

PUTTING CITIZENS FIRST

THE TASKS FACING EUROPE, HER PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE CHARACTER OF HER PUBLIC AUTHORITY

Víctor Pérez-Díaz

ASP Research Paper 22(b)/1998

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Víctor Pérez-Díaz

Complutense University of Madrid; and ASP, Gabinete de Estudios, Madrid.

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Depósito legal: M-6126-1994
ISSN: 1134 - 6116

1. The tasks facing Europe and her public space: clearing up some factual and normative misunderstandings*

No way but forwards

Europe's current predicament is such that we need not worry about the momentum of the European process. To the contrary, what we need to worry about is its quality, and more particularly, the quality of the participation of the public in the process.

After the implementation of the Single Act, politicians were carried away by its success and rushed headlong into the Maastricht treaty. However, their spirits were sobered when the Danish and French referenda suggested that the public was reluctant to follow their lead. And then, against a background of economic difficulties and the protracted digestion of German reunification, they had to slow down even more. The Amsterdam treaty added just a few (though significant) amendments, yet to be accepted by member states, and the intergovernmental conference became a non-event. Now, once again, we are in an upward phase of the cycle, as eleven countries have met the requirements for the single currency and are on their way to 'euoworld'. But, no sooner do we reap the fruits of another success story than we are likely to risk another major blunder. To avoid this, we should take a moment to pause, reflect, and learn from past experience.

The fact is, there is no need to worry about the process not going forwards. The euro will increasingly come to dominate the landscape in the near-future. The impact of the symbolism of a common currency on the everyday life of ordinary Europeans will be irresistible. Particularly as this process will be played out in a situation in which other national symbols are either fading away or subject to controversy; as there are no conscript armies anymore, national memories are getting hazy, and national welfare systems are in a process

of painful revision.

From now on, domestic debates on economic and social policy will have Europe as the crucial frame of reference. Budget policies will be measured up against the criteria of the stability pact. The game rules for economic competition, health and safety protection for workers, consumer and environmental standards, will be largely European. Even states' defense and foreign policy initiatives will be routinely debated in the European arena. At the same time, the European agenda will be dominated by the connected issues of the Eastern enlargement and the revision of the agricultural and cohesion /structural policies. The Eastern enlargement, by far the most critical matter, will engage Europeans in arguments not only of economic interest but of security and foreign policy, as well as moral obligation and identity. And all of this will inevitably spill over into local politics.

The public, therefore, will have to get used to a complex conversation in which European and domestic matters will be inextricably linked. At the same time, it will have to get used to the incessant trips of its elected leaders to other European capitals, Brussels, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, etc., in order to present arguments or petitions, articulate demands, make claims and be part of that continuous conversation; and it will pass judgment on these politicians based on the way they conduct themselves in these forums. We are not talking about a number of scattered rituals and a few periodic ceremonies. The conversation will be - it is already - a continuous happening which, coupled with the omnipresence of the new currency, will change the tacit assumptions of the European public concerning the locus of relevant public authority, the way politics is conducted, the way politicians can be made accountable for their deeds, and lastly the contours and the shape of the political communities that Europeans belong to.

The process is irreversible, and this is why I say that there is no way but forwards. This being so, the question is no longer whether the public will be involved because it certainly will. The question has become how: as a community of alert, steady and discriminating citizens? Or as a mass of people, semi-informed, irresolute and relatively easy to manipulate by any who appeal to their parochial interests or tribal instincts?

*I thank my collaborators Juan Carlos Rodríguez and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca for their assistance at discussing the issues and handling the data which this essay draws from; and Anna Melich (European Commission, Directorate General X) for making the database easily available to me. I also thank Patricia Newey for her editorial help. The French version of this article is "La Cité européenne" in *Critique Internationale* n.1/1998.

