extent. Specific groups were created, such as the 5+5 Group, which brings together the countries of southern Europe and North Africa. This western Mediterranean cooperation that Portugal had taken part in was launched by President Mitterrand.

A range of initiatives came to the fore in southern Europe. This area, however, is in an ambiguous position because it is, at the same time, the closest group of countries and the one most in favour of a strong relationship, but it's also the group that's most aware of or concerned about possible destabilisation in the Mediterranean. So there's a group of countries which is in favour of close relations, but it does have a perhaps excessive concern with stability, which also makes it difficult to ensure closer relations with the democratic regimes and more determined support for democracy.

[**Véronica Martins**] Could you tell us about the Euro-Latin American Forum that you launched, give us a few specific examples of initiatives associated with it, and please outline Spain's role in the Forum.

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] Certainly. I already touched on that when I said that we launched the Forum from the Portuguese Presidency of the European Communities in 1992. It was an organisation involving a European institution, the *Centro de Estudos Estratégicos Internacionais* [International Strategic Studies Centre] and the *Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo* [State of São Paulo Industrial Federation], the largest business association in Latin America, with the support of the European Communities, the European Commission and the Portuguese and Brazilian Governments. The objective of the Forum was to create a strong relationship between the European Union and Mercosul. We in the European Union felt that it was very important not to be isolated as an integrating group in the world. The fact that Mercosul had appeared, bringing Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay together in a project to develop a common market and deeper integration than that ensured by the regional corporations that existed elsewhere in the world, led us to believe that the European Union should give very high priority to support for the consolidation of the Mercosul process. And so, in the Euro-Latin American Forum, we proposed to create a single trade area between the European Union and Mercosul.

Spain was very important for us, because we didn't want to make it an exclusively Portuguese project.

So we wanted to give it a European dimension from the outset, and that began with very active Spanish participation (which was always the case), and Spanish organisations, associations and universities have always played an active part in the Euro-Latin American Forum, precisely to give it a European dimension.

We also undertook one of the largest reforms in Rome, precisely to 'Europeanise' that objective, with the very active support of the European Commission. Commissioner Marin (a Spanish national) was always a great supporter of the Euro-Latin American forum.

That was the objective: to establish Mercosul as a closely integrated group and to try to create a strong bond through a free trade agreement. This proposed agreement was accepted by the European Commission, was drawn up by the Forum and was always implemented by the European Commission. Commissioner Marin always supported it enthusiastically. During the 2005 Presidency, Spain put a free trade agreement with Brazil and Mercosul on the agenda, but subsequently there was no consensus in Europe because of the agricultural question. For there to be a free trade agreement with Mercosul, agricultural trade had to be liberalised. Europe had to open up to agricultural exports from South America, from the Mercosul countries, which are major cereal and meat exporters.

Within Mercosul, meanwhile, Argentina suffered a major crisis, Brazil became an emerging power in its own right and, during the 2007 Portuguese Presidency, people talked about European Union/Brazil relations rather than European Union/Mercosul relations.

The moment had gone; the Forum placed a very important question on the European agenda, but the moment had gone, and the plan didn't come to fruition.

## **6. The European security and defence policy and the role of France and the United Kingdom**

[**Véronica Martins**] Do you think that, in terms of defence, EU representation has more credibility, or could have more credibility with non-EU Member States and international organisations if it was ensured by France and/or by the United Kingdom?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] Yes, without doubt, particularly if it was ensured by France with the support of the United Kingdom, or by the United Kingdom with the support of France, credibility would be much greater for a very simple reason: only France and the United Kingdom have a significant military capability, and not only a significant military capability, but a tradition of projecting power. We've seen recently with Mali, and now with the Central African Republic, that France projects military power, during the conflict in Libya against Colonel Gaddafi, to impose the principle of responsibility to protect, and the countries that intervened were France and Great Britain. When France and Great Britain join together, the credibility of European defence policy is substantial; when they don't join together, it's much weaker. If we want to see progress, the progress that began in Saint-Malo, between 2000 and ... well ... For a decade, from Saint-Malo, from 1998 to 2008, Europe carried out 23 foreign security and defence missions, some with a significant military component, such as in the Congo, in Chad, in Bosnia and in Kosovo, particularly in Bosnia, where it was very significant. It was possible because of the Franco-British agreement. When the French and the British, particularly the British, got involved in the war in Afghanistan at a level that made their participation in military action elsewhere very difficult, and when Great Britain lost its enthusiasm for European defence policy, as it has now, Europe's capacity to take military action diminishes very significantly. That's what's happening now, when there are virtually no European missions, but there are French



