

Speech by Dr Angela Merkel at the 47th Munich Security Conference
Munich, 5 February 2011

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Mr Ischinger,
Dear David Cameron,

Among all guests, I would like to particularly welcome to Munich the host of yesterday's lunch, Herman Van Rompuy. The lunch lasted six hours, and it did end up being quite successful.

I am pleased to be here again at the Munich Security Conference today, at such an exciting time. The last two decades have fundamentally changed the period following World War Two, that is, the post-War world order. We are slowly but surely becoming aware of this fact. At the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties – as we gladly recall – freedom was on the march. The changes in Central and Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and also the end of the bipolar world order left traces that are visible to this day.

If there is one symbol for this – and as German Chancellor I have the right to say so – it would be the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the opening of the Brandenburg Gate. Since Ronald Reagan would be turning 100 this year, I would like to remind everyone that he is one of the few who publicly predicted the fall of the Wall. At the time, when I heard about his speech on the other side of the Iron Curtain, I thought: Well, many predictions have been made. But none of us – or at least almost none of us – believed that this would come true so soon. Today, the European Union is different, NATO is larger, and the separation of the world into blocs is a thing of the past – with everything this means. In many ways, the world has become more confusing. The march of freedom could not be stopped, and we were there to witness it.

Next, some events occurred that quickly brought us back down to earth and to reality. In the nineties, books were written about "The End of History". At the latest when war broke out in the Balkans did we realize that this would not be true. The first

ten years of the 21st century brought more dramatic events: first, September 11th 2001 and, second, a great global economic crisis the likes of which had not been seen for decades. It was essentially a crisis brought about by market excesses and by irresponsible, unregulated actions.

We experienced a third development as well – something I am firmly convinced also played a role in the late eighties with the changes that Europe underwent then – namely the breakthrough of the information society's new technology. Since the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, we have been confronted with an ever larger amount, and ever more precise, information. What we have been witnessing for a few years now, namely the triumph of the Internet, will change our societies in ways we all can probably not foresee. Twitter, Facebook and social networks – in this world, it has become impossible for anyone to hide, and a face is quickly put on everything.

These very days – and this could not be predicted while this security conference was being planned – we are seeing images that truly bring back memories of what we experienced in Europe: people mustering their courage, people casting away fear, people clearly speaking their mind, and denouncing injustice. We would be untrue to ourselves if we were not to declare that we stand by these people who are taking their concerns to the streets. That is why we also say: it is absolutely crucial that the liberties we believe to be universal – freedom of the media, freedom of opinion, and journalistic freedom – are at home not only in Europe, in the United States and elsewhere, but that the Egyptian authorities, too, are called upon to guarantee them. I think that yesterday, which for the most part was peaceful, testified to this. We can only hope that developments continue to move in this direction.

There will be a change in Egypt. Of course, change must be shaped in a way that it can be guided by a spirit of peace and reason. I would now like to recall my own experience, even though direct comparisons cannot be made. Once the Wall fell, we did not want to wait a single day. We were always told that we would have to wait until 1 July 1990 for monetary union. Yet in fact, we wanted the deutschmark right away. We did not want to wait very long for German unification. When unification did

come on 3 October, and we saw how great a transition was required, we were glad to see that a few people had done a good job in preparing it.

This means that change must be moulded. We, the European Union, – as we jointly stated yesterday – want a new partnership to help shape change. Our territory borders on the North African coast. Cathy Ashton will travel there. Various foundations are active there, and we have many contacts to civil society. Hillary Clinton and I have just agreed that the United States and Europe can work very closely in shaping the change. We want to do so, it is our duty.

After all, during the first decade of this century, we also had another experience, one we must always bear in mind as we witness current events in Egypt, in Tunisia, and in other countries – after all, what happened on 11 September led to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, we must remember that simply exporting what we call Westminster Democracy – and I am saying this now in the presence of the British Prime Minister – will not work in all regions of this world. This means that we now face the task of, on the one hand, helping and, on the other hand, becoming aware of what we expect our model to achieve in other places. We must decide where there are specific cultures and independent developments, with which we must not, and of course cannot, interfere.

In this connection, the red line, beyond which we can make no compromises, is the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Almost all countries in the world have signed this Universal Declaration. This means we can in no way compromise on respecting the dignity of each individual. Therefore in everything we do – and, looking back, we must ask ourselves if we have always done so in the past – as well as in all our cooperation, we must keep a constant eye on human rights, and on our common values. Of course we will not have brought the world into line with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by tomorrow. Our foreign and security policy therefore faces formidable challenges.

I want to be perfectly clear: on the one hand, we have an obligation to pursue value-based foreign policy and, on the other hand, we of course are also obliged to guarantee security and stability. In many instances, there is a certain tension

between the two. It is my belief that one should never make compromises that completely ignore the first aspect, respect for human rights. That is also why all negotiations in which I have participated – for example, those on the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy – have also always been tough negotiations on our principles of cooperation; this will not change. At yesterday's European Council meeting, we also said that, when and where we give financial support, we will make an even greater effort to ensure that these principles are respected.

Now I would like turn my focus to the development of the transatlantic relationship over the past two decades. Freedom's victory march, and the enforcement of our common transatlantic values, could be felt. Yet we also had difficult times. Europe experienced division over the Iraq war, which opened a rift in the transatlantic relationship.