Redefining the democratic deficit

The formation process of the European Union may be (mis)understood *as if* it were a goal-oriented process that corresponded to a grand strategy or project, and was vindicated by occasional referenda in which the public was summoned to confirm the general direction of events (Pérez-Díaz 1998: 236). This view can be elaborated by means of two complementary narratives which describe the prime movers in this process. Both depict a series of two-tier sociopolitical pacts according to which politicians agree among themselves and then lead their citizens; and/or the big, core nations, namely the German and French establishments, agree among themselves and then lead the minor, peripheral countries; *as if*, in this respect, there were implicit pacts of political representation between politicians and citizens, or between core countries and the rest.

Both these narratives are misleading. The fact is that these implicit pacts do not exist, belonging as they do in a sort of fantasy world which, by the way, is inimical to the very *raison d'être* of the European process. Because, in a civil and free society (such as the one most Europeans envision and hope for when they think of a European political association), the citizens are not just 'followers' in their own countries, and the smaller countries are not followers of the big ones.

From this normative viewpoint, citizens are not there simply to elect their leaders and be led by them. Rather, they must be considered the masters of the house, and it is in such a capacity that they appoint their political and civil servants to manage, that they hold these managers to account, and that they dismiss them and change them according to certain game rules which, incidentally, never allow these managers to be above the law at any moment. This is what liberal democracy is all about, and this is what citizens can do, try to do and actually do, when the institutions of a liberal democracy work properly, through the mechanisms of political accountability. Otherwise, there would be a deficit in the quality of democratic life: a 'democratic deficit' that, from a normative viewpoint, should be overcome.

Thus, as regards the democratic deficit of a political association, the key issue is that of elected politicians' accountability before the electorate and, of course, before the courts of law. Ultimately, the point is not so much to elect them

but to be able to hold them to account. This includes not allowing political leaders to get away with the kind of despotic behaviour which convinces them that they are above the law, so they act accordingly. The question of accountability applies to *any* political association, local, national or supranational, and therefore to Europe. Hence, for the European Union, the question of her democratic deficit arises first and foremost in regard not to the problem of designing better ways for electing political leaders, but to the problem of designing the proper mechanisms for making them really accountable once in office.

In this essay, I will proceed as follows. I assume that political accountability as applied to European leaders can only exist within the frame of the public's expectations and aspirations as to what the performance of their leaders is and should be. This leads me to suggest an interpretation of what the public's understanding of the European process, the role of the different nation states in that process, and the character of the ensuing European political association may be. In the first part of the essay, I emphasize the idea of 'process', the centrality of 'politics of difference', the 'civil' character of the European political association, and the need for a 'civic conversation'.

In the second part, I suggest an interpretation of the lessons to be drawn from recent developments in line with the preceding considerations, and, accordingly, I propose a redefinition of the proper role of political leadership. I go on to examine some empirical evidence which, in my view, tends to corroborate my views, as they suggest a sort of 'elective affinity' between them and the sentiments of the public. This leads me to my conclusion, with recommendations for 'putting citizens first', and criticism of the alternative path of putting political engineering, media and party activism and electoral games first.

2. The European process and the politics of difference

Like many human experiences, individual or collective, the so called '*construction européenne*' may be better understood as a journey to be enjoyed or a way to be followed rather than the final destination where travellers will rest and the way will end. The very term '*construction*' is misleading, as it presupposes a building master-plan which is then found to be non-existent as soon

as people get ready to discuss it.¹ In fact, the plan (the goal, the project or the final destination) has the intriguing quality of existing only insofar as it is 'being alluded to', preferably in an oblique manner, with some vague and presumably intense emotion attached to it.

There certainly is, and has always been, emotion over the 'European construction', even though, for the observer, that emotion (at least at its most intense) has been less likely to summon up the dreams associated with a brilliant future than the nightmares associated with a terrible past. From the beginning there was passionate concern, but it was for escaping from the past. First, however, it had to be put into words. And, whatever the real nature of the undertaking, it was articulated in the way politics usually was, in the language that the European statesmen of the late 1940s had at their disposal: the language, learnt in earlier years, of political activism and state intervention. It had been nurtured by the experiences of the world wars and the interim period. The desolate landscape left by the second world war only added a sense of urgency and opportunity. Thus, a language of grandiose, future-oriented 'historical projects' developed: socialism had to be built; nations, re-constructed; and Europe, constructed anew.

