



Brugge

College of Europe  
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

## **Mr. Carl Bildt's speech at the Opening Ceremony at the College of Europe, Natolin**

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It is an honour for me to be invited to this distinguished institute for European education to make a few remarks on the future of our common Europe.

And to do it in honour of Anna Politovskaya and Hrant Dink is particularly appropriate.

Their names symbolise not only our common devotion to human rights, but also our commitment to a vision of Europe that does not stop at the present borders of the European Union.

We have much to be proud of when looking at the Europe of today.

Our Europe has never been as free, as prosperous or as secure as it is today. And never really means never - never in its entire history.

But it was not long ago that things were very different indeed.

It was in August 1914 - when, as a result of a murder in Sarajevo, the railroads of the continent were filled with trains bringing the newly mobilised armies in different directions - that the then British Foreign Secretary Lord Grey - looking out over Horseguard's Parade in London - made his famous remark that the lights were going out all over Europe and wondered whether they would see them lit again in their lifetime.

An age was coming to an end. In retrospect, it was the first phase of globalisation - globalisation with a European face - that was coming to its end as the armies rushed to the different fronts.

Lord Grey's question was most appropriate. The lights were not lit again in his lifetime.

After that Great War followed not a Great Peace but a series of new disasters - revolutions, pandemics, hyperinflation, depression and the rise of new totalitarian ideologies of either the red or the brown variety - until the continent plunged into a new and even more devastating war.

After that conflict the west of the continent - protected by the extended deterrence of the United States - was gradually able to begin to recover.

It was Winston Churchill in his famous speech to the University of Zurich in 1946 who was the first to call for some kind of United States of Europe, but it was the gradual

reconciliation between France and Germany that drove the process that resulted in the Treaty of Rome half a century ago.

But that was there - in the West.

Here - in the east or the centre of Europe - things were very different indeed. Soviet military power had been extended into the very heart of Germany and Europe, and everything that was behind the five Soviet armies located on German territory and the garrison state built around them had to be politically part of the wider Kremlin empire.

This certainly also applied to Poland, as was amply demonstrated in 1956, 1970 and 1981.

But over time this was unsustainable. At the time, I was one of those who repeatedly said so - but it was certainly not the conventional wisdom of those days.

It was not until the barbed wire was cut on the border between Hungary and Austria, the wall came down in Berlin and a new political opening was agreed upon at the Round Table here in Warsaw that the lights started to come on again throughout Europe.

The European nightmare between 1914 and 1989 was coming to an end.

What has been achieved since then has been remarkable in every single respect.

In Maastricht in 1991, the then European Community decided to transform itself into a more ambitious European Union, and soon this Union was prepared to open up not only to old former 'neutrals' like Austria, Finland and Sweden but also - and far more important - to all the countries of Central Europe, the Baltic region and down towards the Black Sea.

There is no doubt that it was the magnetism of the Union and the model it provided that made the transformation we have since seen in all of these countries possible.

When - at some time in the future - the history of the Union is written, this might well be seen as truly its finest hour.

Today, we see 10 nations with some 100 million people from the Gulf of Finland in the north down towards the Bosphorus in the south creating a new belt of lasting peace, stable democracies and bubbling prosperity in an area that history had otherwise reserved for instability, conflicts and great power rivalry.

Our Union today is a union of approximately 500 million people. It is the largest integrated economy in the world. It is by far the largest trading power of the planet - larger than the second and third put together. It is the biggest market for more than 130 nations around the world. It provides more than 60 per cent of all ODA to the developing countries. And - remarkable as it sounds - the value of the euros in circulation on global markets exceeds the value of dollars.

We certainly have our problems - but we should not overlook the weight and importance that we have in the global economy. Others do not.

But increasingly the Union is also a matter of political influence.

Not because of the numbers of combat brigades or carrier battle groups, but because of the model that it provides of democratic nations integrating peacefully, trying to promote reconciliation and conflict resolution and building the possibilities of effective multilateralism in order to meet the multitude of challenges ahead.

This has been the year in which we have celebrated the Treaty of Rome and this will be the year in which we will be signing the Treaty of Lisbon - but it must also be the year in which, after the focus of the last few years on institutional issues, we must start to focus more on the strategic challenges ahead.

A start was made at the European Council in March when our Union took the global lead in the efforts to combat and limit climate change.

But more must certainly be done. And for me as one of the foreign ministers collectively shaping our Common Foreign and Security Policy, it is particularly relevant to look at the challenges ahead in this area.

You could say that with the hardware of institutions now set in stone for years to come - since that is the reality - it is time to focus on the software of strategic, long-term policies.

Hardware without software is just dead metal, and institutions without policies are little more than a nuisance. It is the software that makes the difference.

