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# Konrad Adenauer Lecture Series

**Inaugural Lecture: 'Germany and Europe  
in a New Era of Global Challenges'**

**By Professor Dr Norbert Lammert**

*Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung  
Former President of the German Federal Parliament*



**Inaugural Lecture, 28 November 2017**

## Inaugural Konrad Adenauer Lecture

*Germany and Europe in an  
Era of Global Challenges*  
Prof. Dr Norbert Lammert  
28 November 2017

**The Konrad Adenauer Lecture Series** is focused on enhancing understanding of Germany and Europe in Australia and the wider region. The inaugural Konrad Adenauer Lecture took place in November 2017, delivered by Professor Dr Norbert Lammert.

The establishment of the prestigious annual Konrad Adenauer Lecture Series was the culmination of an ongoing collaboration between the ANU Centre for European Studies (ANUCES) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

Over a number of years ANUCES and KAS have worked to bring together researchers and policymakers on issues of critical importance in both Europe and Australia. Their collaborative events and publications have promoted dialogue among scholars and practitioners to address common problems and identify shared interests. ANUCES and KAS formalised their partnership in the form of their commitment to an annual, high-profile lecture series and subsequent papers.

**Konrad Adenauer Lectures can be viewed on the ANUCES website:**  
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# ‘Germany and Europe in a New Era of Global Challenges’

By Professor Dr Norbert Lammert

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Good evening Ladies and Gentleman, Professor Lo, Excellencies and Distinguished Guests. Thank you for the kind invitation and for the particularly kind introduction. The title of the first Adenauer lecture tonight is not as harmless as it might sound: *Germany and Europe in a New Era of Global Challenges*. To be honest, there have been times in the past when it was much more pleasant to talk about Europe than might be the case today. But looking to the future, we could hardly find a more appropriate occasion to talk about Europe due to the global challenges we face in this new era. I'm not going to talk about Germany and Europe, but rather, about Europe and Germany, which is not exactly the same but precisely the role which confronts us, given the challenges we have to deal with.

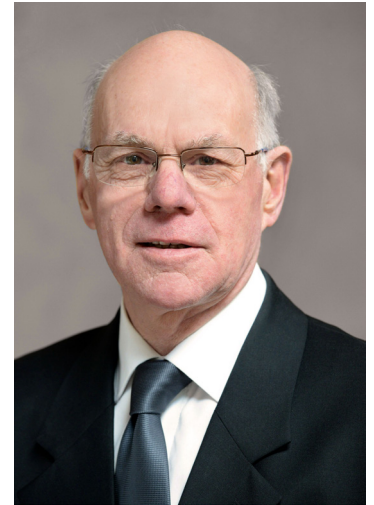
I will start with a sentence by Konrad Adenauer, to whom this lecture series is dedicated. He once said that ‘European unity was a dream of a few but became a hope for many, today it is a necessity for all’. I would like to explain why I think this is definitely true, even more so now than at the time when Konrad Adenauer made this remark more than 60 years ago, before the process of European integration started. This year we have celebrated the 60th birthday of the European integration, defined by the Roman Treaties that were negotiated and concluded in 1957. Simultaneously, we have celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty, which was the first European treaty defining Europe not only as an economic unity and common market, but also as a political union; and the 10th anniversary of the Lisbon Treaty, which is the last of the major European treaties, but definitely not the ultimate treaty defining the future prospects of Europe. I personally share the perception of a lot of historians, journalists and political scientists who regard the process of European integration as the greatest achievement of Europe in the 20th century, if not, as some observers argue, the greatest achievement in European history. Even if such a remark is some kind of exaggeration, it makes a point which I think, and I hope to convince you, is correct.

Talking about the significance of the process of European integration, we recognise two historical lessons being learned. One has to do with the past and the other with the future. Looking to the past, we have learned the lessons of two World Wars, both having taken place in Europe, both being organised in Europe, and both with a particular participation of Germany. It was this traumatic perception resulting from two unbelievable types of military conflict with dozens of millions of victims, which, for the first time ever, created an understanding of the necessity of a completely different future than all the European past that had come before. The first statesman to explicitly announce this necessity was Winston Churchill. In his famous speech addressed to the youth of Europe at the

University of Zurich in 1946, Churchill referred to the experiences of the immediate past and argued in favour of creating ‘something like the United States of Europe’, adding that the United Kingdom would observe and support this process without participating because Great Britain obviously didn't belong to Europe. This appears to be an integrative part of the misunderstanding of any British Prime Minister, but this is another issue that I won't comment further on tonight.