But we are well advised not to take this project-centered language at face-value. We need to concentrate our attention less on reasserting the project, and more on understanding the process.

The individual without a 'project of life'

Let us concede that, sometimes, a traumatic accident confuses an individual to the point where he loses a sense of continuity with his previous acts, a sense of direction and even of identity. However, in normal conditions, it seems odd for a forty-year old man to engage in a search for his own identity as if he could forget the circumstance of being ... forty-years old already. He may have a wife, children, a job and a variety of economic

¹As Philippe de Schoutheete indicates, at some point many Europeans reached the conclusion that "*toute évocation des buts et des finalités entraînait les partenaires dans des débats insolubles et inutiles. Elle conduisait à l'étalage de profondes divergences, sans profit pour personne et sans progrès pour l'Europe*" (1997:150).

and emotional involvements, routines and transformations. He may have taken long journeys into the realms of boredom and pleasure. And he will have had so many other experiences that have shaped his character, thereby 'defining' what he is and what he has become.

He may have lived through simultaneous happenings and confused relationships; or he may have lived his life one step at the time, caring little for any vision of *l'ensemble*. And yet, should we consider him not to have an identity just because he did not have a 'clear and distinct' idea of himself? Could we say that he was in need of *une pensée* so as to be able to (really) exist? Or assuming he cannot write his own autobiography, should we suggest that, as a sort of 'second best' he ought to settle for a professional writer to write down his life story? Would this provide his life with a (coherent) 'meaning', so that he would be able to reconstruct his experience as if everything that happened to him responded to a 'project of life'? However, even such a project of life would require one moment of clear-sightedness. Maybe that moment came when the man was twenty-years old, but what about the previous twenty years? Should we conclude that, lacking a 'project' these earlier years were not 'really' lived? (Or not lived in a human way?)

From the individual in quest of his 'project of life' to Europe in quest of hers

I am tempted to suggest that the discourse about the need for a historical project for Europe makes as little sense as a discourse about the individual's need to have a 'project of life' in order to prove that he has an identity. No doubt, today, it might be helpful to have a project; and even more helpful to have several projects, just in case... But the imperious need to have an all-encompassing project, or an overall meaning, sounds characteristic of people of certain dispositions, or certain professions such as intellectuals, politicians, futurologists, journalists and others, who trade in projects (just as shoemakers trade in shoes, farmers trade in corn and subsidies, and students trade in ideas and summer vacations, etc.).

The fact is, the European Union is already forty-years old (assuming continuity between her different impersonations), yet still harbours doubts about her final destination, and revolves around a

rather confused 'project of life'. This is no impediment to the fact that the Union has already had a very rich, intense and deeply rewarding experience, that makes sense even though that sense cannot be reduced to a single, unequivocal 'meaning', or give her a clear, distinct idea of herself. I suspect that, in fact, she is in no need of such an idea and that, contrary to Giscard d'Estaing's rather eery suggestion ("*l'Europe a besoin de retrouver aujourd'hui une pensée*" [De Schoutete 1997: 155]), what she needs (besides 'finding' not one thought, but several, or as many as possible) is self-understanding of her on-going experience as a process impossible to reduce to '*une pensée*'.

The politics of difference

A key component of the European experience has been the resilient diversity of her various components, the nation-states, from the very beginning and throughout. This is what clearly differentiates Europe's experience from that of America. In both cases, 'politics of difference', that is, politics of recognition of the various peoples and nations which comprise the whole, is the key to understanding the experiment. However, it has been undertaken in vastly different ways (Walzer 1992: 8-19).

The United States was originally developed by people from a common stock, who brought their English language and their English soul to a new land, together with their Anglo-Saxon laws and institutions and the moral dispositions that went with them. For a very long time after that, new migrants were mostly European (if we overlook the African slaves) who accepted the challenge of accommodating themselves to the new world. Of course, they kept their own customs up to a point and provided the stimulus for huge changes in local politics, the religious landscape and many other features of American life. Nevertheless, they accepted the basics of what they found: the constitution, the rule of law and common law, the market economy, social and geographical mobility, and English as the common language. And they were proud that their children and their grandchildren played by the prevailing game rules of the land.

