

## **A FUTURE FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION PROJECT, TERRITORY, DEMOCRACY**

Since 1989 the geopolitical and geoeconomic environment within which the EU operates has been undergoing rapid and profound change: at the global level, power relations are being transformed and the hegemony of the 'West' is being called into question; a 'clash of civilisations' is possible; and there is a growing number of conflicts on the periphery of Europe. The globalisation of the economy is calling into question the position of our economies within the international division of labour and our socio-economic solidarity models. Finally, the disappearance of Communist regimes has 'metamorphosed' our continent and transformed the European Union, through 'enlargement', increasing its internal heterogeneity<sup>1</sup>.

All of these changes, and the very rapid rate at which they are occurring, are helping disorient public opinion in Europe and, above all, encouraging xenophobic political trends in all countries on an extremely alarming scale.

In the light of these situations of major instability and lack of security, greater political investment in developing the European Union as a new civil power capable of acting within a globalised world, is, in our view, essential. That is the unequivocal choice formulated by the European Green party at its last congress<sup>2</sup>. Admittedly, many have commented on a crisis of purpose and performance in European policy leading to question marks over Europe's popular legitimacy. Whilst this analysis is not irrelevant, it should not conceal the fact that the Union has achieved a certain number of successes, and it is not inconsistent with an approach advocating the creation of a genuine European power.

Today the Union is a normative model which provides stability and enables European societies to build modern democracies. The very existence of the Union and the prospect of accession are the main focus of security policy for the whole of the European continent.

The European Union is, today, by virtue of its numerous powers, notably in the area of monetary, trade, environment and energy policy, potentially capable of shaping globalisation. This is a strongly debated political issue, given that the Union currently demonstrates, through its policy in practice, rather a concern to adjust to the constraints of global financial capitalism than to promote relations based on solidarity between peoples. Nonetheless, the Union is the sole supranational political and legal system in the world which has a mandate bringing together the various environmental, economic and social dimensions in defining its objectives and powers.

The governments of the 27 Member States have now concluded a new stage in the development of the legal and political system of the European Union by reaching agreement firstly in 2004 on the draft Constitution and subsequently in 2007 on the Treaty of Lisbon.

The European Greens are probably the most united political family within the European Parliament in terms of defending the Union's supranational, Community system and wishing to

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<sup>1</sup> A recent study by the Institute for Security Studies in Paris, which attempts to define the main characteristics of the global environment within which the European continent will find itself in 2025, concludes that the world will be more unstable and there will be greater insecurity. Nicole Gnessoto and Giovanni Grevi, *The new global puzzle*, Paris, 2006. See also Pierre Hassner, *Le siècle de la puissance relative*, Le Monde, 2.10.2007

<sup>2</sup> Geneva, 2006

see it developed further. At the same time, the Greens are faced with a political reality within the European institutions in which they are clearly in a minority. The development of a European power (a 'United States of Europe') runs up against several political currents, in which stances are increasingly being taken. In my view, there are at least three major obstacles different in nature: the rise in nationalism within Europe itself; the euro-atlantic option in which it is the 'West' that is defined as the relevant political unit; and, finally, an economic rationale in which it is the global market that is the relevant economic area for companies irrespective of their nationality of origin. In addition to these obstacles, there is the current lack of certainty surrounding the Union's external borders, which is associated with the different political projects.

There are splits running through the three main European political families on these issues. The EPP and the European Liberals are the groups which pursue, as a priority, within Parliament the project of a 'global Europe', open to the world, and expanding, a project which finds its clearest expression in the policy stance of the British Prime Ministers of the New Labour movement<sup>3</sup>. In view of the electoral successes of these movements and their large political majority within the three main European institutions, the European policy agenda is largely dominated in practice by this direction. The Socialists are also divided on these issues and, moreover, they are not currently in a relative position of power that would enable them to significantly reorientate the 'global Europe' project. The Greens are more united, but their influence is clearly in proportion to their electoral results.

2008 is the year in which the Treaty of Lisbon is to be ratified and at the same time a decisive year (?) in terms of the opening of international negotiations on climate change (Kyoto II), in which the European Union will have particular responsibility in the conducting of negotiations.

2009 will see the election of a new European Parliament and the appointment of a new Commission. It is essential that the Greens present a common, transnational programme addressing the global challenges faced and the legitimate questions which have sprung up during referenda on the constitutional treaty.

Assuming that the Treaty of Lisbon is ratified by the 27 Member States, it is necessary, in order to continue the work of building Europe, to address certain fundamental questions: why the EU? with whom? and how? In other words, it is important to establish whether we are in a position to propose an alternative to the 'global Europe' course currently being pursued. The European elections in June 2009 in particular will be an opportunity - not the only opportunity - to make the future of the European Union a political issue, going beyond institutional questions, in order to allow a more direct debate on the possible choices.

The following notes should be seen as a first step in this exercise.

