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Europe at the Crossroads: Global Power or Also-Ran?

Presented by Professor the Hon. Gareth Evans



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Prof the Hon. Gareth Evans presenting the 2019 Schuman Lecture

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EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS: GLOBAL POWER OR ALSO-RAN?

2019 Schuman Lecture by Professor the Hon Gareth Evans AC QC FASSA FAIA,
Chancellor of The Australian National University, ANU Centre for European Studies,
Canberra, 26 September 2019

For as long as I can remember I have been deeply personally attached to Europe, and the European Union ideal, for multiple reasons – cultural upbringing, early education, living and working experience, and I hope some rational, analytic judgement as well.

It began as you would expect with Britain: Australia in the 1950s was as Anglo-centric and Anglophilic as any country could be, and Enid Blyton, William, Biggles and Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia* defined my worldview far more than any Australian or American books, let alone any influence of any kind from Asia. And my continuing love of the UK has survived even the combined advent of Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn. But my fascination with all things European didn't for very long stop at the Channel: throughout my formative decades the successive post-War waves of *non*-British immigrants to Australia were almost wholly from continental Europe and, just as this fundamentally changed the way the whole country looked and felt, and fed itself, it certainly broadened my worldview.

Beyond that, at university in Melbourne, and then Oxford, studying law and the humanities – including the great philosophers – my frame of intellectual reference was wholly European. And reinforcing it all has been my lived experience – in the UK for two years while studying; in Brussels for nearly ten years, much later on, after leaving politics, and while heading the International Crisis Group; in Budapest, teaching at the Central European University for several weeks over a three year period; and just travelling, throughout my whole adult life, often and intensely, through nearly every corner of the continent (with only Andorra and San Marino still to tick off!).

I love Europe's countryside, cities, art, music and literature, not to mention food and wine, and I have a pretty intense sense of the richness and complexity of the interlinkages of European history, and the continent's cultural and intellectual traditions. In fact, the whole Western Civilisation thing – so you will understand me saying: 'Oh Ramsay Centre, what might have been at ANU, if only you had been a little more sensitive about academic freedom and our need for academic autonomy in putting together that course you wanted so generously to fund'!

I should perhaps make clear at the outset that I have never had any difficulty in comfortably accommodating all this emotional and cultural affection for Europe, which goes back to my childhood, with that which I have been developing for Asia throughout the rest of my life: it's not a matter of 'either-or' but 'both- and'.

Nor have I felt any difficulty in in accommodating my affection for Europe – and the European Union, which I will come to in a moment – with the theme that was so central to the conduct of foreign policy in the Hawke and Keating Governments which I served as Foreign Minister, and which I continue to strongly believe, viz. that Australia's Asia-Pacific geography will determine our future much more than our European history. It is possible to recognize the important role that a player, or group of players, can have in the world at large – and it's very much a theme of this lecture that Europe has such a role, even if it could be playing more of it – while accepting that its significance for us in Australia is not, economic relations apart, as central as it is for many others.

When it comes to the European Union, and the whole idea of European unity, my attachment is not just cultural and emotional, but very much rational and analytical. Throughout my adult lifetime I have loved the idea of the European Union above all else for the reason that, like many others, I have regarded its creation – given the terrible history of conflict between its member states, above all in the catastrophic 20th Century – as the most important single *conflict prevention* enterprise the world has ever seen. Although so much of the EU storyline has always been, and remains, about economics, its real achievement has been geopolitical.

That was, of course, supremely well understood by Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister whose legacy we honour in this annual lecture. His means were economic, but his motivation was unequivocally political – to bind the continent together in such a way that future war, above all between France and Germany, would become inconceivable. As David Ritchie reminded us in this Lecture two years ago, Schuman could not have been clearer in his seminal Declaration of May 1950, proposing that French and German production of coal and steel be placed under one common High Authority:

The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not only unthinkable but materially impossible.

And again, more generally:

The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilisation is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations...A united Europe was not achieved, and we had war.

The story of the evolution of Schuman's dream of European unity was, for at least the next 55 years, overwhelmingly a success story, albeit one with many bumps and stumbles along the way, like the economic fallout from the 1970s oil crises, the less than stellar handling of the Balkans political crises of the 1990s, and recurring tensions over the management of the enlargement process, some of which issues have been addressed in previous Schuman Lectures.