It was in this way that America became a national, and a civic, community. As such, it accepted living with the perennial problem of

having to find room and accommodation for a series of ethnic and national communities. But the crucial provision was that ethnic or national groups did not try to take control of a particular territory within the country, or of the population that inhabited it. As a result, many of the new Americans became (at one time or another) 'hyphenated Americans', that is, people willing to articulate their two identities, ethnic and American (Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Chinese-Americans and the rest) (Walzer 1992: 10). Their American patriotism was shaped by a complex set of attachments and commitments to American fundamentals (the civic game rules and the symbols associated with them) and to their more specific, ethnic identities.

Europe was different. Her nation-states gradually emerged in the XIXth century from a very different historical background. They came about as a result of the disorderly and contingent processes of many centuries that brought together a political authority and a miscellany of communities, and then submitted the arrangement to the vagaries of wars, diplomacy and, latterly, to the workings of markets, passably well-organised bureaucracies, school institutions and massive indoctrination (Oakeshott 1990: 188). In the end, quasi-nations emerged, stable enough and homogeneous enough to look like the 'real thing': a mass of people who believed they shared a common land, some 'vital' interests and some 'deeply-felt' traditions. True, the compositions were never perfected, and every nation had its minorities or historical regions that never felt quite at home in it. But on the whole, since the XIXth century, most European nation-states have felt that they have come as close as possible to the Platonic idea of the nation that the nationalists of the XIXth century dreamed of.

Under these circumstances, during the last couple of centuries, Europeans who emigrated from one European country to another did so in a manner quite different from the manner in which Europeans emigrated to America. The simple and obvious truth is that our present-day Europeans are the descendants of the Europeans who stayed in Europe while their counterparts went abroad. For those who stayed, emigrating within Europe had a special meaning. It meant going to another European country in order to become part of an already established national (or quasi-national) community and to be assimilated within it and by it. And in Europe, the test of their new citizenship

and nationhood, was not just a matter of reciting the pledge and being accepted as partners in the game of a civic community; the crucial test was participation in the wars of nation against nation that had torn Europe apart over the centuries, and the ultimate proof of 'belonging' was death on the battlefield in one of those wars. Thus, Europeans became accustomed to living with a set of symbols and experiences that taught them that belonging to the political community was related to primordial or quasi-primordial sentiments, to memories of collective pride and collective shame, and to the varying fortunes of their national communities. And until fairly recently, these powerful feelings were hardly tempered by the liberal predicament.

The point is that, even when, in the aftermath of the disasters of the first half of this century, Europeans engaged in the task of overcoming these habits or expressing them in milder forms, extremely powerful memories remained which could not be fully erased, precisely because they were tied up with the self-understanding of the nation-states themselves in the new era of European reconciliation. In fact, the formation process of a European Union is not, and never has been, an adventure in forgetting the original nations, but in redefining them so as to recover the national self-esteem which was lost, or nearly lost, in the war.

This has meant that the European process has allowed Germans, Italians, French, Belgians and so many others to recover their sense of being part of a dignified nation, after so much misery. Let us recall the misery of war itself as well as, depending on circumstances, the misery of arrogant victory, crushing defeat and collaboration with the invader (including possible cooperation in the extermination of the Jews). Then there was the misery of living on the periphery of war, suffering a period of undeclared and bloody civil war (in France and Italy), with thousands and thousands of summary executions, and in the aftermath, the misery of posturing and selfdelusion to avoid facing up to the truth.

The Germans, for example, could not redeem themselves by appealing to a renewed version of a grand design for national greatness; even the very word 'nation' had been polluted by the Nazis' use of it and was, in the post war period, 'politically incorrect' (Kaufmann 1998: 90). However, they could adhere, first, to the more modest goal of (national) survival, of sticking together against all

odds and being able, by means of hard work, common decency and moral endurance, to rebuild their country. Then, at last, 'Europe' provided them with the opportunity to assert themselves as partners in a cooperative undertaking, to play their part and play it right, and to end up equal in rank to the other European nations.

