

Poland and the Sleeping Beauty of European Integration, 1989-2019.

Lecture at the Institute of International Affairs, Wellington, New Zealand

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31 August 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Institute of International Affairs on its 75th anniversary and an impressive record of achievement. It has been twenty years since my country and its region started their second life. Poland is over a thousand years' old but Eric Hobsbawm's short twentieth century was the most tragic and bitter in its history. Tomorrow, leaders from around the world will gather to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two which left Poland with six million dead. They will look back and reflect on the nature of human soul that made it possible. But they will also stand in relief that the last twenty years have been at last put to such a good use in Europe. Since 1989, we have witnessed one of the most rapid transformation processes in modern times. Twenty years to the day, on 31 August 1989, Hungary allowed East German refugees to travel to West Germany, hence defying the communist "solidarity" that kept countries of the region in the freeze for fifty years. A process was gaining momentum which would offer the hope of a lasting taste of freedom.

1989 and the "hour of Europe".

For me, 1989 was when the second life started for Europe as well. I see it as the founding moment of the European Union as we see her today and key to its continued relevance. As the former Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek recalled, the feeling of a European community of purpose was strong and clear when the entire Western Europe was wearing the pin of the underground Solidarity movement in the 1980s that eventually undermined the regime and when people protested against the martial law in Poland in 1981. "This was the moment when Europe demonstrated what it was really about". It was in Poland in the spring of 1989 that the Round Table talks were held between the communist government and democratic opposition and the moral superiority of the anti-communist dissidents translated itself for the first time into a political power-sharing agreement which was really crucial for the eventual success.

What happened next from 1989 up until today was an experiment in political engineering to create space for the various social groups, some of which suffered enormously as a result of the transformation. The Polish film director Krzysztof Krauze says rightly that in 1989 we got rid of fear which enabled the new opening in the country. Poland changed its neighbours entirely and had to build relations with all of them more or less from scratch. Linking up countries economically, even though complicated in itself, proved to be easier than doing the same at the level of historical memory. Not surprisingly since looking back at the first World War, the Germans and the French

think of the Verdun cemetery, the Poles think of regaining independence after almost a hundred years of political oblivion. The date of the Soviet invasion, 17 September 1939, was a watershed for Poland and the Baltic states but a lot of people in Western Europe do not know much about it. Testifying that history is very much alive in the old continent, 140 German intellectuals signed a letter a week ago saying that without the Nazi Germany there would not have been a communist Eastern Europe. We are still living through it as the future unfolds. It is a miracle that in such a difficult context, it was possible to create a project which with an equally unprecedented appeal. The key to that success is understanding of diversity in Europe which is the continent's unique strength. In Europe, "the other has always lived within the eyesight or arm's length", the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman rightly observes. "The other is your closest neighbor in Europe".

Poland and 1989 – return of the hope.

For Poland and for the post-Soviet Europe, 1989 is of critical importance. It is the end point of a tragic century and a victory of hope. As the political scientist Aleksander Smolar puts it, "for Western Europe but also for the United States, the geopolitical dimension was the most important". Hence 1989 was seen as an outcome of the great powers' play rather than a quest for freedom. Not surprisingly, it is the fall of the Berlin wall, the symbol of Europe's division, that is remembered much better in the world than the Polish Solidarity movement and the Round Table talks, the first compromise between the communist government and the opposition, a model for many other transformations.

The European Union is one of the best things that happened to Poland. It proved to be a unique formula for transforming the country's politics, economy and the way of life. It was an up-hill struggle. The Polish painter Franciszek Starowieyski portrayed some of the anxieties when he painted a massive canvas currently at display at the Polish representation to the European Union called "*Divina Polonia rapta per Europa profana*" showing a fat, naked woman as Poland being pulled onto a bull by savage Europe. A sense of belonging was always very important in Poland's attempt to "return to Europe" as the process was often perceived. There was little of a wholehearted embrace of the new members by the old, at least that was the reading among the former. However, enlargement is by far the most successful project that the European Union has ever embarked upon. It may have saved it from a major existential crisis already.