Not only did war become unthinkable between any of the EU's rapidly expanding members but the accession process was one of the most, if not the most, successful

democracy promotion exercise in history.¹ The civilizational lure of Western Europe was compelling, the belief in the superiority of the Western economic model was absolute, and confidence in the effectiveness and longevity of both the continental and transatlantic institutions created by the statesmen of Schuman's generation was for many decades close to absolute. The whole story has been amply documented, perhaps most brilliantly by my late friend Tony Judt in *Postwar*, his magisterial history of the continent from 1945 to 2004, ending with the entry of the Central Europeans into the EU,² and in Ian Kershaw's very recently published *The Golden Age: Europe 1950-2017*.

All that said, I think we have to acknowledge – as Kershaw's book does – that Europe's, and the European Union's, Golden Age has been not quite so golden over the last decade or so. A number of the key assumptions which the EU has traditionally made about itself have shown serious signs of unravelling. Its leaders are now confronting an unprecedentedly complex and often interrelated set of economic, security, social and political challenges, all of which have significant implications for both Europe's capacity to meet the needs and aspirations of its own citizens and, at the global level, to punch at the weight it could and should.

In many ways Europe is at a crossroads where, as Mark Leonard, the Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations recently starkly described it – in language that is no doubt exaggerated, but gives us plenty to think about – on one side it could possibly consolidate its collective potential to be a 'co-equal power in a tripolar world', but on the other side faces the prospect of becoming 'roadkill in a Sino-American game of chicken'.³

In this Lecture I want to look at the nature of the main challenges currently facing Europe's major players, their implications for the wider global order, and to offer my perspective – for what it's worth – on how Europe might maximise its chances of not becoming a global also-ran.

Europe's Challenges

Economic. One of the central sustaining assumptions of the EU about itself, the inherent superiority of the Western economic model and the bankers and finance ministers who managed it, was left reeling by the global financial crisis of 2008-09, which had a devastating impact on jobs, savings and companies across Europe, and particularly in the weaker economies of the south. The EU survived the continent's worst recession for eighty years, but discontent and division about the way it is economically managed has continued.

The fundamental problem within the Eurozone is the disconnect between centrally determined monetary policy but sovereignty-dispersed fiscal policy, which remains as

¹ See Anne Applebaum, 'The Lure of Western Europe', 6 June 2019. In what follows, I have partly drawn on her analysis in this review of Ian Kershaw's *The Golden Age: Europe 1950-2017* (Viking, 2019).

² Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (Penguin Press, 2005)

³ Mark Leonard, 'The End of Chimerica', *Project Syndicate*, 25 June 2019

unresolved as ever, with the power to tax, spend and invest firmly in the grip of national governments. Hints a couple of years ago that Angela Merkel might be prepared to consider Emmanuel Macron's proposals for a common Eurozone budget and even a Eurozone Finance Minister have come to naught, with Germany's traditional extreme caution on these treaty reform issues, and general passion for austere housekeeping, strongly reasserting itself.

Significant income disparities continue to exist within the Union, to some extent between the core and southern periphery members, but very acutely between the core member countries (Germany, France, Benelux and the Scandinavians – and for now the UK) and those from Central and Eastern Europe. Apart from contributing to the social and political challenges I'll come to shortly, this has had troubling brain drain, and energetic-youth drain, implications as many migrate internally from the periphery to the core, which in turn makes relative economic gains in the periphery harder to achieve.⁴

When it comes to global economic policy issues, Europe's overall size – the EU collectively being the second largest economy in the world, just behind the US in nominal GDP terms and China in PPP terms – means that it should be, arguably, just as significant a player as the United States and now China. But that has manifestly not been the case. Part of the problem, some analysts argue,⁵ is that without a reserve currency of similar credibility, Europe's financial might cannot begin to match that of the US, and the euro cannot be a serious rival to the dollar until it is radically reformed in a way that France wants but Germany has continued to resist, not least because this would be likely to increase the euro's value to the point of causing real pain its very successful export-driven economic model.

Another part of the problem here is very real continuing division within the EU about how to respond to the economic power (and the political influence that is increasingly being seen to accompany it)⁶ of its second biggest trading partner, China. Although European companies have exactly the same legitimate concerns as Americans and others (including ourselves in Australia) about many aspects of Chinese practice – including market access, intellectual property theft, cybersecurity risk and some problematic BRI investments – there has been a deep reluctance by European policymakers to communicate that concern with anything like the vigour now being embraced by Washington.