It is obviously true that the European integration process is a historical achievement. Nobody can imagine that serious conflicts in Europe which still exist today could be dealt with by military means. Thus far, this historical lesson of the past has been fulfilled. Some observers argue this is precisely the problem of the European integration process: those who have grown up after the Second World War will simply take it for granted, and won't necessarily be motivated to engage in a process which, although recognised as a historical achievement, is still taking place. Nobody challenges this achievement, and thus far it is obviously not sufficient for motivating younger people in Europe in the 21st century. That is the reason why we have to look at the future challenges that make this process of European integration at least as necessary as the need to overcome traumatic experiences of the past. And another reason is the new era of globalisation that we have already reached. What does globalisation mean? This is, of course, a story that I cannot tell comprehensively. I will concentrate on one aspect that I think is the single most important and irreversible political implication of globalisation.

We all share an understanding that we live in a world that is greater than it ever was, bigger than it ever was, and, at the same time, smaller than it ever was. There are more people living on the globe today than ever before – more than seven billion people. It took thousands of years in the history of humankind to reach a total of one billion people at the beginning of the 19th century, then another century to double this figure. Now, after another 100 years, we have more than three times the number of people we had at the beginning of the 20th century, which alone is an interesting story to tell. But given this tremendous number of people, this world is smaller than it has ever been, and we have never been as close to each other as we are now.





Out of numerous reasons that contribute to this new experience, it is probably digitalisation that has had the greatest single effect. For the first time ever in human history, we live in a time when any information is principally available at any place in the world at the same time. If I tell this to my children, they are not even astonished because this is the reality they have grown up with. But we should be aware that it is a completely new type of living together: the fact that we can now observe whatever takes place, anywhere on the globe. Political systems now have to be aware that any information out there, including private life matters, is principally available to everybody. Young people in particular, share their intimate, personal interests with the rest of the world and expect the state to keep their personal integrity intact.

In my understanding, the most important and irreversible political implication of globalisation founded on digitalisation (widespread availability of information of any kind, in any place), is that nation states will definitely lose what for centuries they thought was their core business: sovereignty. Nation states, including those in Europe, have been founded on this particular interest: being master of their own agenda and being able to define what should be valid within the borders of their own country. Whether you like it or not, this type of sovereignty may no longer exist. Even worse, there is no chance to restore it. I'm

completely convinced that we already live in a time in which not a single sovereign country exists in the way that sovereignty existed in the 19th century – the great time of founding nation states in Europe. One could differentiate the approximately 200 existing states that are members of the United Nations from those who have understood that they are no longer sovereign, and others that refuse to understand that this is the new situation.

So far, the most convincing solution is Europe. I don't see any other region in the world that, with a similar approach, has come to terms with this new era of globalisation. I don't see any other region in the world that has been prepared, more or less willingly, to share sovereignty in order to keep as much influence as possible and jointly create a better future for everybody. It is nearly a tragedy that some of the states in the EU seem to be interested in going back rather than moving forward. Some states are interested in restoring capacities and competencies that may no longer be available.

This leads me to three points I want to make to characterise the process of European integration, which, for the reasons I have touched on, is in general an astonishing success story, even if not always felt as one. Some people in many EU member states tend to think of Europe as a permanent 'meta' of crisis and problems, rather than a common success story. I would like to explain what I think have been



three asymmetrical developments within the European process of integration, and why we have some imbalances in the process that need to be solved, without a clear perspective at the moment whether or when those future changes could be implemented.

The first asymmetrical development characterising the European process of integration is the preference of economics against politics, the second is the preference of enlargement against the deepening of institutions, and the third is the preference or superiority of government against parliament, executive against the legislative process.