Put in the simplest possible terms, the European Union is about the promotion of peace and prosperity - in our own countries, on our own tip of the vast Eurasian landmass and in the wider world.

And to continue in the simplest possible terms, the promotion of peace requires us to be able to continue to unite, while the promotion of prosperity requires us to be able to continue to compete.

If you look at the challenges ahead, it is obvious to me that in the coming years we must intensify our efforts in both these respects.

Globalisation is the mega-trend of our time. And we are now in the third phase of globalisation dominated by the return of the Asian economies to the position in the global system they had during the millennium or so before the rise of the European powers - America included - in the last couple of centuries.

Today, a third of mankind lives in regions that are growing at approximately 10 per cent a year. We are seeing the fastest reduction in poverty in human history. In most parts of the world, more people live both longer and better lives than ever before.

The economy of China doubles every seven years or so. India may eventually have the potential for an even more rapid development. There is a new hope also in large parts of Africa.

There is no longer the old division of the world into developed and underdeveloped. In this age of both globalisation and the revolution in science and technology we must understand that we must all be developing countries - although with different starting points and with somewhat different attitudes to the necessary process of change.

The truly important new dividing line is the one between the approximately five billion people in the more or less rapidly developing nations and that "bottom billion" caught in a conundrum of failed and flawed policies - the billions in the Zimbabwes, the Burmas, the North Koreas, the Congos and the Somalias of this world.

We Europeans are the true "globalisers" of this world. The phenomenal success of our values and societies in the past few centuries has been intimately linked with our reaching out to and spreading all over the world.

Across the plains and mountains of America towards the Pacific Ocean. Across the vast wilderness of Siberia towards the same ocean. Across the open seas to create an even more open world.

And the fact that we are, by far, the number one traders of the world - building the prosperity that we enjoy on this trade - is testimony to the success of this process.

I see no reason why Europe tomorrow will not continue to be one of the winners in this new phase of globalisation.

But we must all understand that we can only be winners if we also see ourselves as developing nations - not statically defending what we once used to have, but being prepared to continue to change in order to be able to forge ahead, create new wealth and open up new possibilities.

A Europe that becomes defensive about its own ability will also be a Europe that loses the ability to shape its own future.

By being open to and promoting this open world, we are not only creating the best possible conditions for ourselves, but also for all those five billion peoples of the entire developing world.

An open world opens up new possibilities for the global middle class that we now see emerging from Shanghai to Sao Paulo - soon approximately 80 per cent of what we call middle class will be found in countries that only a few decades ago were classified as underdeveloped.

But as we in the years ahead revive our ability to compete, and recommit ourselves to being true partners with the rest of the developing world in this process of globalisation, we must also refocus our energies on the question of peace, democracy and stability in our own part of the world and what might be referred to as its "near abroad".

Wherever we look - from Kabul to Khartoum; from Bihac to Basra - we see tensions building up.

Not only the obvious risks of political conflict, terrorism or nuclear proliferation. But also perhaps the even more dangerous risk of our sliding into a true Huntingtonian clash of civilisations.

What is needed is a profound strengthening of the soft power of Europe. We certainly need to strengthen the hard power as well - but at the end of the day peace is built by thoughts and by ballots more than by tanks and by bullets.

A critical part of the soft power of Europe lies in the continued process of enlargement - a Europe that remains open to those in our part of the world who wish to share their sovereignty with us, accept the rule of law and commit themselves to the building of open, secular and free societies.

There are those who want to slow down or perhaps even stop the process altogether.

We have heard talk of the need to define the borders of Europe. And to draw these borders as close to the present borders of the European Union as possible.

But drawing big lines on big maps of eastern Europe risks being a dangerous exercise for us all.

Because it means defining firmly not only for whom the doors will remain open, but also slamming the doors in the face of some for whom the magnetism of Europe remains a major driving force for profound political and economic reforms.

It means telling them to go elsewhere. And that means doing things differently also in terms of the evolution of their societies.

If we put out the light of European integration in the east or southeast of Europe - however faint or distant that light might be - we risk seeing the forces of atavistic nationalism or submission to other masters taking over.

And if that happens, no lines on maps will be able to protect us from the consequences.

Our strategic focus in terms of enlargement is most immediately on the approximately 100 million people of south-eastern Europe - of the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In my opinion, we have a moral obligation to welcome the European integration of the countries of the Western Balkans. I hope we will be able to welcome Croatia as a member in the next few years, and I do hope that in these same next few years we will be able to open accession negotiations with other countries of the region.

It will not be easy. Conditionality remains the key to progress. European laws and standards must not only be accepted in theory but also implemented in reality. And

political reconciliation as well as economic reintegration remain very difficult concepts in the Balkans - the deep wounds of a decade of open war are still there.

