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Europe's challenges in a globalised world

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The present is a critical period in the process of the European construction, but this is not the first time nor will be the last one. Uncertainty is a consequence of the lack of definition about which way the EU has to follow in the short term. The deadlock in the process of ratification of the European Constitution Treaty, especially after the French and the Dutch referendum has led to the current situation. But its origin can be dated backwards. The historical acceleration between 1989 and 1992 brought into play the necessity of enlarging the EU easterly. The German demochristian began to use the term of ‘variable geometry’ in the process of the European construction, and the metaphorical use of geometry has been common in academic and political speeches. These years of debates about the Constitution have updated the comparison and again well-known and prestigious politicians and scholars use terms of the sort ‘circle of friends’ (R. Prodi), ‘concentric circles’ (G. Verhofstadt), the ‘three circles’ (L. Fabius) or ‘Eurosphere’ (M. Leonard). Old questions come to mind in those debates, namely, what must be done – deepen further or not?, how can one do it: cooperation or integration?, who can do it? or where is the European *limes*?

The history of the European construction can help us make a decision. Let us focus on three possible headlines:

1. An identified threat is transformed into opportunity. A lost opportunity is transformed into a threat

There are people who maintain that the current crisis is associated with a certain loss of interest in Europe, especially by the younger generations. It is commonly argued that the threat of war, so present in the circles of the Founding Fathers, gave way to cessions and eased agreements and to the unwritten support by the public opinion. In the past the German fear fostered the Schuman or Pleven plans, worked out by J. Monnet, when the real military threat did actually come from the extinct Soviet Union. Now the threat is called globalisation and immigration.

On the one hand, globalisation brings about two serious internal challenges, two wonderful linked opportunities: overcome the gap in R+D+I and energetical dependency. If we are capable of being successful, we will maintain our social model, that is, the regulated capitalism developed when the first communities were turning up.

On the other hand, immigration, as has been evinced on many occasions from a historical perspective, is based on converging internal and external factors. Our age pyramids are not balanced and the current aging cannot warrant the replacement of generations. This leads to increasing costs in the professional and the social dimensions. The globalisation of the mass media and the transportation underlines developmental differences between developed and underdeveloped countries. Our weaknesses, their necessities and the migration chains justify an intense shouting effect. Immigration implies new internal challenges for our social and political models. Two opportunities are brought into play, which, if they are badly negotiated, will constitute a powerful threat to our living together: the regulation of migration flows, and the social and political inclusion of the newcomers. Regulation cannot lead to putting up sand walls which the waves will inevitably destroy. Quite the contrary, it implies flexible imaginative and realistic legislative actions which can foster returning migration, as well as intensive work in and with the source countries in an attempt to assign a central role to those who return. When Europe was a land of emigration, those returning to Europe were basic pillars of the social and political transformations of their home countries which have led to current prosperity. Social and political inclusion must lower down the potential struggle brought about by sustained immigration. As a consequence of the profile of the newcomers, the women constitute the core of the solution. Fostering their leadership and turning them into the axis of the great transformation are the most important and passionate challenges of the future.

2. We need more Europe to overcome the crisis. More Europe is not enough, but better Europe: more integration, more multilevel subsidiarity

One should go back to 1954. An agenda issue blocked the ratification of the constitutive Treaty of the European Community for the Defense in the French parliament. There would not exist – there does not exist – a common army. There would not exist – there does not exist – a European Political Community. There would not exist – there does not exist – a Constitution. This recollection leads us to Messina, a great pilot, Spaak, to the Rome Treats. It seems in order here to reflect upon such a first *relance* of Europe.

Those were problematic times for Europe – Hungary, Suez, Berlin –, not free of hope – Sarre, peaceful coexistence, economical miracles–. The Coal and Steel European Community had demonstrated the virtues of the functionalist method, the Green Pool, whereas other experiments had shown the ballast of intergovernmentalism methodology with a low degree of institutionalisation. The two Rome Treats can be approached to as two bets for the future: a realistic one – EURATOM – and another more ambitious one – EEC.

EURATOM implied amplifying the success of the Coal and Steel Community, a sectorial exercise of integration focused on energy. Although it seemed something easy, reproducing models is not a guarantee at all. The project lacked compromise – only France, and only for a while, seemed really interested – and a well-defined goal which could generate illusion and justify effort. In sum, it did not constitute a political opportunity since it was not in keeping with the strategy of the US, which was later evinced by Kennedy's *Gran Design*, and did not provide an answer for the British equation. Such an easiest way became a complete failure, only relieved by its reduced expectations.