It is interesting the way that Tacitus describes how in the 2nd century AD a debate was held in the Roman Senate about enlarging the Empire and whether it should annex Gallia and Germania. Claudius prevailed and they agreed to take over Gallia. This was the last long stable period for peace and prosperity for the Roman Empire but a different Roman Empire. Similarly the EU has certainly gained by enlarging but it will still have to come to terms with how much it has changed as a result. Moreover, it will have to come to terms again with the fact that shutting the doors closed to future new members would defy the logic of openness on which it was built. Hence, reflecting on the possible accession of Turkey which is undergoing the second great modernization effort after Atatürk, the EU will have to straighten out its attitude to Islam and come to terms with the view that Islam and democracy go together. The EU has borders with dictatorships such as Belarus already. It will have to live with having borders with Iran, Syria and Iraq. The problem lies deeply in the minds

of the European elites. As Jacques Rupnik once remarked, “everyone is someone else’s barbarian”. The Europeans have temporarily lost appetite for transforming countries which do little to transform themselves. They will, however, realize that especially with regard to their closest neighbours, lack of engagement is not an option. This is very much what is behind the recent Polish-Swedish initiative on Eastern Partnership.

The EU: introversion that comes from a dream.

The European Union has problems thinking big partly because it has not entirely managed to shake off the trauma of the failed federalist dream. Quite likely, the aspiration to build the myth of a constitutional union was Europe’s step too far for the moment. The Constitutional Treaty, signed at the magnificent Capitol Hill in Rome in November 2004, was a product of deliberative democracy but it failed to pass the test of popular democracy. It was an attempt by the elites to make their project a project of the people. The effort turned out to be too little too late. Worse still, the elites have also lost interest and failed to lead a confused public.

The new treaty is still needed, however tortuous the way of getting there, because the European Union is a contractual arrangement between its Member States. It can achieve results on the basis of a political will to act together but it will not function properly as long as it does not have a legal basis which is adequate to the tasks and challenges it faces. Part of the problem is that the European interest is still a postulate and not a reality, as Bronisław Geremek used to say. Paradoxically, it was easier to build a nation when means of communication were modest and dispersed. Today, one can be loud and clear about the European identity but people will still wait to be convinced.

A Chatham House commission concluded in the 1980s that “there is no definable British national interest”. The world looked increasingly more complex already at the time. While the national interest might be difficult to pin down and capture, threats and risks as perceived from the British perspective are different than those of Finland, Brazil or New Zealand. It was fashionable in Germany a few years ago to discuss the national interest. People would have criticized Chancellor Helmut Kohl for not perceiving the national interest but the European interest. Sensible conclusion of that debate was to say that the existence of a body like the EU is in the German national interest. Convergence of interests in the EU massively outweighs divergence. Polish or Dutch national interests are increasingly indistinguishable from interests of other member states.

Westphalia’s fusion with post-Westphalia.

The future world order will be increasingly about a fusion of Westphalian and post-Westphalian rules of the game with state power remaining an important factor but gaining real prominence only when combined with a more universal power of attraction. Naked exposition of state of sovereignty as a top value will be a failure just as exclusive reliance on post-modern superiority of values would be. Simon Serfaty was right when he said that just as Europe invented cities, then states, it has now invented member states as a new category and form of statehood. Trade policy, environmental policy, they have all been handed over to the EU level but governments carry out their foreign policy

with the hands tied back, pretending nothing has happened. At the time when the state returns with a vengeance in economic policy, the European Union should make sure its foreign policy is not a random collection of common positions or merely a state of mind.

The changing logic of European integration.