But if we are serious about our Europe as a commitment to peace and stability on our continent there is no other way.

It should be crystal clear that we have a profound strategic interest in the eventual membership of Turkey in the European Union. This would be the culmination of a long process of European modernisation for that country, and would have a decisively positive impact on the prospects for stability in the entire region of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

It would also add important elements of economic dynamism, demographic vigour and cultural diversity that can only enrich our common European efforts.

But our commitment must of course extend beyond the present processes in south-eastern Europe.

To the east of the present boundary of the European Union live another 200 million Europeans - Ukrainians and Russians, but also Byelorussians, Moldovans and the different peoples of the Caucasus.

Let's be clear: There is something of a soft war going on for the future of the east of Europe. The mighty fortress by the Moscow River has its own concept of a so-called controlled democracy, while others see their future in more open economies and open societies that follow the model that has proved a success in the rest of Europe.

It is up to these nations themselves to freely choose the way in which they would like to shape their future. And for all the impressive economic gains that we are seeing in most of them, we should not underestimate the magnitude of the transition that they in different ways are undergoing.

The Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Rose Revolution in Georgia showed the democratic commitment that is there, but subsequent events have of course demonstrated that change takes time, that enormous problems have to be overcome, that long-lasting tensions cannot be overcome overnight and that reforms require a commitment over years.

At this time Ukraine is in the process of forming its new government, while Georgia is undergoing a very difficult period as it heads for the presidential elections in January and the parliamentary election somewhat later next year. The revolution of rising expectations is a reality.

Our message to Tbilisi today is as clear as was our message to Kiev or anyone else - it is only by staying firmly on the democratic path that the doors to cooperation and integration with the rest of Europe are opened up.

This is a message also for Minsk and Moscow.

Russia is unlikely ever to aspire to membership in the European Union. But it firmly remains a European country, and we and they have an obvious mutual interest in

developing a relationship based - as a minimum - on common interest in our common part of the world.

But over time it is my hope that we will be able to build a relationship with Russia based not only on common European interests - but also on common European values.

On paper that commitment is there - but reality has turned out to be somewhat different. We will have to await the outcome of the political transitions now underway in Russia, and to assess the policies thereafter, to see whether this can be realised as early as we all hope for.

In the decades ahead, I thus see a European Union that continues to enlarge. And thus would be better at securing the peace and promoting the prosperity of all its nations and citizens. We might go from the approximately 500 million citizens today to the approximately 600 million citizens of tomorrow - or perhaps to 650 million citizens.

There are those that fear such a development. And it might well be that it will make the institutional arrangements in Brussels a degree less easy to handle.

But there is no doubt whatsoever that such a Europe - consolidating its position as the pre-eminent economic force in the world - would be a far stronger and more credible actor on the global stage across the entire range. Long-term this can undoubtedly be seen as a major asset - provided that the economic and social challenges of the short- and medium-term can be handled.

This will be important particularly in our relationship with the Muslim world that is our immediate neighbour - not only on the map, but increasingly also across the street in our respective societies.

And our relationship with this wider Muslim world and the clashes within that civilisation that we are now witnessing will undoubtedly be one of the factors that will determine the decades ahead.

Today, 54 per cent of the population of Pakistan is below the age of 19. And the Arab countries that are our immediate neighbours face a true demographic expansion - a possible 150 million increase in population, equivalent to two Egypts, over the next decade or so.

To generate an increase in employment of the required magnitude requires duplication of the "miracle" economies of Korea and Taiwan - and if this can be done, that wider region in our immediate neighborhood will move into an era of a "demographic dividend" of growing prosperity, confidence and optimism.

But this will hardly be possible without stability in Mesopotamia and true peace between the two states between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean. Nor will it be possible if the region is haunted by nuclear rivalry, religious tensions and stagnating policies.

A Europe that is confident with itself and is prepared to move ahead both with uniting and competing will be a force that can contribute decisively over the coming decades - directly in different ways as well as indirectly by the example that it sets - to positive developments in the Middle East as well as in the wider Muslim world.

And the importance of that can hardly be stressed too much.

There is - this is important to understand - a clear correlation between the confidence with which we are able - on the one hand - to move ahead in uniting our continent and making it more competitive and - on the other - our ability to be part of that shaping of the rest of the world that over time will be so important in shaping also our European future.

I am a European optimist.

We certainly have our problems. We are certainly not perfect.

But we have entered upon a historic path of democratic integration, overcoming old rivalries, opening up societies and economies and extending the reach of the rule of law that has already transformed our continent, and which I am convinced will be of ever-increasing importance as an inspiration to the wider world in the decades ahead.