While some of that reluctance is born of an entirely understandable lack of confidence in the Trump administration's ability to act intelligently in even the most defensible causes – with certainly no mood to follow the US down the path of full-on trade war and large-scale forced economic decoupling – it is also a function of significant resistance within the EU from those (including, but not confined to Greece, Portugal and Hungary) who

⁴ See Frederico Furbini, 'The Roots of European Division', *Project Syndicate*, 17 May 2019

⁵ See Tom McTague, 'What the Iran Crisis reveals about European Power', *The Atlantic*, 25 June 2019

⁶ See Julianne Smith and Torrey Taussig, 'The Old World and the Middle Kingdom: Europe Wakes Up to China's Rise', *Foreign Affairs*, 12 August 2019

want more Chinese investment, oppose any kind of strict screening of it, and generally don't want to do anything to rock the China boat. Challenging problematic actions and practices of your biggest economic partner is never easy, as Australia and many other countries in our own region are aware, but when you are of the size and potential clout of the combined European economies, you do have pushback options unavailable to us lesser mortals.

Security. Another sustaining assumption of the EU which has come under intense challenge in recent years – to be more precise, since the election of Donald Trump in 2016 – is that US security protection was absolute, and a given. It manifestly no longer is, for US allies everywhere, who are clearly seen by this President more as encumbrances than assets, with him seeming to have a particularly visceral distaste for his European partners. ‘America First’ for Trump means just that, and Washington’s European allies, both in an EU and NATO context, are rapidly coming to the realisation, as are we in Australia and the Asia-Pacific, that Less America and More Self-Reliance are going to have to be the watchwords of our defence future.

The security challenge for European policymakers has become that much more acute with Russia’s return over the last decade to many of its bad old habits, including outright intervention in Georgia and Ukraine, sabre-rattling in the Baltics, playing a cynical spoiler role in the UN Security Council and elsewhere, embarking on a major modernization of its military capability and – in this respect, it has to be said, doing not much more than matching the US – being prepared to play again with nuclear fire. While it is hard to believe that Russia – whose GDP, after all, is not much bigger than Australia’s – would ever deliberately initiate a major war with any EU or NATO member state, its behaviour has obviously been destabilizing, and as always defence planners have to act on the basis of capability rather than current presumed intent.

Although EU members have been focusing more in recent years than in the past on achieving a significant degree of strategic autonomy, with a general framework set by the 2016 Global Strategy (EUGS), supplemented by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and European Defence Fund initiatives,⁷ serious self-reliance is much more easily said than done, given not only where Europe is starting from in terms of defence expenditure, but the continuing reluctance of so many of its players – above all Germany – to be seen to be acquiring real military power.

Defence expenditure across the EU, on latest 2018 World Bank figures, is 1.5 per cent of GDP, with only six of its member states (France, the Baltic trio, Poland and Greece) meeting the NATO target of 2 per cent. In the case of Germany, lagging well behind at 1.2 per cent, the obvious willingness of most of the elite to play a more powerful international role, both in defence and foreign policy generally, is – for understandable but hardly still relevant historical reasons – not shared by most ordinary Germans.

⁷ See Sven Biscop, ‘The Power to Engage: Giving Punch to a new EU Global Strategy’, *Security Policy Brief*, September 2019

Social. The social policy challenges currently facing European policymakers are themselves partly a function of both economic challenges – the anxiety felt by so many European about their economic futures – and security challenges, albeit ones of a less existential kind than those posed by the traditional continental nightmare of direct conflict with Russia. The wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen – which it has to be acknowledged European diplomacy did little or nothing to prevent or contain – have helped feed a wave of terrible terror attacks in major European cities which in turn, compounded by economic anxiety, generated a massive backlash against Muslim immigration.

Although Angela Merkel's personal decency in responding to the massive surge of asylum seekers and other unregulated arrivals from the Middle East and North Africa was one bright ray of principled light in an otherwise very dark period for Europe, and although the number of arrivals, and as a consequence some of the heat in the issue, has subsided since the height of the refugee crisis four years ago, the domestic policy challenges posed by it have not gone away, are still dividing EU member states, and have significantly contributed to the populist backlash which has been roiling the politics of so many of them.

Political. When it comes to the EU's political challenges, collectively and individually, it is fair to say that – despite the current triumph of utterly unpalatable illiberal democracy in Orban's Hungary, and the varying degrees of visibility and influence of other illiberal and anti-European parties in recent times in the UK, France, Poland, Estonia and Germany among others – the feared widespread triumph of really ugly far-right parties has not eventuated and seems for the moment contained. They did not get as much of a toehold as many expected in the EU Parliament elections in May this year, and while the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party did surge in two eastern state month, it was not by enough to turn out the ruling coalitions there.