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Blair, Europe is not a super power, Warsaw, Gordon Brown, Global Europe, full employment, October 2005 ; Foreign policy priorities, 12.11.2007

## WHY THE EU? : MANAGING GLOBALISATION

The question of a new EU project is not an abstract one. In common with others, the 'most developed countries' are faced with a triple crisis: a *crisis of development* (if European countries' ecological footprint is extrapolated to the world population, three planets would be needed today), a *crisis of distribution* (greater inequalities between capital and labour, between regions of the world and within regions) and a *crisis of regulation* (absence of world 'governance'). This crisis within the system is not linked to the existence of the Union, but it makes the question of the EU's role in relation to globalisation all the more pressing. Do the choices currently available at least partially address the crises?

A further question: does the European system give the political powers a degree of additional freedom in their policy choices in relation to national action?

Admittedly, the answers to these questions are not unequivocal. For example, taking advantage of the strong media attention paid to climate change and its economic and social consequences, the European Council in March 2007 adopted targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions and developing renewable energy sources. Although, in the view of the Greens, these are inadequate, they do indicate a partial change in governments' political priorities. This European decision also again puts the Union in the vanguard of post-2012 Kyoto negotiations.

However, European laws clearly need to follow and be consistent with the targets announced. Our experience within the European Parliament shows us that that is far from the case, as has recently been seen again in votes on permitted emissions for cars or the inclusion of aviation in the emission allowances mechanism, where the resources made available are, in our view, insufficient.

At the institutional level, the Greens have called for the introduction of a mechanism for imposing sanctions on Member States that fail to comply with their targets, along the lines of the mechanism applying to Member States' budgetary policies.

Aside from the official speeches and the declared intentions, the political strategy that governments of all political hues have been choosing to pursue for many years is to immerse European economies in the global economy. From this point of view, the legal framework of the Union is perfectly suited to, and facilitates, the work of implementing the national reforms entailed by this immersion<sup>4</sup>.

The Union's legislative action continues to focus on the general opening up to competition of all sectors of economic activity, the boundaries of which are continually being pushed back (current discussion on health care and social services); environmental legislation remains essential, but is systematically confronted with cost considerations for companies which operate within the context of international competition (for example, Reach); fiscal and social legislation is at a halt. Furthermore, there has been a relative move away from European harmonisation in favour of competition between national rules.

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<sup>4</sup> The Commission has published three strategy papers on globalisation since 2005, COM(2007)581, COM(2006)567, COM(2005)525, each approved by the European Council.

More generally, an analysis of the current internal situation within the Union suggests to us that the 'clash of nations' is prevailing over cooperation, a competitive scenario over a cooperative scenario<sup>5</sup>. This internal dynamic has an external dimension, insofar as the EU's weakness when it comes to playing a role in world economic governance is recognised by leading experts<sup>6</sup>.

However, compared with all international organisations, the EU constitutes a legal system bringing together a set of powers which potentially allows a different kind of political arbitration. What is above all needed is a new hierarchy in terms of objectives and priorities. The EU can, and does, play a pioneering role in the fight against climate change. It could defend international fiscal standards within the WTO and the IMF and promote either the setting up of a world environment organisation, or, better still, the transforming of a group of existing international organisations so as to create a legal and institutional system at the global level, a global sustainable development Union, which could be modelled on the Union system<sup>7</sup>.

A more active role in the area of world 'economic governance' is inseparable from redefining relations with the USA, which have permanently played an important role in the history of the building of Europe from the outset. The current emphasis within the EU, and at all events within Parliament, is on relaunching transatlantic relations, putting behind us the opposition associated with the war in Iraq<sup>8</sup>. Our capacity for acting autonomously vis-à-vis the United States remains very limited, including even at the internal level within the Union, as the controversy surrounding 'anti-missile' stations in the Czech Republic and Poland demonstrates. This is a subject which continues to be heavily debated by the Greens, and in particular the German Greens, and is clearly of major importance for the future development of the Union.

## **WITH WHOM? TERRITORY OF THE UNION**

### **THE BORDERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) ARE POLITICAL STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS NEED TO BE DEVELOPED WITH THE MAJOR GROUPS NEIGHBOURING ON THE EU**

The EU is open to accession by European countries on the basis of adoption of the 'acquis communautaire' (in particular European treaties and legislation) and geopolitical considerations. The EU's borders are thus political and not geographical, a choice confirmed by the draft constitution.

Successive enlargements of the Union, and in particular the last one, are generally presented as perhaps in themselves the most spectacular success achieved by the ESDP in so far as they are the most appropriate way of safeguarding the security of the whole of the continent. In this way, the European community of values and fundamental rights is projected, and extends, over a wider area. Taking this approach, the accession of the Balkans, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasus and even Middle Eastern countries is able to be defended without too much hesitation. This is very much the majority view among Green MEPs within the European Parliament and among many Green parties, from Swedish Eurosceptics to German Greens.