3. The character of the European political association, its underlying community and the test of foreign policy

The character of the political association: more of a 'civil association' than an 'enterprise association'

As a result of the above process, the European nation-states have interacted through a sequence of treaties and understandings in order to solve a variety of problems and to 'live together' according to certain rules. From the start, all of them apparently intended to remain "themselves" even though they had no way of ascertaining the effects of "living together" on their initial identities once the game started, and continued, with no end in sight. (In fact, the game is supposed to have no end.)

Living together has provided two different kinds of associative experiences which, in the ideal-typical language of Michael Oakeshott, come down to experiences that pertain to either a 'civil association' or to an 'enterprise association' (Oakeshott 1990: 108ff., 114ff). The difference is simple. In a 'civil association' people agree to abide by common abstract rules that prescribe the formal conditions that they have to subscribe to in order to pursue their own particular goals, and thus to be governed by those rules. In contrast, in an 'enterprise association', people get together in order to pursue one or more collective goals, and they agree to subordinate themselves to their leaders (and their administrative apparatus) who may have received (or may arrogate to themselves) a mandate to determine the goals and the best ways of attaining them. Obviously, just as the character of the two types of association is quite different, the character of the public authority in each type, and what is expected from it, is equally different. In the case of a 'civil' authority its main role consists of the implementation of the rules; in that of an 'enterprise authority', it consists of deciding on a course of action to be supported (by means of taxes, manpower or moral compliance) by the

people.

We should not expect empirical reality to conform to either of these types; in most situations both may be present. The European process, comprising such a mixed experience, has evolved as if its aim had been for the nation-states both to collaborate with each other in order to create a common framework of rules, and to solve a series of common problems and/or conflicts of interests among themselves. However, out of that experience, it may be argued that the civil association type has tended to prevail in the long run, despite some appearances to the contrary.

Most stories about the European community are evocative of a novel or a motion picture full of challenges and responses, in which heroes have dreams and visions, succeed or fail in getting their peoples' support, and dominate the screen by their goal-oriented actions. Possibly a more plausible story comes closer to the kind of fresco drawn by Tolstoy, that would give us the feeling of an immense scenario in which thousands or millions of individual adventures are given the opportunity to unfold. The fact is, the process commenced with, and was based on, a scenario for peace which had to be safeguarded both by reconciling old enemies and containing a potential invader. That peaceful scenario was then filled by the *fourmillement* of markets and a potentially infinite number of free social and cultural exchanges. And what was needed for these exchanges to multiply was to ensure a common legal space in which, eventually, European law could find the way to prevail.

What I have just described in this way is, first and foremost, the emergence of a 'civil association', flourishing under the protection of the twin deities of *iustitia et pax*. It is an order of liberty. It provides an institutional framework of game rules, enforcement mechanisms and culture within which individuals can move, follow their own inclinations, and engage in mutually beneficial exchanges of all sorts. The arrangements for a common market, for the mobility of capital, products, services and manpower, as well as for a common currency, are just manifestations of it. The impulse towards a common space for judiciary proceedings, internal security and police follows on from the same premises.

It is only against the background of this fundamental experience that the development of the other associative dimension, that of a *sui generis*

'enterprise association', has taken place. According to this, the nation-states come together in order to solve distributional conflicts among themselves by following certain procedural rules and, when needed, by exerting the full weight of their power and influence on each other.

As a result, we have witnessed the gradual introduction of a series of *ad hoc* compromises of various kinds. Some of them, such as the so-called Luxembourg compromise, indicate precisely the limits of any commonality of goals when the 'vital interests' of any nation-state are touched on. Other compromises are of a more oblique, less straightforward, nature. Thus we observe implicit or explicit pacts which reflect a compromise between the contrasting interests of several nations. According to de Schoutheete, these include the arrangements that endow the minor founding states with disproportionate influence, as a sort of guarantee against any hegemonic pretensions by the major ones (de Schoutheete 1998: 28ff.). Something similar can be said of the agricultural policies that were decided on at the insistence of the French, or the structural and cohesion funds that accompanied the entry of the Southern European countries in the 1980s (de Schoutheete 1998: 59-65). Once the bargaining has ended in a compromise, and the agreement has been implemented, in due course it comes to be accepted and 'legitimized' as if, all along, it had been a common goal like, for instance, the goal of European 'solidarity'.