What *has* been happening is a real fragmentation in voting patterns, with a very visible decline right across Europe in the capacity to win elections and govern of the traditional centre-left and centre-right parties, which in turn has made stable government and balanced policymaking more difficult than it has perhaps ever been. This was evident to an almost caricatured extent in the UK vote for the EU Parliament, with the Labour Party winning less than 14 per cent of the vote and the Conservatives less than 9 per cent: a reflection of both the rise in populist sentiment and the major parties' inability to respond effectively to it, which of course lies at the heart of the Brexit debacle.

While for now, at least, there is no other country in the EU seriously contemplating breaking away from it, the ongoing Brexit crisis is clearly the major political challenge facing the Union, and if nothing else a massive continuing distraction for its leadership. It is hard to exaggerate the scale of the damage that will be done if Britain's departure becomes a reality – and not only if it goes ahead on a no-deal basis, although in those circumstances, as has been amply documented by the Johnson Government's own civil service advisers, the damage will be even more alarming to the British economy, on some

analyses to the wider European economy⁸, to the prospects of continued peace in Ireland and to the constitutional future of the UK. For the EU to lose the UK's economic weight, its foreign policy voice, and its contribution to regional defence policymaking will be to dramatically diminish the Union's collective capacity to be the kind of third-force, rules-based-order supporting, balancing voice the world arguably needs now more than ever as the US increasingly abandons its traditional role and China becomes ever more assertive and influential.

This is not the occasion to spend very much more time on Britain's Brexit brain-fade, but I can't forebear from putting on record my longstanding view of just how utterly wrong-headed is the notion, so beloved of former Australian prime ministers John Howard and Tony Abbott, former foreign minister Alexander Downer, and of course the motley crew of opportunists and 19th century true believers who make up the current UK Government, that a self-exiled United Kingdom will find a new global relevance, and indeed leadership role, as the centre of the 'Anglosphere'.

The basic problem for Anglosphere advocates is that none of the candidates for membership of this new club are likely to have the slightest interest – geostrategic, economic or political – in joining it. Economically, the notion that a linguistically and culturally driven multilateral partnership, or new bilateral agreements between pairs of Anglos like the UK and Australia, could deliver more in trade and investment terms than the other bilateral, regional and global agreements now in place or being negotiated is nonsensical. The UK's total trade with Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand is less than with just one medium-sized European partner, the Netherlands.

Geostrategically, the main game is, as it has been for most of recorded time, geography rather than history, and the biggest game of all for the foreseeable future is the emerging contest for global supremacy between the United States and China. Should the US again get serious about enlisting allies and partners to help it stare down any overreach by China in East Asia, some Anglophone countries like Australia, India, Singapore, Malaysia and maybe Canada can bring certainly something to the table, but more important than anything the United Kingdom could contribute are Japan, South Korea, and the very non-Anglo South East Asian countries, especially Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand.

And to the extent that tensions persist with Russia that require counterbalancing, while the US could obviously expect to draw support within NATO from its fellow Anglophones in Britain and Canada, it is not self-evident what Australia, New Zealand, and a bunch of other far-flung Anglos in Africa, Asia and the Pacific could usefully bring to that particular table.

Probably the hardest truth the Anglosphere dreamers must confront is that there is just no mood politically, in Australia or any of the other candidate countries of which I am aware, to build some new global association of the linguistically and culturally

⁸ Jeremy Warner, 'Europe has more to fear from a no-deal Brexit than Britain', *The Telegraph*, 1 August 2019

comfortable. Whatever residual Anglo identity we may have, this is just not the main game for any of us anymore.

Why the World Needs Europe to Fire

Quite apart from Australia's obvious strong economic interest in having a stable and prosperous Europe to trade and invest with – and that speaks for itself, given that the EU as a bloc is our largest source of foreign investment (ahead of the US), second largest trading partner (after China) and third largest export destination (after China and Japan) – it is very much in the global interest, and Australia's simply as a responsible member of the wider international community, that Europe punch economically and geopolitically at its global weight.

Economically, Europe's voice matters above all because, as EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom clearly articulated in her Schuman Lecture last year, it remains so instinctively committed to free and open global trade as a win-win for all; to a strong, rules-based approach to the management of that trade, with a continuing central role for the World Trade Organization and its dispute resolution system; and to decent standards in labour, environmental, health and consumer protection. And does so in an environment where the present US administration has abandoned just about every one of these values which it has traditionally championed, and China's commitment to many of them remains highly questionable.