One can speak of different ways of explaining the rationale for European integration. Some see as the victory over the state that had done so much harm in the first half of the last century. Others believe it is about a renewal of the state in the wider context. It is also seen as simply another platform for bringing about the traditional foreign policy objectives of states. A new explanation will be needed in today's world somewhere between the EU as a global actor and the EU that protects. The latter matters because for many the new hour of Europe is about shielding ourselves from all sorts of rivalries coming from the outside. "Our citizens expect from us resolute action to protect them", President Sarkozy said in a recent letter to the European G7 members. For the moment, we have an either-or debate. But it will soon lead to a new common denominator being built.

This is because whatever the theory of choice, the European Union is today striving for relevance in the world for which it no longer provides a sufficiently appealing formula. Ryszard Kapuściński, the famous Polish reporter, noted 10-15 years ago that the attitude to Europe had changed. Previously when he travelled the world, someone always caught up with him on the street and asked: "Mister Kapuściński, can you tell us what is going on in Europe now?". Then people stopped asking. Europe became one of the pieces on the chessboard. Grand designs no longer are expected from her. Kapuściński also observed that the Europeans used to treat the rest of the world as a playground and entertainment. Today, they see it as full of threats. Almost like in the final years of the Roman empire when its borders were described as "ubi sunt leones" on the map, meaning full of lions and hence unwise to venture into.

Winning back Europe's relevance.

As Paul Henri Spaak put it, "Europe still consists solely of small countries. The only relevant distinction that remains is that some countries understand this, while others still refuse to acknowledge it." This is one of the keys to understand the EU as it is. The new global context is Europe's opportunity, its chance to show to the people that it is relevant. Europe had 25 percent of the global population in 1900, 12 percent in the 1960s, it will have 4 percent in 2050. Does it matter for Europe not to be capable of having a say internationally? It does because the world is a more and more unstable place. There are choke points in the oil transportation system around the Gulf area which can easily become the target for the terrorists. There are more and more countries interested in the possession of nuclear technology. The risks increase and not decrease as a result.

The myth of a global Europe is the only potent political proposition which exists for the European Union today. There is a twin logic in this of first of all the EU consolidating in order to better compete internationally and secondly of the EU experimenting with the way of cooperation, dialogue, legal basis, so that it becomes useful in the global context. It is about creating a stable platform for

problem-solving and pan-global solidarity. But the global Europe will only become a viable prospect if the EU undergoes a process of renewal allowing her to project a sense of purpose to the outside world. It will have to take place on the basis of an economic revitalization.

“Reform, reform, aren’t things bad enough already?” - Justice Astbury would enjoy a lot of sympathy today for his dictum from early in the last century. “Reform used to mean social progress but for the last twenty years, it has symbolized social regression” – guess who said that? The president of the French employers federation. Europe to many people have come to symbolize sweat, pain and suffering. It also continues to receive low-skilled or unskilled labour while the USA, Canada and Australia are able to attract talented migrants. The EU needs an estimated 20 million migrant workers by 2030. Today, 22 percent of the Europeans are over 60 and by 2050 this will rise to 38 percent. In Italy, 60 year olds will outnumber the 20 year olds by two to one in 2030. There is a lot that needs to change inside the European house first.

In an Irish joke, someone walks into a pub and asks “how do I get to Dublin?” He hears in response: “if I was to go to Dublin, I wouldn’t start from here”. The point of departure in politics is always leadership. The European Union faces a systemic leadership challenge. The method of Treaty change has run into the sand with the failed project to draft the European Constitution and successive attempts to resuscitate the best of what it stood for. Big member states will need to take more of a responsibility for the course of action the European Union takes. The problem is that the Franco-German motor remains in the garage as the two countries clash on what economic vision should prevail. In 2000 President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder met in the Brussels Conrad hotel to basically pre-spend 308 bln euro in agricultural funds. This would not be possible today. What is worse, Britain is likely to make itself unavailable for leadership in Europe for some time to come. And Germany is not the country it once was. But leadership can also come from specialized small and medium states. Denmark is an example of a country exercising genuine leadership on climate change issues. Poland could become a leader on issues of clean coal and defence. The time for her to punch above weight in the EU is coming. A more competitive leadership system might emerge with countries vying for power and influence. Key issue is to overcome the Freudian narcissism of minor differences which holds Europe back and pushes it to keep discussing issues of secondary importance.