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Pisani-Ferry, Sociétal, December 2003

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Defraigne, L'Europe dans la gouvernance économique mondiale, RAMSES 2007, Dunod 2006

<sup>7</sup> Pascal Lamy, La démocratie-monde, Seuil, 2004, in particular chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Resolution of 25 April 2007

This line of argument greatly underestimates the fact that accession by an ever-growing number of European countries to the Union is transforming the Union itself and that the famous 'acquis communautaire' is in no way a definitive acquis to which everyone conforms. Existing EU legislation is subject to regular revision (this is indeed one of the priorities of the Barroso Commission, under the banner of 'better regulation') against the background of a situation of greater internal heterogeneity and under pressure from international competition.

It is therefore reasonable to see a tension - not to say a contradiction - between, on the one hand, calling for more ambitious European standards, in particular in the area of social and fiscal (and environmental) policy, and, on the other hand, increasing the number of Member States and thus objectively creating greater internal diversity<sup>9</sup>.

In these circumstances, we should not be content with treating full accession (either becoming or not becoming a member of the Union) as the sole option available to candidate countries. The new neighbourhood policy is in place and views on the substance of a special partnership agreement should be taken into consideration<sup>10</sup>.

## **HOW? DEMOCRACY**

The draft European Constitution as decided on in 2004 represented a delicate political balancing act between the advocates of greater supranationality and others. In terms of the internal functioning of the Union, the new provisions strengthen the supranational dimension in decision-making, but at the same time give national parliaments new powers to scrutinise compliance with the 'subsidiarity' principle, in other words to check that powers are not being exceeded. Enhanced cooperation between EU Member States to be decided on by the Council by a minimum of nine Member States could be interpreted as an instrument enabling the unanimity rule to be got round where it is retained (in particular in the area of taxation).

As regards external policy, the creation of a post of President of the European Council and the strengthening of the position of the 'minister' for external relations, together with the creation of a common diplomatic service<sup>11</sup>, pave the way for the Union to present a more personal face to the world in exercising its political powers. However, the institutional framework remains intergovernmental in nature and decisions will continue to be taken unanimously by the Council. Only implementing measures will be adopted by qualified majority. In the area of defence, the pre-eminence of the NATO framework is uncontested.

The Treaty of Lisbon signed in December 2007 incorporates all of the main elements of this balance. Political realism demands that the Treaty be approved given that, today, with a Union of 27 Member States, there is demonstrably no alternative to the Treaty. That is the stance which will probably be taken by national Green parties and, in their wake, the European Greens.

However, it is also clear that the new Treaty in itself will not give rise to the kind of 'constitutional patriotism' that some people have talked about.

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Rupnik, La « nouvelle frontière » de l'Europe, quels confins pour une Europe élargie ? published in Geremek and Picht, Visions d'Europe, Odile Jacob, 2007. See all of the contributions to chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> Note No 38 by the Robert Schuman Foundation, 'Le partenariat privilégié comme alternative à l'adhésion', December 2006

<sup>11</sup> The renegotiations conducted three years later culminating in the Treaty of Lisbon have significantly limited, at least in theory, the scope of the creation of a common service.

The building of Europe over the last 50 years has largely been going on over the heads of European peoples. It has been conceived and carried through by a small number of people. It has been supported by business circles which have strongly influenced the direction taken based on their interests. A high public administration and the lawyers at the Court in Luxembourg have developed and controlled European policy.

The Parliamentary dimension, which, all in all, has been very slow to develop on the basis of successive Treaty reforms, is still incomplete. The centres of power remain first and foremost in the hands of the Commission and the Council, not forgetting the Court and the ECB. None of these institutions has direct legitimacy vis-à-vis citizens.

The media (press, television) remains extremely compartmentalised from one country to the next and from a linguistic point of view and is having great difficulty in developing a 'European dimension'. European elections are held nationally and not much is perceived to be at stake. This situation fully explains the widespread feeling within the population that Europe is something very much external to them; 'Europe is a long way away and it is not us'. That is helping exacerbate the crisis of representative democracy which exists in many countries.

In order to make choices at European level more democratic, a number of institutional reforms are needed, without taking the view, however, that the forms of national democracy can be projected onto the European level<sup>12</sup>.

Increased powers for the European Parliament and for the parliamentary dimension in general (including national and regional parliaments) is clearly an important aspect at the institutional and political level.

However, there are also other aspects to which due attention should be paid, in particular the emergence of a European public space developed not only at an institutional level but also built upon cooperation and exchange networks within civil society in all spheres of human activity (sciences, arts, education, the economy, the social sphere). From this point of view, the working methods of European associations are far in advance of those in the political sphere, which still very much has its roots in national territories. An essential priority in order to build and sustain European democracy within nations and beyond nations is to educate and to develop a debate on political projects, taking a transnational, in other words a genuinely European, approach. It is what some people are calling 'politicisation' of the Union, and it is all the more necessary in so far as the work of conceiving a future for the Union, referred to here, is wholly political in nature<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *L déficit démocratique européen*, Esprit, October 2002

<sup>13</sup> Thierry Chopin, *Le Traité réformateur: vers une Union européenne politique?* Robert Schuman Foundation, European Issues No 78, November 2007