The trouble is that, as pointed out in a major article in *Foreign Affairs* last month,⁹ so far from trying to translate those values into a coherent and distinctly European strategy, Europe has gone to great pains to avoid confrontation with either the US or China, which has largely relegated it to the sidelines at a time when its influence has never been more necessary. It needs to speak with a strong and common voice against the more egregious challenges of the US to the economic order, mobilizing multilateral support elsewhere – just as it has done on the Iran nuclear issue, to which I will come in a moment.

And it needs at the same time to join more robustly with the US and other like-minded in pushing back, in the WTO and elsewhere, if and when China plays fast and loose on market distortions, intellectual property and cybertheft. Europe won't add value by initiating or joining others' trade wars, but it certainly would do so by more aggressively pursuing economic peace, and the decent standards which will help sustain it.

Geopolitically, Europe's role matters enormously, again, in a world where principled voices are in short supply, where voices of calm against the sabre-rattlers have become ever more needed, and where multilateral approaches to problem solving – particularly on those global and regional public goods issues, quintessentially climate change, which Kofi Annan used to describe as 'problems without passports' – have never been more necessary.

It has been a recurring concern of mine over many years, certainly both when I was Foreign Minister and then when I was based in Brussels for nearly a decade as president

⁹ Smith & Taussig, op cit

of the International Crisis Group, that – despite its potential importance, and despite all the efforts that have been made to more effectively institutionalise it with the creation of the position of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the External Action Service -- the EU's contribution on so many of these fronts has so often been so limp. Partly that has obviously been a function of always having so many disparate voices to accommodate and coordinate – the 'herding cats' problem, and national sovereignty realities so well described by then External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten in his Schuman Lecture back in 2001 – but a key factor has always been that it's hard to play the role of world power when your biggest and richest member simply does not want to accept that responsibility.

Happily, there are recent signs that European – and German in particular – frustration with the Trump administration on multiple fronts, and a growing perception that the US might no longer be as reliable a protector of European security as had always been assumed, are encouraging the EU to play a more assertive and effective role, with Exhibit One being the Iran nuclear deal – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It was a slow start. I know because as head of Crisis Group I was personally playing a back-channel role with the Iranians, and we had identified and published as early as 2006 all the ingredients of the 'delayed limited enrichment' deal which we knew Tehran was prepared to accept, but which deal was not finally struck until nearly ten years, and 20,000 centrifuges, later. The trouble then was that while the EU, unlike the US, would at least talk to Tehran, it always, as so often elsewhere, found reasons not to act against US wishes.

But the EU – with the UK, France, Germany and the High Representative around the table – did ultimately play a central role in the successful JCPOA P5+1 negotiation. And, very importantly, the Europeans have played a laudably tenacious role since in trying to hold it together after the US under Trump totally indefensibly withdrew from the agreement in May last year, with the latest initiative being President Macron's efforts to mobilise a \$15 billion credit line to finance Iranian oil sales.

It has to be acknowledged that the odds are against that effort succeeding, because the US capacity, backed by the dollar's dominant reserve currency standing, to apply secondary financial sanctions against almost any company anywhere defying Washington's blanket ban on any dealings with Iran, continues to be a massive disincentive against any attempts to bypass it. And the whole enterprise has become more complicated in recent days with Iran's evident complicity in the strikes against Saudi Arabian oil facilities cooling some of the European enthusiasm for going out on a limb against the US.

But all that said, Europe's efforts to hold together the JCPOA have sent a message that will not be lost on anyone – hopefully including both Presidents Trump and Xi Jinping – that the EU, and its major member states, are willing to do more to make Europe's balancing presence felt on the global stage.

There is one other aspect of Europe's actual and potential capacity to be a major global

power which should never be underestimated – its *soft power*, the power to influence through example and attraction, not economic or military might. All the cultural, intellectual and lifestyle values that have made me a lifetime Europhile – as I described at the outset – are equally attractive to vast numbers of people around the world. Again, the genuine commitment of so many European countries – if not, unhappily, these days all of them – to humanitarian and human rights and international law values is a real contribution to their realisation around the world.

And I don't think it goes unnoticed anywhere that Europe continues to be by far the world's most generous aid donor, contributing 69 per cent of global official development assistance (ODA) – as compared with 21 per cent for the US and far less for China.¹⁰ A key reason the rest of the world needs Europe to go on firing, and if possible even harder, in this soft power space is that so few others are doing anything at all not just to make the world more prosperous or physically secure, but more decent.

