

The Gerold von Braunmühl Lecture Series

The German Foreign Ministry established and continues to support the Gerold von Braunmühl Memorial Lecture Series in honor of a SAIS Bologna Center alumnus, who was assassinated by terrorists on Oct. 10, 1986.

Von Braunmühl's career carried him to the most senior positions in his country's foreign ministry. At the time of his death, he was Political Director, working closely with the Foreign Minister.

In the inaugural lecture in 1988, Germany's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher described von Braunmühl as one of the "architects of German politics," particularly of its Ostpolitik, and "an outstanding example of historical experiences, the spiritual stimuli and the political premise that govern the fate of our nation and the course of German foreign policy."

The ministry also established the Gerold von Braunmühl Memorial Fellowship for a German student at the Bologna Center, which the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst and the Bologna Center administer.

In addition to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, previous speakers and their titles at the time of their lectures were: Alois Mock, Foreign Minister of Austria and Bologna Center alumnus; Gèza Jeszenszky, Foreign Minister of Hungary; Süleyman Demirel, former Prime Minister and President of Turkey; Douglas Hurd, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; Jüri Luik, Foreign Minister of Estonia; Susanna Agnelli, Foreign Minister of Italy; Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission; Marjorie Mowlam, M.P., United Kingdom, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Miguel Nadal Segalà, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Spain; and Klaus Kinkel, former Deputy Chancellor and Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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Special Lecture Series

Europe on its Way to a Political Union?

The Gerold von Braunmühl Lecture Series
Bologna, March 20, 2007

President Richard von Weizsäcker

Federal Republic of Germany
(1984–1994)

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I was moved to receive this invitation to give a Memorial Lecture dedicated to Gerold von Braunmühl, whom I knew and for whom I had the highest respect. Having been expelled from his home in former East Germany, he worked towards peace in Europe in his key position as Political Director of the Federal Foreign Office. With his analytical and conceptual skills, he devoted all his strength until the day he died in 1986 to freeing the world from all the dangers of the East-West conflict and to promoting an atmosphere of understanding and reconciliation in Europe. Thus Gerold von Braunmühl was one of the architects of today's free and united Europe. Not only in view of Germany's EU Presidency during the first six months of this year but also in reference to the work of Gerold von Braunmühl, I would like to present some thoughts on the subject of "Europe on its way to a Political Union?" Let me begin by looking back at some length. It is nothing new I have to present. It is simply a description of how my generation, which had been participating fully in the Second World War, was looking forward to new political answers, to a new political Europe in the times to come.

I.

The Second World War was coming to an end. A National Socialist rule over our continent had finally been averted. What lay ahead for Europe? In February 1945, the victors drew up a new map of the continent with a demarcation line which divided it from north to south. This was the result of the meeting between Roosevelt and Stalin in the Black Sea resort of Yalta. Churchill was also present.

In July 1945, two months after the end of the war, the Potsdam Conference followed. It confirmed that America and the Soviet Union now shared the domination of Europe. Europe appeared to have been reduced to a buffer zone between the two.

And what about Churchill? Even before agreement had been reached in Potsdam, he was voted out of office – at least for the time being – in July 1945.

However, the European tragedy was very much on his mind. What could be done to overcome the new tumult among the victors? How could the chaos and desperation among the vanquished be dealt with? That was the situation when Churchill came to Zurich some 60 years ago. In a pithy speech which displayed courage and foresight, he called upon us to create the United States of Europe. His words electrified an exhausted world. Let us create a European family once more, he proclaimed. Generous wisdom and a “blessed act of oblivion” (Gladstone) could help us. The two great nations France and Germany should, he said, take the lead. The United Kingdom, the Commonwealth of Nations, the USA and the Soviet Union should be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe. Churchill’s appeal had a unique historic force. With it, he laid a foundation stone for the future.

Under the Presidency of the great European, Jean Monnet, the Coal and Steel Community was the first step towards integration. Coal and steel were not just

industries for the future. Their integration was intended to prevent any new national arms race preparing new revenge wars among European nations. The goal, therefore, was primarily political from the start and by no means purely economic.

The six founders were eager to go ahead and to create the European Defence Community. However, there was no majority for this institution in France's National Assembly. Instead, the European Economic Community was founded in 1957 with the Treaties of Rome. We have every reason to celebrate the 50th anniversary together on 23 March.

