



Micheline Calmy-Rey – January 24, 2014

Former Swiss President argues for Swiss entry to EU

Former Swiss president Micheline Calmy-Rey, in her second speech to the AIC, sketched out her perspective on the new global order and disclosed her views on Europe and Switzerland's role in it.

'The international order is now multi-polarised', the dominance of Europe in global decision making a century ago has faded and we are watching a 'reshuffling of economic powers.' In less than a century 'we have moved from a planet directed by Europe to a multi polar world.'

American influence has declined since the Iraq war, coalition powers have not been able to make the impact they once did. Meanwhile international

organisations and financial markets enjoy greater power she said. 'It is impossible to ignore that multinational companies exercise their influence on a global scale'.

Europe has reacted to globalisation and other changes in the world with a 'process of integration'. The EU is facing questions about whether it should become more integrated and united or if member countries should evolve at 'different speeds'.

Calmy-Rey noted the important disconnect between the EU's economic power and its ability to influence international events because of its weak central governance. If member countries want the EU to have greater impact internationally they will have to accept more unifying approaches.

How does Switzerland respond to this integrated Europe?

For nearly 500 years it 'has demonstrated an ability to create a niche for its continued existence in the shadow of great powers.' The country's neutrality has served as a great advantage. Through this 'active neutrality' it has kept a distance from great powers, which enables it to act as mediator and encourage dialogue between countries at odds with each other.

In recent years Switzerland has been involved as an 'honest broker' in mediating 20 peace processes without taking sides.

But Switzerland, she said, now faces a situation similar to Geneva at the time of Napoleon. After being ruled by the French, Geneva in 1815 decided to join the Swiss Confederation because as a small independent republic it was difficult to defend itself. Similarly she said Switzerland should join the EU, believing that it can still retain its unique neutrality whilst being a member.