Lord Howell writes in the summer issue of “Europe’s World” that the key to EU success in the world “is an appreciation of the limitations of an EU common foreign policy”. He believes the EU can come together and act effectively on specific issues, but not on everything because there is a growing mesh of bilateral relations which the information age has created. Howell sees the old federalist logic of seeking the end-point of European integration as being intellectually and philosophically flawed. Over-ambition for him can be a “potentially fatal disintegrating force”.

I believe Lord Howell is right about the fluidity and complexity of the current international relations in which power positions are less and less cast in stone. Nature of leadership is changing as more and more actors seek to combine their own modernization efforts with the best possible place on top of the world’s league tables. The intensifying rivalry means nevertheless that size matters. It is not about seeking the end-point of European integration because that is a journey into the unknown. It is about shaping the world in one’s own image. To do so, one needs to have confidence and the power

to attract others. No wonder the Chinese disregard the Russians as an international actor and see them increasingly as a confused and frustrated power with its head stuck in the past. The EU cannot remain sentimental and cling to its own past dreams either. But this should not be confused with giving up aspirations to speak with one's voice in the world. And for that institutions matter. Jean Monnet was right saying that "nothing is created without men and nothing survives without institutions".

A new model of international relations is emerging which will be neither a realist Hobbesian struggle of the fittest nor a multilateral paradise, a sort of an XXL version of the EU. Its nature will be about seeking to outsmart others, shape the future way of life and aspirations and buy into the minds of the next generations. In terms of where power will be concentrated, this will be a G3 world for at least a couple of decades to come. The European Union will be well-positioned for that struggle since it had long practiced what Hillary Clinton branded as smart power. Its approach is best visualized by Botticelli's painting "Mars and Venus" which can be seen in the National Gallery in London. Mars is asleep and Venus triumphant having tamed an assertive warrior who lies naked on the ground, his pump having long since evaporated. Unfortunately, the world which is emerging is more complicated than that.

Europe is disregarding power politics just as its biggest neighbor Russia is reintroducing it. Threshold for Russia to use military power to defend its strategic interests was crossed last year at this time in Georgia. It is not a question of being paranoid about Russia. After all the EU is 15 times richer, it has 3.5 times more population and 7 times as much defence spending. However, Russia is not a predictable foreign policy actor whose steps can be anticipated in advance and whose words can be relied upon.

The EU's answer to power politics has to lead to a reinvigorated link with NATO. The EU has not given NATO enough of a chance after Chancellor Gerhard Schröder said at the Munich conference a few years ago that NATO is no longer the place for strategic transatlantic discussion. Often the way that the Europeans decipher the abbreviation NATO is "no action, talk only". However, for the US, NATO is firmly part of the picture when it comes to transatlantic dialogue. A lot of issues which are problematic in NATO would reappear in a new EU-US platform. There are a lot of issues on which the EU does not have a position, like on missile defence. If it develops one, this would not necessarily be conducive to harmony. Therefore, it has to be possible to build an EU-US framework inclusive of consolidated EU-NATO ties.

Growing bigger?

One of the best things that could happen to the EU in order to stimulate its internal transformation is enlargement to include Turkey. It is about the choice of a frame of mind. Europe can either carry on becoming a bigger Venice or laboriously turn itself into a global power. Some people think that the future of Europe lies not in a cosmopolitan version of the empire of Charlemagne but in a postmodern version of the feudal fragmentation that succeeded the Frankish empire. However, we are hopefully wiser today. As Carl Bildt rightly says, Turkey is after the US the most important partner of the EU because they can talk to Muslim countries in the way that no one else does. And the ability

to talk to the Muslim world is one of the decisive skills for the future. David Milliband brilliantly described enlargement in a speech he gave to demosEUROPA in Warsaw as being about the deepening of liberal democracy. That was a perfect bridge overcoming the usual European dichotomy on enlargement versus deepening.