The EDC thus became the EEC. A customs union paved the way from the common to the single market. The single market was created and evolved into an extraordinary global achievement, especially under the strong leadership of the Commission President, Jacques Delors. From the outset, the single market developed into much more than a simple free-trade zone. Four spheres of freedom were agreed upon: free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, while agricultural policy and external trade policy were integrated. Today, the EU speaks with one voice in the World Trade Organization. Competition rules in the internal market are subject to central management and monitoring. Both have garnered international attention for Europe, even in the USA. A general European canon of laws was drawn up, the *acquis communautaire*. Finally, a European Court of Justice was established whose decisions are binding for the national legal sphere.

The success of the European single market, the world's largest economic area, meant that the Union was soon faced with the chance and challenge of inviting new European countries to join, or to be more precise, to comply with their request to be admitted. The Copenhagen Criteria were adopted. They are the EU's yardstick, mainly of a political but also of an economic nature, for the admission of new members. These prerequisites include democracy, an independent rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities.

II.

All of this is well-known to us all. It sounds quite matter-of-fact. And it is being taken for granted by younger generations. Nevertheless it describes an unprecedented development. While the majority of European peoples had been deprived of their self-determination during the Second World War, the process which now began was no less than a step-by-step expansion of freedom. An attractive area of peaceful coexistence, free of violence, emerged without any pressure from the outside. It had an ever more powerful and, at the same time, completely peaceful impact on the East-West division of Europe. Under the shield of the Atlantic Alliance, the Cold War gradually subsided thanks to the Community's appeal and magnetism.

The Berlin Wall came down; most Member States of the former Warsaw Pact system sought and soon found their way into the Atlantic security system and into the European Community. We Germans were particularly keen to see these old European countries included in the new Union. My country, Germany, lies at the heart of the continent and we have nine neighbours, more than any other country in the world except Russia and China. Our history has therefore never belonged to us alone. It has always been shaped by pressure both from within and without. Today, or rather since 1 May 2004, we belong to the same Union. Although we all have our specific interests, no neighbour is threatening us or afraid of us. The era of fears among us is over. Historically, this kind of development has never been experienced before in the centre of our continent. It is wonderful that young people today take that state of affairs simply for granted.

III.

Sixty years have now passed since Churchill launched his appeal in Zurich. Today, the third generation following him is at the helm and it is faced with a

completely changed world. Yalta has been forgotten and the tension between East and West has been replaced by globalization. As a global power, America seems to hold an insurmountable lead over the rest of the world, while China and India have become strong players.

At the same time, the current world situation is plagued by crises. Which responsible force can deal with them? Although the United Nations has credibility and legitimacy, its mandate exceeds by far the intentions of its most powerful members.

And the European Union? Does it exist? Has it any real influence or does it make any helpful contributions? As Henry Kissinger said: What is the telephone number? Yet it consists of 27 nations and half a billion inhabitants. It accounts for one quarter of global GDP. It has the world's largest single market. Peace prevails amongst its Member States. To the extent that the EU speaks with one voice, it is one of the very few global forces. But this is still far too narrow.

The Community, however, is not very popular with its own citizens at present. Where are we heading? Will we have ever more Member States? Ever more immigrants? Where are the boundaries? How can we hold our own in the face of competition? What will bring us growth and employment? Who will ensure social equity? Are our energy supplies guaranteed? Who governs Europe anyway? What is their democratic legitimacy?

The field is open for both serious questions and demagogic populism: if one cannot resolve problems at home, is it not too easy and most convenient to make Europe the scapegoat?

The European Community has grown because nations have surrendered key aspects of their sovereignty to a central body. That is unprecedented. However, a

proper state has not evolved. Rather, we Member States have become post-classical nation-states. There are no relevant historical models for this. The EU does not mean the end of the nation-state. In the EU, people's ties with their own country remain; and the political debate is conducted at home.

The EU's increased weight is undeniable. Its Member States have joined together because they have finally learned from history, but also because every country senses that it cannot master the challenges of globalization on its own.

Yet, to start with, the EU's power depends on the vitality of its Member States. Some of them, especially the large ones, are currently struggling hard at home to implement essential reforms which, in many cases, are long overdue. What role does the EU play here? Can and should it provide assistance? Is it authorized and willing to protect us from unpopular national reforms, as some citizen's hope? Conversely, others fear that the Commission is too business-friendly and pro-market. But even if that were true, it does not have enough authority or clout to either regulate the labour markets in question or to ensure social equity in individual nations. The principle of solidarity is firmly anchored in our home countries. We ourselves bear responsibility for the labour market and taxes, as well as for the young, the old and health.