missions, which proves what I was saying that they're the ones with the capability, but there are no European missions. There has to be Franco-British collaboration for European missions to exist.

[**Véronica Martins**] Did you know about specific positions supported by France and the United Kingdom at the last IGC with regard to provisions on common security and defence policy that may have given rise to tension?

[**Álvaro de Vasconcelos**] Yes, I mentioned that briefly — on the one hand, there was the French ambition for a successful European policy. The British opposition, which was a little ideological at first, let's say, was that European defence policy is made in NATO.

A very important issue: for the French, Europe should have a common voice in NATO, i.e. the European Union Member States which are members of NATO should have a common position within NATO, a common voice, a European voice in NATO.

The British are totally against this. What they want is for each NATO member country to be for itself and for there to be no consensus building with regard to member country positions. The British argument is that the United States would never accept a common European position. A common European voice would be met with considerable American opposition. To some extent, when WEU was relaunched and when people began to talk about common European defence policy, the Americans were rather displeased at the possibility of a common European voice in the area of defence because it would weaken NATO, and the Americans in particular would find it very difficult to negotiate with a single player. A single European player is a player that builds a consensus before talking to the Americans, but flexibility (the Americans are right on this to some extent) in negotiating in that field is more fragile, and, what's more, the Americans were afraid that their European allies (in fact, they're all allies of the United States, but the closest allies, the ones that are even closer allies of the United States, the closest or most dedicated, if you like) would become weaker in that dialogue in relation to the American positions. So the Americans were the spokespersons for the Intergovernmental Conference on all matters concerning European defence policy from this American point of view, and therefore they opposed that idea, they objected to an Article 5, a kind of Article 5 that would weaken NATO, and were against the idea of a common European voice.

The American position evolved, however, because the United States, which opposed the development of defence policy, now willingly has a more significant presence in Asia, coupled with the fact that it doesn't want to get involved in conflicts close to the European Union, particularly in the Mediterranean ... the lessons it took from the Iraq war, Afghanistan and all that ...

The Obama Administration has said that, for them, it's important for there to be a European defence policy and a common European voice, and hence we could say that the British could then have said 'now we're all for European defence policy'. But that's not the case for various reasons. On the one hand because, in the meantime, the Conservative Party, which is more Pro-Atlantic and anti-European, has come to power in Great Britain, and on the other there's a serious discussion in Great Britain on the actual idea of European integration, and the sectors that are opposed to political Europe are much larger than those that are opposed to economic Europe. So there's no sufficiently strong parliamentary or political consensus to support a more active defence policy, and because the concentration of British power in Afghanistan, after the Iraq war, significantly reduced British capability to participate in European defence. So the discussion covering possible progress in European defence was always opposed, it came in for significant British opposition, and, when I was Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies, we organised several events, debates on Europe, etc., on the Europe of defence, and the British had a dual position. The British, who are very pragmatic, were a little against the rather theoretical discussion on European defence policy, because they also understand that, when the French table more advanced ideas of European defence policy, it doesn't mean they'll necessarily come to fruition. So the British always took the view that they would

discuss conflicts and what to do in response to them, and that progress on European defence policy could be made on that basis.

So they avoided the institutional discussion to some extent, they were even critical of the institutional discussion, but they're also critical for the reasons I've given. And then there's a financial issue (I realised this from my practical activity, in connection with the European Union Institute for Security Studies, a component of European Union security and defence policy), which was that, when it came down to the financial discussion, British opposition was always huge. Such British opposition may be because of a rigorous British policy, which it will be in part, but also because they don't want to empower (to use the English expression) European defence institutions.