Wither multilateralism?

Copenhagen negotiations this December will not only be about saving the world from adverse effects of climate change. They will also decide on the future of the multilateral global order. It seems at the moment that we are heading towards a qualified success but that this will be a qualified success in the best case. Given the status of negotiations, it is possible to argue that unilateral commitments or bilateral deals might be more beneficial to the overall desired effect in the form of the required reduction of emissions. The risk is, however, that a butterfly effect will be created with an impact in other areas, including when it comes to the trade agenda where the WTO has been perhaps the single most successful international organization in the last decade. One possibility would be to think in the future in terms of the necessary big bargain to make multilateral agreements fly. They would need to link trade, climate and investment in a global partnership for sustainability. It will be increasingly indispensable to make this argument given that half of all the people who have ever been alive in the world are alive today.

The crisis proves to be less of a tormenting experience for the West than was feared. Certainly the West has lost some of its power to inspire others. Yet the real significance of the crisis from the point of view of international politics is that everybody got the biggest ever taste of interdependence. And it is interdependence of an entirely different type. It may well be that the instinctive reaction will be to pursue the globalization era's equivalent of nationalism in which every block of countries, every pole of the new international order will act in a protectionist fashion to shield off the competitive advantage of others. It may well be that the warnings today are against a past evil of classical nationalism which ruined much of the world economy in the 1930s while the real beast lies somewhere else – in a mixture of old nationalism and new “multi-pollism” where the big are primarily after their own advantage. Often one of these phenomena will inspire the others. There will be more and more pressures in the EU and the in the US to penalize Chinese companies which do not comply with the EU' environmental or social standards and export into the European Union.

Who will be at the losing end? Primarily the environment, the poor, the thirsty. Solutions to global problems will need to wait for better times and the way to get there might be much more tortuous than we assume. Everybody will need to feel the pain before committing themselves. Yet the failure, however painful, could still be a victory of capitalism, democracy and the Western world. “The foreign reserves are the product of the sweat and blood of the people of China, please invest them with more care!” read one of the anonymous postings on Sina.com, a Chinese web-site. There is no evidence that the authoritarian way of running the market economy will in the long term pay-off

Existential risks

As Stephen Wall, Tony Blair's former EU advisor puts it, it may well be that all the ingredients are in place for a major disaster but we only misread the signals. The economic crisis demonstrated that this could well be the case. There had been a few in-between random voices but not much of a loud warning. The same could be true about international relations.

We are on the threshold of a technological revolution which will take place much faster than our ability to govern it. It will influence all areas of social life and international relations. Every year we register more information than has been accumulated in the history of human kind. The level of interdependence is growing and so are the risks at stake. It is enough to think of the consequences of the DNA code of the ebola virus to be put on the web. Not without a reason, Sir Martin Rees, the head of the Royal Society in Britain believes that there is a 50 percent possibility that our civilization will not survive the 21st century. Existential security is clearly a must which will push Europe closer together.

Europe's moment of truth.

The European Union is a political project and a model of civilization. Its future will be decided at the points of intersection where the EU meets the slowly emerging, radically changed, global community. If the EU loses the case for world influence, it will diminish as a political project. If the European way of sharing sovereignty and responsibility does not make inroads elsewhere in the world, the EU will find itself in a very complex situation. For the moment, the Lisbon Treaty is likely to open a new phase of institutional consolidation. Its primary innovations lie in the foreign policy field. If they are used well, the EU can start to develop a strategic culture.

It was once remarked that Wagner's music is better than it sounds. In that, the Sleeping Beauty of the European Union is not that much different...