Moving Forward

If Europe is to meet the challenges I have described, for the reasons why it should try that I have described, the question remains as to what needs to be done to make this happen. What do European policymakers have to do more of, or differently, to see Europe becoming, even if not a fully co-equal power in a tripolar world alongside the US and China, at least more in that direction than that of becoming just another global also-ran? While it is totally presumptuous for a decayed former politician living on the other side of the world to offer any such prescriptions, that can no doubt be said about any of the opinions I have offered in this Lecture, so let me bring it to a conclusion by making just these four final observations.

First, recognise the absolute necessity of responsive, effective political leadership. At the moment that is in visibly short supply in Europe, as in most of the rest of the world. With the important exceptions of Merkel and Macron, and perhaps a small handful of others, the quality of the continent's present leadership seems to me to range from underwhelming to desolate to appalling.

Populist challenges to long-established political parties happen because people are unhappy, and there are invariably at least some good reasons for that unhappiness. The first responsibility of political leaders anywhere is to listen and understand; then it's to devise, communicate and implement effective policy responses. Maybe my ageing is turning to dementia, but I can't help but believe that in forming those responses, there is still a huge amount to be said – both in terms of substance and saleability – for the 'third way' approach that the Hawke and Keating Governments of the 1980s and '90s initiated and systematically applied in Australia (and which Tony Blair then successfully appropriated for the UK until he lost the plot over Iraq, but that's another story).

¹⁰ See Andrew Moravcsik, 'Europe is Still a Superpower', *Foreign Policy*, 13 April 2017 - though much of the rest of this piece might be thought to over-gild the lily.

That approach is, in short, a three-legged stool: the first, uncompromisingly dry, productivity, competitiveness and free-trade focused economic policy; the second, uncompromisingly warm, moist and compensatory social policy, to ensure that no-one is left behind by the dry stuff; and the third uncompromisingly liberal internationalist foreign policy. It may be that the present mainstream parties of centre-left and centre-right are now so internally divided in so many European and other Western countries that such a program can only be delivered with a new configuration of the political landscape. Maybe such reconfiguration, as has increasingly been mooted, will be around, respectively, those favouring more open societies (and who could I think unite around the approach I have described) and those who want their societies more closed. If that happens, so be it. History doesn't stop when we get too old to write it ourselves.

Second, it is critical if Europe is to play the leading global role it could and should, for its leaders to be absolutely serious about multilateralism, and cooperative solutions to global and regional problems.¹¹ A great many of the major issues which this and future generations of politicians will have to face up to are what I mentioned before as Kofi Annan's 'problems without passports', those which by their nature are beyond the capacity of any one state, however great and powerful, to individually solve. They include not only achieving a clean and safe global environment, but also a world free of health pandemics, out of control cross-border population flows, international trafficking of drugs and people and extreme poverty, and a world on its way to abolishing all weapons of mass destruction.

As itself a multilateral organization, the EU is particularly well equipped not only to engage constructively itself on this issue, but to encourage others to do so, and this is reflected in the language of the 2016 EU Global Strategy. On the initiative of Germany and France there is being launched today (26 September) at the UN General Assembly an 'Alliance for Multilateralism' – 'a flexible and agile network of states ready to support initiatives for enhanced international cooperation, build coalitions and consensus, in a constructive and open spirit' ¹² This appeals to me as having much more substantive, and buy-in, potential than the 'Alliance of Democracies' project that has been around for some time, particularly if the grouping can offer constructive solutions, without taking sides, on some of the issues on which the US and China are mud-wrestling. It is very much to be hoped that this initiative signals some inspired new commitment to global activism by the EU, and is not just an inspired piece of PR fluff. The latter is not unknown in EU diplomacy, or indeed elsewhere.

Third, if the EU is to have a more robust and effective role in the wider world, it is probably time to recognize much more clearly than many so far have been prepared to – certainly including French President Macron, who overtly supports much closer integration – that

¹¹ These points are further developed in Gareth Evans, 'In Defence of Multilateralism', Evidence to House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations, 6 June 2018

¹² 'Alliance for Multilateralism to be launched at the UN in September', *Democracy Without Borders*, 3 April 2019; see also Biscop, op cit.

it can only be as a two-speed entity, with those few states who want to proceed to something like a full federal state being allowed to follow that path but with others continuing to exercise, within a common market structure, a large measure of national sovereignty.¹³ That would not necessarily be my personal preference, but it is the reality of Europe for the indefinitely foreseeable future, and to ignore that reality might be to encourage more Brexits, not a consummation to be devoutly wished.