Considering the mixed nature of Europe's political association, it seems fitting that the European public authority should have developed in a way that bears little resemblance to that of the member states. It has nothing of the apparent inner coherence and relatively neat design of a 'state', with its typical central locus of power or, at the very least, its neat 'trinitarian unity' of an Executive, a Parliament and a Supreme Court at the center. Instead, we are dealing with a net or network (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991: 13ff) of public authorities including the Council, the Parliament, the Commission and the High Court; a number of quite powerful independent agencies including what is now the European Monetary Institute and will soon be the European Central Bank; plus a web of committees, all interconnected in ways that require continuous and massive inputs of goodwill and ingenuity so as to keep the 'system' - whatever that means: communications, decision processes, implementation mechanisms,

etc. - working.

The underlying community (in the making): the importance of civic conversation

The character of the public authority I have briefly sketched lends itself to a curious *modus operandi*. It permits an on-going debate, the incessant exchange of résumés, outlines of plans and regulations, philosophical pieces aiming at changing or reinforcing the premises of the decisions to be made, summings up, meticulous bargaining around agendas and deadlines: in short, a flux of endless communications going in all directions. This is far from being a clearcut political decision-making process followed by implementation. It could be compared to a conversation of sorts, interrupted at intervals by numerous, precise (or not so precise) decisions, only to be taken up again by a myriad of voices. If this is so, what is going on within the world of the European public authorities and their administrative machineries mirrors, in a weakened and attenuated manner, what is going on outside it.

The fact is that, for several generations, the European experience has evolved through an extraordinary intensification of exchanges and mutual reference and coordination activities among Europeans. As travellers, entrepreneurs, workers, migrants, in whatever capacity, Europeans have been, and are increasingly, engaged in reading, observing, imitating, trying to differentiate themselves from, influencing or trading with one other. Ultimately, all this comes down to a basic common feature, that is, conversing with one another, and therefore getting used to, or more familiar with, one another.

The nature of the conversation indicates the character of the social and moral community that is in the making, and the type of solidarity it may be based on. There is little of what Durkheim used to call 'mechanical' solidarity, based on common values and traditions (of allegiance to the same political authority and of feelings of togetherness), since the Europeans' stock of cultural orientations and memories is marked by its very diversity. This cannot, and will not ever be, reduced to a common credo or a 'politically correct' narrative. By contrast, there is an increasing amount of 'organic solidarity' based on frequent and mutually beneficial exchanges, accompanied by symbolic interaction.

One of the main problems for the full development of this conversation is, of course, a linguistic one. Short of a common language, the conversation will remain too limited, and the fact is that it has already done so for far too long. To the extent that this continues, Europe risks stagnating at a stage reminiscent of preindustrial, agrarian, medieval Europe. In this period, as Ernest Gellner explained (Gellner 1983: 9ff.), a world of pan-European elites, horizontally stratified but sharing a common language, presided over another world of vertically segmented communities able to communicate with their local elites but not with each other. The elites had a lingua franca and access to sufficient 'cosmopolitan' experiences to make their exchanges possible. They could all speak Latin, or possibly French, while the local masses conducted their business in the vernacular.

At present, the European masses are getting closer and closer to mastering enough of one particular language so as to be able to communicate horizontally among themselves, irrespective of their origins. That language is, of course, English, which has become the lingua franca of trade and travel all over Europe. Nevertheless, this process is strenuously resisted by some local elites and their national constituencies. They claim to be resisting a foreign invasion, presumably an 'Anglo-Saxon' one. In reality, they are trying to avoid a generalised conversation across countries and social strata, and feign ignorance of the fact that the masses are quite close to achieving it.