Firstly, I will discuss the preference of economics against politics. Before the Roman Treaties were negotiated, there was an early approach to make a European community organised for security interests. It was an initiative to create a European defence union and, interestingly enough, consisted of the same number of member states which later on established the economic union. This started to make a similar defence union with the interest of integrating the military capacities of member states in order to prevent them from engaging in military conflicts and to enable them to defend themselves against potential aggressors. This idea failed. The negotiations came to an end with the treaty signed by all prime ministers, including Konrad Adenauer. The treaty was also ratified in five out of six national parliaments, including the German Bundestag, but failed in the Assemblée Nationale. And the reason is quite understandable: sovereignty. For Germany it was not a major problem to renounce sovereignty as a core activity of a sovereign state responsible for its security, because Germany had no sovereignty at that time. However, our French colleagues were not yet prepared to give up their sovereignty, which they still thought to maintain.

There was a need for a new approach and the new attractive approach was to create a market. It was plausible for everybody who was interested in overcoming the limits of national markets and having a broader place for economic activities. Thus, the Roman Treaties created an economic union and what took place was the self-dynamics of economic interests, which again had different implications and effects. One effect was that the creation of a common market soon became such a large success story that even those countries that were not interested in participating, immediately decided to apply for membership. This included Great Britain, who was prevented from joining the Union at that time due to French president Charles de Gaulle – only when he was no longer in this position could Great Britain join the European Economic Union.

Another effect was that this self-dynamic economic process was even quicker than the political preconditions for stable structures in a big common market (I'm simplifying much



more complex processes now): introducing a common currency for a common market, without having common budget policy, common economic policy and common fiscal policy, was quite an ambitious initiative without any precedents in the history of political systems. It is true that the turbulences that we have experienced after introducing the Euro instead of using the national currencies are the result of the lack of reliable political frameworks. This was not an oversight. It was a major debate within the states and between the states when the Euro was introduced. I will never forget the argumentation of Helmut Kohl in the 1990s after the decision to introduce the Euro. He was repeatedly asked whether he had really thought this could be managed without the necessary political institutions for common policies in budget, fiscal and other fields. His answer was always this: there is an indispensable connection between both structures, but without the pressure of an introduced common currency, the necessary political reforms will never take place due to the interest in keeping sovereignty. This was not a silly argument, but, unfortunately, did not provide a sufficient perspective for the future. Hence, we still have this imbalance between a highly ambitious level of economic integration and an incomparable level of political institutions.

The second asymmetrical development was the preference of enlargement against the deepening of institutions. Whenever there was a chance to make applicants member states of the EU, we have taken this opportunity. This was particularly true after the Cold War, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and after the transformation of political systems in Central and Eastern Europe. The result was that a community which started with six western European member states expanded to 28 western, central and eastern European states. I wouldn't blame anybody for that. It's complicated to argue that we should have refused Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to become member states at the first possible moment, and nobody can seriously answer the question as to whether a postponing of their membership would have made their



membership possible at a later date. But even accepting that historically this might have been unavoidable, it is still an imbalance, particularly as the treaties indicate that any substantial new agreement needs the approval of every single member state. Therefore, enlargement makes it even more complicated to make progress because any single member state may be in a veto position for any substantial progress.

The third point is about the superiority of governments against parliaments. This is an understandable process, of course. In the 1950s and 60s that has been organised by governments – that was not the problem. The problem was that sharing sovereignty and transferring national competencies to European institutions was, at the same time, transferring capabilities for legitimising valid rules from national parliaments (where they have been) to the European level (where they have never been before). So, instead of a process of democratic legitimisation of rules, we had a transformation of making rules in European institutions in discrete European councils without public observation, and by negotiations of governments instead of participating parliaments. This is the democratic gap that has been rightly complained about, and has, in effect, been overcome with the Lisbon Treaty, the last of the series of important European Treaties. In the meantime, the role of the European Parliament is definitely comparable to the role of a national parliament, and, in my observation, there are some national parliaments that would be proud if they possessed the capacities and capabilities of the European Parliament.

Looking to the future, we are faced with a series of challenges. All of them, in my understanding, can't be met on national terms. I will only mention some of them, without a detailed explanation, and the list of examples is, of course, not a comprehensive one. We are faced with populism all over Europe and beyond, in all vital, traditional western democracies, including the US and Australia. We are faced with an astonishing new trend of separatism and an interest

in making regions independent again, with the crazy idea of re-establishing sovereignty for the regions (which is no longer available even for the nations). We are confronted with a new trend of nationalism, at least in the sense of renationalising political decision-making processes.