Fourth and finally, to conclude where I came in, it is crucially important, if Europe is to meet the present array of challenges that presently beset it, and not become a divided, marginalised bit player on the world stage – or, even worse, to become itself once again a theatre for deadly conflict – that Europeans remember the past. And that they remember, or learn all over again if they cannot remember, why Robert Schuman set the whole European Union enterprise in train seven decades ago.

Nobody now in office has any direct memory of World War II. And it is not long before a generation will be in power that has no direct memory of the Cold War either. Those Brexiteers and others who are intent on demolishing the EU and all that it stands for do not pause for one second to think how hard-won has been the security, democracy and standard of living they now enjoy. As Ferdinand Mount has written in the *London Review of Books*, ‘they are the feckless children of seventy years of peace’.¹⁴ May those feckless children never prevail, and may Robert Schuman’s inspiration, not just in Europe, but on the wider global stage, for as long into the future as we can possibly foresee, have the influence and impact it deserves.

¹³ See John Lloyd, ‘After the Deluge’, *The American Interest*, 13 August 2018, reviewing Ian Kearns, *Collapse: After the European Union* (Biteback, 2018)

¹⁴ Ferdinand Mout, ‘Why We Go to War’, *London Review of Books*, 6 June 2019

2019 Schuman Lecture Vote of Thanks

2019 Schuman Lecture vote of thanks delivered by H.E Dr Michael Pulch,
Ambassador of the European Union to Australia

Good evening everyone. Let me start by saying:

Thank you Professor Gareth Evans for your engaging lecture on Europe's future.

It is indeed a privilege to listen to an eminent Australian speaker discuss Europe from such an intimate and informed position. And it is a humbling experience to be given the floor to close such a rich and stimulating debate.

Tonight we have been invited to a Schuman lecture, in the true sense of its meaning: A sharp analysis of the current challenges, based on a deep understanding of the historical and political context, and coupled with a vision for a future direction.

There is much to be reflected on. Luckily, we have a reception afterwards to allow more conversation on the many issues raised tonight.

I would like to offer just 3 points by way of closing remarks:

I. Europe indeed is at a crossroads in many ways. Europe has been at crossroads at times before and Professor Evans raised some of the recent ones (integrating the other half of the continent and the financial crises).

I expect many more to come in the future. The European Union has demonstrated then that it can be dynamic and evolving and this adaptability has enabled us to weather many storms.

But no doubt: the combination of (i) Brexit, a key member to leave, (ii) a re-orientation of our transatlantic partnership, the pillar of Europe's development over 60 years, (iii) a rising and assertive China together with (iv) a more difficult relationship with Russia creates a particularly demanding geopolitical environment.

One ray of optimism here: After the Brexit referendum support for Europe has risen in all Member States.

The EU has woken up to the need to do more about its own strategic sovereignty and it has re-assessed the balance of its interest and concerns with China at the last summit.

It is a first step to address the basic requirements that Professor Evans has noted for the EU to fully use its potential.

II. This brings me to my second point that Professor Evans has alluded to: Europe's challenges in many ways also reflect challenges that the entire world is facing - as we are about to lose the comfort, predictability and stability of a globalised world based on accepted rules, norms and standards of behaviour.

This incidentally has brought Australia and the EU closer together than probably ever before. Support of the international rules-based trading system is one of the key elements that motivated both sides to pursue FTA negotiations.

Europe is increasingly seen as perhaps THE champion of multilateralism (or the one that is left). Tonight at the UN in New York a new "Alliance for Multilateralism", an initiative by FR and DE, will be launched.

This could well be one of the steps to address Professor Evans call for a Europe that punches at its global weight. 'A voir', as one says 'dans les couloirs' of the Berlaymont building.

III. My last point is this: The four issues that Professor Evans raised in his conclusion are an excellent advice for an incoming new European leadership. I had the privilege to listen to all new leaders two weeks ago at our Ambassadors conference.

My impression is that message is coming through. President-elect von der Leyen has started her presentation by saying she was born and grew up in Brussels – she knows where we come from.

She outlined 3 key avenues for the EU to advance during her term: a new 'green deal', strategic autonomy in digitalisation and ensuring the EU as a security provider, including a stronger EU foreign and security dimension.