Those opposed to the acceptance of a lingua franca apparently dream of a future looking remarkably like an updated version of medieval, stratified Europe. At the top, there would be a highly qualified segment of pan-European elites, fluent in two or three languages, talking among themselves, and attending to the serious business of leading (or could we say 'lording'?) and ruling. In the middle, we would find a fairly large segment of translators (who alone represent a third of all the functionaries of the European Commission: de Schoutete, 42) and cultural intermediaries like journalists, intellectuals, middle-ranking politicians and civil servants. They would play a dignified yet secondary role in the 'high conversation', and explain things to the rest. Finally, at the bottom, we would find the masses, toiling and speaking in the vernacular. Their ability to communicate across borders would be restricted to the minimum required for them either to do menial work and

receive decent accommodation from their fellow Europeans for whom they worked, or for them to pay short visits as tourists herded into quasi-international spots and rubbing elbows with the locals (who would attend to them as waitresses, hair-dressers or local policemen). This (implicit) 'project' of a three-tier social world exhumes the system of the three orders of warriors, clerics and peasants from the distant past, with the European masses playing the role of peasants.

It is quite unlikely that this 'project' will prevail, as it so obviously runs counter to the general trend towards an order of liberty and the multi-layered communications that go with it. The profound, long term trends are clear: trade and travel, knowledge of English, rising educational levels, pressure for worker mobility and democratic debate and participation, intellectual curiosity and scientific exchanges, Internet technology and the development of capital markets. Now, with the 'euro-explosion' just around the corner, these are the phenomena that will be on the rise in the coming years and decades, and they will break down the barriers to horizontal communications that the 'neo-mediaevalists' are trying to keep in place.

In the meantime, there will also be attempts to create solidarity, so to speak, from the top by means of a policy of social transfers. This is the policy instrument chosen by national governments to solve their mutual conflicts of interest, and to legitimise their compromises. Thus, a policy of subsidies to farmers is supposed to express the deep solidarity of the urban populations that are committed to industrial and service activities, towards rural ones; and subsidies to countries with a below average per capita income are supposed to express inter-regional solidarity. There may be something solidaristic about these arrangements, but they are composed of a number of different elements, some of which are deeply anti-solidaristic. In the long run, and depending on precisely how these policies of social transfers are designed and implemented, they may create quasi-permanent enclaves of second-rank social sectors and regions in Europe, living off subsidies and unable to overcome this dependence.

The test of foreign policy: creating a civil space beyond European borders

It is also consistent with the character of the

European political association, the public authority, and the underlying community, that the design and implementation of a robust European foreign policy runs into such endless difficulties. I shall not go into this subject in depth; suffice it to say that it is hard to imagine a situation in which the European public might be willing to finance and support the defense sector it would need for an assertive presence in the world, and even harder to imagine such a sector being deployed with the necessary determination to pay the price in human lives and economic resources. The point is that in the European Union it is not the ability or willingness of the states but, in the last instance, the capacities and dispositions of the European public that define the limits, the possible goals and the contents of Europe's actual foreign and defense policies (and by 'actual' I mean her deeds, not her words).

If the truth be told, Western Europe was only able to face up to the Soviet threat within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance, even though Europe was in the frontline at the time.² Now, Europe is responding to the challenge of local conflicts in the Mediterranean area with difficulty, and practically in partnership with the US or under US leadership when the time comes for decisive action.

The lessons of this experience so far are clear, at least for those who refuse to let their minds be clouded by mere rhetoric. They indicate that, unless the European public undergoes a dramatic change of heart (of mood and mind, so to speak), Europeans will remain committed to a practical and moral accommodation with a very strong linkage between European and the US' foreign and defense policies (more or less in line with the institutions of the Atlantic Alliance). They also indicate that, this being so, the alliance will be increasingly interpreted as a normal feature of life in the contemporary world that is there to stay, and not as a one-off historical occurrence (that will disappear once the extraordinary circumstances that brought it into being have disappeared). However, such a change of heart is most unlikely. It is also, we may add, most undesirable, given the European record of 'assertiveness' and 'robust defense and foreign

²In the words of Raymond Aron: "[L'Europe] a choisi de rester sous la protection des 'États Unis, et ce choix la France gaulliste l'a fait, elle aussi, tout en le camouflant sous un langage avantageux": (1977: 517).

policies' vis-à-vis the rest of the world in the last century and a half (without mentioning the more distant past).