Obviously, there is not a broad preparedness within the EU to increase the responsibility of European institutions. There is, rather, a trend of making the member states stronger, and there is a particular connection between populism and nationalism. This idea seems to be very popular, although it is obviously anachronistic and an attempt to go back to the 19th century, instead of moving forward into the 21st century. We are confronted with particular challenges in terms of migration, of both economic migrants and refugees, which again are not exclusive European issues, but are, nonetheless, major European challenges nowadays. We are faced with new types of intervention or, I should rather say, we are faced with new and old types of intervention. What we have experienced in Ukraine is rather the old-fashioned type of intervention that we thought would never happen again, at least in Europe.

Beyond this strange experience we are met with the experience of cyber interventions, openly interfering in election campaigns, in economic processes and the steering of major institutions. Among all these aforementioned challenges, I cannot see one that could be solved with national means. All of them have technical and political dimensions that overrun any existing border. If at all, the challenges can only be solved by joint approaches, or else they won't be solved.

Terrorism is another challenge and not just a new kind of criminal activity. It is a completely new type of challenge organised with methods of state institutions, and easily overriding national borders. We either will find joint approaches or we won't find solutions. Given these challenges, and given the necessity for joint approaches, I probably don't have to argue why the decision of our British friends is probably the most disastrous decision in the younger history of Europe. My expectation is that for the people of the United Kingdom this will be a discouraging experience, that after having left the EU they will neither have restored sovereignty nor gained attractiveness. They lose, both harming their own interests and, of course, weakening Europe, which would be stronger with British participation.

My last remark will be about Germany. Again, looking back to the year 1957 when the process of European integration started, Germany was divided. It was a border country with limited options and prospects. Today, 60 years later, Germany is a united country with 82 million people. It has more people than any other European country, a central



geographical position within Europe, more neighbouring states than any other country, and a stronger economy than any other member state. This alone makes Germany not just one of 28 member states, but the state which has to play a significant role in any European process. To put it the other way around, without German participation, substantial progress is not possible. Most German people don't like this situation. Most German people would prefer playing like Switzerland, which is a pleasant idea but completely unrealistic. This is the domestic challenge that old and new German governments have to face. They are confronted with the expectations of the neighbouring states and partners within the EU that go far beyond the preparedness of most German taxpayers and voters, as far as the German role in this process is concerned.

I would like to finish by making one last remark and comparing the situation now with the situation 60 years ago. When the integration process started 60 years ago, there were six western European states of the European economic community with a total of 200 million inhabitants. These 200 million people represented roughly 10% of the world population. Now, 60 years later, the EU with 28 member states has 500 million people who represent less than 7% of the world population. These two figures alone illustrate the new

era of global challenges. Those who remain enthusiastic about the great times of European history had better not expect such times to last. If it were ever true that Europe was the natural centre of the world, it is definitely no longer true. There is, however, a chance to keep influence in a world which is as it is, and to maintain what we have developed as western democracies in terms of values and principles. Virtually none of the existing European states is able to maintain these principles in a global world alone, we have to do it jointly. That's why I'm convinced that Konrad Adenauer is completely right: the process of European integration initially was the dream of some, then it became the hope of many. In a global world that he couldn't even imagine, it has become a simple necessity. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to deliver my reflections on Europe and thank you for your attention.



Left to right: Mr Paul Linnarz – Director, Team Political Dialogue and Analysis, KAS Berlin; Professor Jacqueline Lo – Executive Director, The Australian National University Centre for European Studies; Professor Dr Norbert Lammert – KAS Chairman and Former President of the German Federal Parliament; Dr Beatrice Gorawantschy – Director, Regional Programme Australia and the Pacific, KAS Canberra; and Ms Gerda Winkler – Chargé d'Affaires, German Embassy in Canberra.



## CONTACT US

### **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Regional Programme Australia and the Pacific**

T +61 2 6154 9322

W [www.kas.de/australia](http://www.kas.de/australia)

### **The Australian National University Centre for European Studies (ANUCES)**

T +61 2 6125 9896

E [europa@anu.edu.au](mailto:europa@anu.edu.au)

W <http://ces.anu.edu.au>

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