However, we can also look back on some great successes, which I would like to recall here today. When I first participated in the Munich Security Conference as Federal Chancellor, I spoke about how I wished to see NATO become more of a place for political discussion, not just military discussion. This we have achieved. We have a new security concept. This security concept is clearly one that addresses military questions, but it also tackles political ones. We went into Afghanistan together. It is my true and strong desire that we also leave Afghanistan together. We have reached agreement on networked security. We thus proved that we, the North Atlantic Alliance, stand shoulder-to-shoulder on an important issue, namely the fight against international terrorism, which has been our great challenge since 11 September 2001.

We have also learned that, in principle, we cannot solve any of the large international conflicts exclusively within NATO, or as the United States of America or Europe. In Afghanistan, we have many other allies. Regarding proliferation, to turn to Iran, we are holding the E3+3 talks. There are six-party talks on the issue of North Korea. There is a Middle East Quartet in which the United Nations and Russia play an important role. We have built up a completely new partnership with Russia that is slowly making the end of the Cold War a reality – step by step, and despite all of the

human rights questions that we still need to discuss. We have also learned that we cannot fight international terrorism if we do not cooperate with Arab states. Let me just mention Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt, in its former days.

I therefore say that we of course have a responsibility, on the one hand, within our alliance, i.e. NATO, to keep the pillar of this alliance strong, to shore it up, and to engage in intensive discussions on the new challenges. For all of these challenges did not exist to the present extent twenty years ago. International terrorism did not pose the major danger it does today. Also, we did not have to deal with such pressing proliferation issues. On the other hand, in the post-Cold War period, we must do this knowing that neither NATO nor the transatlantic partnership can singularly solve the major problems of the world. This means that we need partners across the globe. And we must make an ever greater effort to establish such partnerships, because we live in a multipolar world, in which certain rising powers will have to shoulder more responsibility.

This brief digression brings me to the issue of the global financial and economic crisis, and to the new power structures in the world. As I have always said: this international economic crisis will reshuffle the global deck. That is precisely what has happened. In terms of economic strength, the emerging economies are today much stronger than in the past. They will play an ever more important role. On the other hand, I am firmly convinced that the emerging economies, which are gaining great economic power, must gradually assume more responsibility for security and foreign policy. That is why it was so significant that Russia and China, too, supported sanctions against Iran. That is why it is so significant that China is also playing an important role in the six-party talks. As cumbersome as this may be, we should consistently use transatlantic relations to urge these major economic actors to in future actually assume the responsibility that falls on them.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's not beat about the bush: There are challenges to which we have not yet found the final answer. When I look at NATO's new Strategic Concept, everything in connection with cyber defence and cyber attacks is rightly given prominence. Together, we will have to learn how to respond to this challenge. The classic military threat is a thing of the past. International terrorism is hard to

grasp, because people are prepared to sacrifice their lives for this cause – no real deterrence exists for those with such a mind-set. With cyber attacks, we are faced with a situation where military and technical factors interact in a completely new way. This means we will require international agreements on how to address the threats posed by cyber attacks. If we fail to reach agreement, then many actors will start a cyber defence race, and I suspect the possibility of attacks across this domain will increase. Much money will be wasted without an army to show for it, as was the case during the Cold War, but this will still not solve our problems. That means we must think about how we can reach relevant international agreements.

Second, we will extend our concepts of networked security. During the past ten years, we have also learned that military attacks alone will not lead to lasting peace. This, too, is an important lesson. During the Cold War, there was the principle of deterrence. By and large, there was no military activity. The military interventions of the 21st century show that they must be embedded in a concept of networked security.

We will also have to learn how to handle information, or better the unfettered exchange of information. I do not wish to comment on Wikileaks here – I am sure you will understand – but we can begin by addressing air passenger data, bank data, SWIFT and the new US-EU directives on air passenger data sharing. Negotiations on this are highly controversial. Here too, we must try to strike just as much of a balance between the individual's right to information privacy, as we say in Germany, and the necessary protection against terrorist attacks – as we have done in the past on so many other issues.

The last challenge is this: the transatlantic pillar cannot resolve all conflicts in this world. I am firmly convinced that we must use our capabilities to help others develop their own capabilities, so that they can resolve the conflicts on their continents. I am thinking, for example, of our partner, the African Union. We can contribute much experience, but it is not possible for our transatlantic alliance to intervene in conflicts ranging from the Sudan to Somalia, to Côte d'Ivoire, and elsewhere; of course, in most cases, there is no question of military action, but even contributing through

peacekeeping operations is sometimes not at all welcome. What we should be able to do jointly is to encourage, and to create the conditions for peace.

Ladies and gentlemen, these days we are spending much time analyzing what mistakes we have made in our interaction with systems that are proving to be failing. I would suggest instead that we from time to time reflect on the good things that we may have done. The great technological inventions that have changed our lives to such a great extent – for example, the computer and the Internet – all originated from free societies. They come from where minds are free and where free research is possible; where people are free to develop and where creativity can flourish. I am therefore optimistic that societies based on our model – which respects each individual's dignity and gives people the opportunity to realize their potential and to make full use of their skills – are still best-suited to fighting terrorism and countering all attacks on freedom.

That is why on days when we ask ourselves “what did we do wrong?” we may also take some pride in saying: we have made many things possible that are now part of our everyday lives in today's world. The fact that Facebook and Twitter exist all over the world, and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to block these services, whether in China, Egypt, Tunisia, or elsewhere, is at least to a very small extent our achievement. If we cooperate with many others in this world, then I believe the transatlantic pillar can be instrumental in helping make this a better world, although many problems remain.

Thank you.