**[Véronica Martins]** So we've just stressed the differences, but what about convergence between the United Kingdom and France? What could you highlight in the area of defence? We can deal with more specific aspects, such as the European Armaments Agency, or the broadening of the scope of the Petersberg missions, for example, among other armaments issues.

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** No, as I was just saying, as far as practical questions are concerned, when the question is raised of developing specific missions in the period when they were willing and felt that they could and should participate, such as in the Balkans, the British participated, and, in that respect, there was clear convergence between France and Great Britain at operational level. The fact that the French and British belonged to two European states which are very willing to engage in defence and which have significant defence resources means that, when they reach a political agreement that a particular action should take place, they are both willing.

I think this is where the fundamental convergence lies. The fundamental convergence lies in the French and British understanding that they are essential to each other if there is to be a European defence policy, or if they are both to be able to act at international level.

The fundamental difference (I'll come back to the differences, because they're very important for understanding the problem) is that for the British, cooperation with France is 'cooperation with France'. This was clear in the Libyan operation. Convergence in this respect between the British and French arose because the French and British were a separate group in the European Union in terms of defence, and that, if serious problems requiring common military intervention arose, then they understood each other. That is the current fundamental position of the British Government when it thinks about cooperation in the area of defence, and [...] in the area of armaments it's by means of bilateral cooperation. The French continue to believe that there's a European framework within which such cooperation should develop. And now, with the cuts in European Union Member State defence budgets, that possibility of cooperation becomes a need for cooperation and becomes even greater. Nowadays, national resources for defence are beginning to diminish, and cooperation would therefore make a great deal of sense, yet even so the British continue to stress cooperation with the French and European cooperation in that area.

**[Véronica Martins]** In your opinion, what up to now have been the key successes and most significant shortcomings in building a common security and defence policy?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** Let's begin with the successes. I think the successes are due in large part (we've highlighted the French and British a great deal), but some of the successes ... sometimes individuals play a very important role. I think Javier Solana, as High Representative for European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy, played an important role in the successes. The successes were, after Saint-Malo, having the possibility of holding European elections. There was a series of missions. According to a very close colleague of his, when Solana took on the role of High

Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, he decided that there would be a European mission every six months. This was ‘flying the flag’ a little. So, as I was saying, in the first 10 years, Europe had 23 missions, some very significant and others not. There were 23 missions, and that was the significant success of security and defence policy: it was to have made a significant contribution (no small matter) within a decade to international peace in the Balkans in particular, with the mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, which helped to stabilise the Balkans, that’s a very significant success, a significant contribution to United Nations actions. What’s more, when I went to the United Nations in New York, when I was Director of the European Institute for Security Studies, and talked to the people responsible for the peace missions, they said that the European contribution had become very significant ... in Congo, in Chad, in Lebanon, in several countries of the world, there was a significant European presence in border missions, including missions in Asia and Indonesia. So Europe contributed to international peace. That’s no small matter. In several countries of the world, the idea began to form that the European Union was not only an economic presence — the traditional view of development aid — but that, in the event of serious crises, there would be a European Union military presence.

They were fundamentally humanitarian actions, by which I mean that it wasn’t humanitarian action in the sense of humanitarian aid, with tents or medicines. No, it was action to protect people, to create a condition or situation of peace that would put an end to very serious humanitarian crises.

That was the case of the European Union mission in Chad, with an essentially French military component but under Irish command. That’s very significant, a neutral country in command of a European Union mission gives that mission great legitimacy. It didn’t seem to me to be a French colonial or neo-colonial arrangement, it was a European Union mission.

They provide a very significant contribution to protect the people of Chad and refugees from Sudan [...]. The European Union made a significant contribution to peace and to protecting people. I think that was the significant contribution, and it’s a contribution, let’s say, to stability and democracy in the Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

This was done by the military component, but not only by the military component but also by the police and the judiciary, because the mission in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina had a very large police component and a rule of law component, and that was an important European Union contribution.