The more recent European treaties, in particular the 2002 Nice Treaty, demonstrated that our capability to take action is inadequate. This was especially apparent following the eastward enlargement. A major new treaty was thus drafted – the Constitutional Treaty. It was largely accepted. Italy, which ratified the Treaty with the overwhelming approval of the population in April 2005 – one month before Germany – was one of the first Member States to do so. However, the draft failed to win approval by a narrow margin in two of the founding countries. Regardless of whether or not this “no” mainly points to national crises, it has had an impact on us all.

The draft is difficult to read but it does comprise steps towards European integration, which are absolutely necessary and which have been strongly demanded, especially by those countries which rejected the Constitutional Treaty. The term “constitution” may be defined in many ways. It is not a sacred concept. However, there is not the least doubt that the EU needs a reliable framework, a clear political compass. The goal of the draft is absolutely indispensable. Only then will we Europeans be capable of action. Only then will we be a force for peace, a force to cope with our interests and with our share of global responsibilities. Only then will we have learned our lessons from history. This is the pivotal task of Germany’s EU Presidency and there is little time left before the next election of the European Parliament which will take place in 2009.

It was Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi, Jean Monnet and Jacques Delors, Valéry Giscard D’Estaing and Helmut Schmidt, François Mitterand and Helmut Kohl, Paul Henri Spaak, Edward Heath, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Vaclav Havel and many others who embarked on the European path for us all. They have set the standard to which we must aspire.

It is essential and certainly within our capabilities to lend new momentum to the partnership, especially among the founding countries. We are very much hoping for a fresh new European wind to blow from France after the presidential elections in May. From the outset, and especially during the Cold War, Italy has raised a particularly wise and strong voice on behalf of Europe on which we can continue to rely anew in the future. In addition, we also need an open and constructive European engagement by Poland, our most important neighbour in the East.

Our paramount joint mandate is to tighten the EU’s decision making structure in foreign affairs. We have to learn to speak with one voice. This we have already achieved in the WTO. There, one European speaks for us all on external trade.

We have to learn the same lesson in other fields, especially in the most important one: foreign and security policy. This is not an easy task. So far, in this field, we have committed serious mistakes. Within the European Council, we had a heated debate on the imminent war in Iraq. This seriously paralysed us. As long as we Europeans quarrel among ourselves about our relationship with the United States of America, within the United Nations and even within NATO, we do harm only to ourselves, not to the US. There is, for instance, the British experience. From the outset, Tony Blair went to Washington time and again, to support the plan for a war in Iraq. Of course, he was welcomed as a friend, but he did not have the faintest influence (“Poodle”). His remarks, including critical ones, would have had some impact as the voice of a leading EU member. We must, can and will learn our lessons from past mistakes. We Europeans of course have close ties with America.

Our security is inconceivable without the United States of America. Within the European Union, we have the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Here it is necessary to reach an understanding with each other on common positions. This concerns common defence plans as well as related technology research. We belong to the Atlantic Alliance, not divided but united. Of course an alliance of the reluctant is not very impressive. So let us sit down and reflect now on how to reach a common stance. Instead, the wrong answer would be an alliance as a subdivision such as an “alliance of the willing” against the reluctant. Therefore, I strongly disagree with remarks made by the Polish Deputy Minister of Defence, stating that NATO was not enough for Poland and that the country needed close bilateral security cooperation with the United States of America. Such a division would, in the final analysis, not even help the Americans. They themselves are, in the longer run, dependent on a European Union which commands the ability and determination to act jointly on its own account. This is where we Europeans must find a common stance on questions such as an anti-

missile defence system against whomsoever. Or, even more important, how to live up to one of the most important parts of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, namely atomic disarmament by those who possess atomic weaponry instead of modernizing and increasing their armaments. I am quite confident that Chancellor Merkel's visit to Poland will produce a common stand with our Eastern EU members. A week before Chancellor Merkel's negotiations, I had followed an invitation by the Polish President Kaczynski. My impression after a very long conversation by just the two of us was quite positive about the forthcoming Polish stand.

It is imperative in this respect that we proactively benefit from the NATO-Russia Council. We need a common approach in our policy vis-à-vis Russia. Russia is a great but complicated neighbour and by no means a democracy in our sense. Yet Russia is not our enemy. Russia needs the West just as much as we need Russia. The links that connect Russia and the West are much stronger than those which are antagonizing.