Charles Michel, the current Prime Minister of Belgium who will replace Donald Tusk as President of the European Council, provided a tour d'horizon of the current geopolitical environment that requires a united Europe – very much in line with the analysis we heard tonight.

We also have a new President of the European Parliament David Sassoli who understands that Europe constantly needs to win the hearts and minds of its citizens.

And for an EU Ambassador to Canberra: Here was the good news. Von der Leyen specifically mentioned Australia relations and the FTA in her remarks.

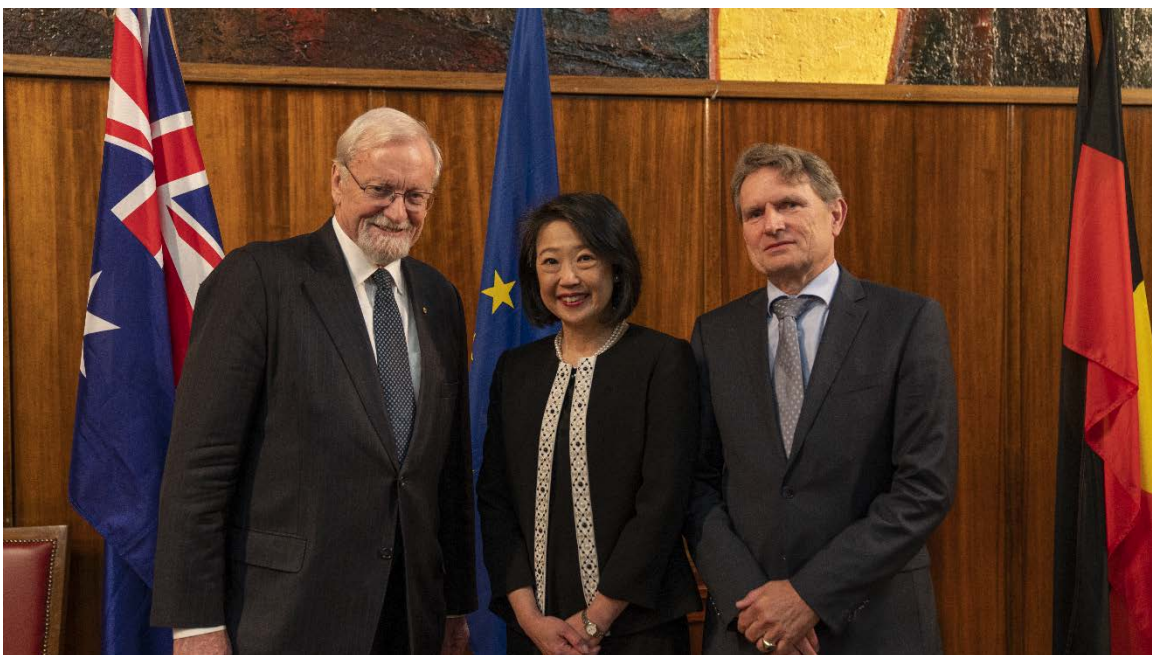
On this happy note I would like to thank Gareth Evans for his thought-provoking Schuman lecture 2019.

This lecture serves as a reminder to all of us of what was behind the European Project – "beyond differences and boundaries, there lies a common interest".

I find it quite refreshing to have an intellectual debate on European matters here at ANU, in the centre of policy debate in Australia.

Many thanks and a good evening.

Image Gallery



ANU Chancellor Prof. the Hon. Gareth Evans AC QC, ANUCES Director Jacqueline Lo and H.E Ambassador of the EU to Australia Michael Pulch



Prof. Jacqueline Lo, H.E Dr Thomas Fitschen, Ambassador of Germany to Australia, H.E Mr Manuel Cacho, Ambassador of Spain to Australia, H.E Dr Alexei Pavlovsky, Ambassador of the Russia to Australia, H.E Mr Breandan O Caollai, Ambassador of Ireland to Australia, Prof. the Hon Gareth Evans, ANU Chancellor, H.E Dr Michael Pulch, Ambassador of the European Union to Australia, H.E Mr Marthinus Van Schalkwyk, High Commissioner for South Africa to Australia, H.E Mrs Martha Mavrommati, High Commissioner for Cyprus to Australia, H.E Mrs Marion Derckx, Ambassador of Netherlands to Australia, H.E Ms Kersti Eesmaa, Ambassador of Estonia to Australia, Mr. Jason Collins, CEO European Australia Business Council