So, in that respect, I have no doubt at all that the European Union made an important contribution to peace. What’s happening today is that the enthusiasm that existed for missions for the European Union as a security and defence structure, in 2000 when Portugal held the Presidency, well and truly collapsed at the beginning of the year 2000.

It’s difficult to understand why it collapsed. On the one hand, it collapsed because of Afghanistan, the enormous effort in Afghanistan drained a great deal of European states’ capacity to take international action; it collapsed because there was less consensus on missions, because Germany, the German population, German citizens are increasingly reluctant to take part in military operations. This also diminished, and it also collapsed because the economic and financial crisis forced Member States to make cuts, so they basically make cuts in defence because the idea of European defence is very important for their citizens, but peace missions in non-EU countries are clearly not seen as a priority when there’s unemployment in Europe and problems as serious as there are today in many European countries.

**[Véronica Martins]** And in conclusion, how do you see the future of common defence and security policy?

**[Álvaro de Vasconcelos]** From being an optimist in relation to common defence and security policy, I

wouldn't say that I'm a pessimist now, but I am a critic. I think that the ambition that existed in 2000 for a European rapid intervention force ... it had to be 180 000 men to deploy 60 000 [...] that ambition disappeared. Will it reappear? Will there be a sufficient stimulus for it to reappear?

If we look to the future (let's say 2030, in line with the report I mentioned), we find that the most important European Union Member States, such as Germany, France and Great Britain, will tend to be part of a polycentric world in which many players tend to act as medium-scale powers at global level, sometimes independently of the European Union. So the possibility of European cooperation in the area of defence had grown so strongly out of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina ... incentives for that will diminish rather than increase, because Germany will be more likely to have an international policy of closer ties with China or India, which are emerging powers.

Where can hope still be found? It can be found in your topic, in Franco-British cooperation, so let Europe take care of it, not so that everyone does everything, in line with our dream: a Europe of equal countries that have integrated with each other, a European defence policy pursued by 28 Member States today — who knows how many tomorrow — in which they've all contributed towards common solidarity, towards common action and, primarily, towards international peace, but there must be a group of Member States around France and Great Britain, in a variable-geometry Europe, with differentiated integration, when some progress more rapidly at economic level and others progress more in foreign and defence policy, involving genuine cooperation.

The French and the British must understand that the United States will not be present as it was in the past. I think the French have already understood that, and the British certainly will do too, because they're pragmatic, realistic countries which analyse the international situation, and they'll understand that, if they wish to stabilise and contribute towards stability in areas as important for European security as the Sahel, North Africa or Eastern Europe, they will have to act as a state, as Europeans, without 'waiting for Godot', because in the play, as we know, Godot never comes either ... so as not to be waiting for the United States, and that's where a plan for a European defence policy may re-emerge, in which many Europeans such as ourselves may identify with less, but which will be a stark reality. This will mean that the French will begin to accept that European defence policy will be made by the European Union, but essentially with the British and with some states that will join this group, but it will be on a Franco-British axis that the European Union will support, because peace missions nowadays are not only war missions, they are, above all, peace missions with a crisis management component, a development aid component, a civil society component, the rule of law and policing, and I think Germany will have sufficient capacity for the other components.

Let's move on to defence, not a hard or tough defence ... military action. Franco-British cooperation will be required, and that will be possible under this commitment, as I was saying, less from Europe, which will bring the British in on the side of the French, but more British input, which will bring the French in on the side of the British. If that common movement exists, in the future there'll be something that we'll be able to call European defence that will have to coordinate that military action as a European Union structure that we hope will be more effective in the future and more voluntary, having learned the lessons of that period of the early years of common European missions that the others ended up paying for, and the French and the British, with help from some, perhaps the Polish, who are now increasingly available for initiatives of this kind, will have a significant military commitment.

[**Véronica Martins**] Thank you for your contribution and cooperation.