As I just said, within the EU we want to learn from the experiences which our new Eastern Member States have gathered during the course of their past and present relations with Russia. We are thinking here in particular of Poland and of the Baltic states. As we must not allow the newly enlarged EU to be divided by America on security issues, it is equally important that EU Member States do not allow themselves to be divided or played off against one another by Russia when it comes to energy supplies. Germany will not try to satisfy its energy supplies bilaterally with the Russians. Hungary, too, should not, as we are hearing now, seek to conclude its own gas supply contracts with Russia outside an EU-wide agreement. Poland should not ensure its military security bilaterally with the Americans. In all of these issues, both Poland and Germany, as well as all other EU Member States, can only gain real influence if they stand together. We are in the process of learning this.

There are other great challenges to be faced jointly. We are very keen to find solutions in the Middle East. All of us, including Germany in the first place, wholeheartedly support the State of Israel's right to exist. However, this cannot be achieved alone through Israel's military superiority over its immediate neighbours. Rather, political talks and concrete results with Israel's direct neighbours, with Syria, Lebanon and a future Palestinian state, are of vital importance. The former Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was always aware that this was necessary and pursued this path for his country. Progress in this direction also requires understanding and cooperation between the West and Russia.

The same applies to the persistent danger that Iran will develop nuclear weapons. Iran is a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is not barred from using nuclear energy for peaceful ends. This includes the enrichment of fissile material.

Our task now is to achieve binding arrangements with Iran through the Security Council on how to ensure that the enrichment process is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Simply imposing ever stricter sanctions on Iran would merely cause entrenchment, especially in Iran itself. How can we bring about progress here? Iran is a large and proud nation with a strong and ancient culture. It is surrounded on all sides by atomic weaponry (India, Pakistan, Russia, in Afghanistan and Iraq by the Allied Forces, and Israel) Iran has its own strong security problem. In the end, will America only be left with the option of a military strike as many are speculating?

The Iran problem cannot be resolved with military means, as General Scowcroft and other wise American advisers have clearly stated. However, it is another area where cooperation between the West and Russia is needed.

The successful conclusion of the Doha Round in the World Trade Organization is also ultimately in our common interests. In order to prevent this round from breaking down, decisions have to be made both in Europe and America, particularly in the agricultural sphere.

Russia not only needs reliable customers for its energy supplies but it also very much needs improved technology and industrial capacities. In all of this, the mutual interests shared by Russia and the EU remain closely connected.

IV.

I will not mention additional examples and issues here, although of course there are many. More than anything else, it is crucial that we in the EU recognize our common foreign and security policy interests. The more this happens, the sooner we will realize that we have to lay down our decision-making processes in a treaty, thus enhancing the EU's capability to act. In the long run, we cannot allow every decision on foreign policy to be blocked only by the veto of one single member out of the 27 Member States.

The future negotiations and agreements towards a new European fundamental treaty will progress in this direction. The term constitutional for such an arrangement is not binding, as I mentioned earlier.

I believe that we are much closer to agreeing on this than we were at the time of the Constitutional Convention. We agree that international law has to be strengthened, human rights have to be better protected and the United Nations reformed. Together we have championed the International Criminal Court. Moreover, only together can we find protection from criminal and terrorist risks. However, we are also united in our rejection of a system like Guantanamo. Security measures must not be allowed to increasingly hem in the freedom and human rights of individuals.

V.

We Europeans cannot choose the world we want and we must play a foreign-policy role. It is this world in which we have to safeguard our interests and which determines our tasks and responsibilities, and often also our partners.

Thus we have learned that the only effective response to globalization, which we regard as inevitable, is to speak with one voice. Despite all the euroscepticism among our citizens, beguiled by populist election campaigners, approval for “more Europe” is nevertheless growing among ordinary people, particularly in the sphere of foreign, security and climate protection policy. Admittedly, we quarrel often and with passion. In truth, however, no-one can or wants to run away. The sense of belonging to a family is growing and with it political union. This means substantial progress on the voting rules in the European Council, a common foreign minister with real responsibilities, as well as an enhanced CFSP and ESDP.

Sometimes age is an advantage. For those like me who heard Churchill’s historic appeal from Zurich sixty years ago, it seemed like a distant dream. But in reality, in just fifty years, we have witnessed the path embarked upon by a united Europe. That is why I feel fairly confident. It is a long-lasting development. It needs time and patience. It needs your activity, the activity of the young ones. It will come. And one day, even America will discover that there still is a somewhat useful and interesting partner on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. The Western world and community is not going to disappear.

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