The EEC represents, one can argue, the widening of the orbit of the BENELUX customs union both spatially and politically, that is, a customs union with a high degree of institutionalisation and common policies which overcome every previous model. Previous similar experiments did not assure success at all – think of the fiascos of FRANCITEL or FRITALUX. The Common Market was however a fact for several reasons. It perfectly took advantage of the opportunities born after the end of the period of the post-war reconstruction and the extended European economical expansion with the cheap versatile and copious energetical source of petrol. The Market benefited from territorial continuity in its customs space and from an important level of interaction and synergy among the different economies. Doubtlessly, its original and ambiguous institutional articulation was also of benefit. Its internal enemies, which were the most dangerous, identifies the Commission as the element which threatened the nations and drove the ship to unknown ports of European unity. The Commission was threatend by, among other, De Gaulle, until the Luxembourg Compromise. But a surprise was still pending in the peculiar Communitarian net. Following the trail of the Marshall Court, the Luxembourg Court – an, in principle, minor institution – opened the way towards successful judicial federalism with the Van Gend & Loos, Costa/Enel and, later, Simmenthal sentences, ones of the most intensive supranational paths in the whole

process of the European construction up to the present. The uncertain and very ambitious way had been initiated and reached notable success.

Summing up, the experience of the years 1954-1957 has showed that the EU is obliged to be ambitious and, at the same time, realistic. It has to be both imaginative in its institutional developments and somewhat ambiguous, which will ease flexible adaptation to the changing situations. It must especially implicate and give grounds for hope to society. The important ambitions – defense, outer policy, taxing, education – are the goals. Participation and transparency constitute the *governance* methodology. The Hallstein and the Delors Commissions, in different times, were the power of the integrating impulse. Today, in the opinion of many observers, the Commission has become a significant *think tank* which produces memos and reports and does not enter into action. Other more benevolent observers regard the Commissions as a hostage of the higher civil servants of the Community. The course of the Commission has to be corrected in a stable way so that its activity does not depend to a larger extent on the President's personality. The Commission has to turn into the engine of the initiatives and, above all, in the landmark of transparency and participation. It must actively fix the rules for sub-statal actors – regions and local entities –, which are the agents of the creation and the management of the European policies which are next to the citizen. The main policies are not those focused on the things – hard or soft infrastructure – but those which are not material – education, training, culture, citizenship–. This does not mean that the statal or national level has to be eliminated; this proposal implies the reinforcement of citizenship by making local, national and community entities converge.

3. The sphere contains smaller circles and eclipticals or maximal circles, which are necessary in order to establish the coordinates which can set a safe course and widen the orbits

Geometry is also present in this concluding section. History gives us the opportunity to move backwards to another important date, namely 1950, when the concept of the big or small Europe as a container of experiences related to the construction of the European unity was under debate. The model which was the most successful was the one which was more homogeneous, involved or threatened. However, the enlargement of the Union to new members was part of the course of action of the European unity. In fact, in the process of the European construction, the extension of the Union constitutes

the best thermometer which measures the degree of satisfaction. If nobody wants to get off the ship and new countries want to get on, the storm can be dominated. The EU is a project which is politically indefinite – this is one of its main attractive features – and the new members are capable of influencing on the course. At the same time, the EU is a stable reality which transmits degrees of conviction attractive to those countries which have to consolidate their bets for the democratic countries and for market economies which are socially competitive.

That stated, nothing is more dangerous and can avoid stability than frustrating expectations. The smaller circles are referential landmarks which are absolutely necessary, as well as the maximal circles. All the countries which are located in the same coordinates have their right to enter the existing orbits. The problem is to find out which our equator is, that is, our *limes*. When one considers a future with great poles placed in the US, China, India or Japan, the size is not important. Let us thus discard the fear to being too many or to occupy too much space. The skyline is also dynamic. History tells us that Europe never had a *limes* constrained by geography. The different panEuropes in the world history – Greece, Rome, Germany, Pope, Illustration – either increased or decreased their geographical space because the important things were the shared values. This must be the correct way: first, firm compromise in the acceptance of the values established by the community which define that we are and want to be European in a globalised world; then, generosity and support in the approaching orbits of the new countries which are ready to risk themselves in the common adventure by adding and not by subtracting; finally, when we allow a given country complete entrance to our orbit, it must be capable of walking the whole way, from the periphery to the centre of our system – the opposite view would be a collective call to disaster.