Thus, what remains is enough room for quite a significant foreign policy but of a rather different kind. By that, I refer to what Peter Ludlow may have in mind when he speaks about the creation of a 'civil space' all around the external European environment, to begin with, to the East and to the South. If there is one 'vital interest' shared by all Europeans it is precisely the consolidation of such a civil space; possibly as a step towards the formation of an international civil society. At least, for the time being, we need to have reliable neighbours, to live together in peace, to engage in trade and conversation with them, to receive their products and, within reasonable limits, their emigrants. In order to achieve this goal, it is in our interest that the basic institutions of representative government and liberal politics, of market economies and cultural toleration proliferate all around us.

The Europeans, contentious as they are, may well be in two minds when the time comes for defining their 'boundaries', and this may pose significant problems of security, economic interest, moral obligation and identity. However, it is likely that most of them will agree that their common interest lies in extending their model of a civil or a civilised society (with the adjustments *de rigueur*) to their external environment, and they will then attempt to do so. Because, even though it could be said that, in a sense, this civil model has a *vis expansiva* of its own, it clearly needs reinforcement.

4. Lessons from recent developments: governance by rules

I feel that most recent developments tend to corroborate the general direction of events and the character of the European experience outlined above. What defines the current moment is the relative success of the eleven European countries in turning themselves into 'euro-world'. Yet the important point is not so much having attained their goal, but the route they have had to follow in order to attain it: the practical experience of getting there, step by step, over the last two to three years. It has been a formative experience for governments, politicians and citizens, the results of which are a set of institutions (the European

Monetary Institute, the European Central Bank and the rules agreed on for the performance of their duties), and a set of lessons that have served to shape politicians' and citizens' dispositions as they face the next round of challenges. In sum, the 'lessons' of this experience are the following.

First, governments have acted in a convergent and quasi-coordinated manner and they have been attentive to reciprocal messages and stimuli (for instance, the message from Spain to Italy early on in the game, in the summer of 1996, that Spain was not interested in delaying her incorporation into the single currency). De facto, they seem to have found a way to avoid the dilemma of 'supranationalism' *versus* intergovernmental coordination. (In Peter Ludlow's words, they have brought about a "reconciliation of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism": [1998: 2]).

Second, national governments have, on the whole, been able to exercise a modicum of domestic *auctoritas*. To some extent, they have put their houses in order, and they have persuaded their fellow citizens that the goals are worth attaining, without inordinate sacrifices having to be made for them. There have been only a few referendums, but there has been no lack or loss of political accountability in the domestic arena; rather to the contrary, the political debate has been lively, critical elections have taken place and most of the crucial issues have come to the fore.

Third, in the process of complying with the Maastricht criteria, both politicians and citizens have become involved in a particular way of understanding the political process. They have trusted to the process of abiding by a set of formal, abstract rules, which are those of the open markets, in order to fulfill their goals; and, by doing so, they have reinforced the 'civil association' component of the European political association. As a result, these rules will be monitored and enforced by a regulatory agency that is supposed to be relatively independent from the political authorities. This is a self-limitation that politicians have imposed on themselves, knowing as they do their proclivity to give in to populist and electoralist policies. They have tied their own hands so as to avoid falling into temptation, as Ulysses tied himself to the mast so as to listen to the sirens' while prevented from responding to them.

Fourth, by doing so, it seems as if both politicians and the citizens who support them are

opting for a mode of governance which could be defined as governance by rules. This (as indicated by Ludlow [1998: 2]), builds on the previous work done by the Court of Justice, and the acceptance of the supremacy of European law by most European High Courts. It is also reasonable to expect its reinforcement by acceptance of the rules of budgetary restraint in the stability pact.

Fifth, budgetary restraint by the member states has come hand-in-hand with budgetary restraint with regard to the Union itself. The states which are net contributors to the Union are refusing to remain so for much longer; and in general there is increasing reluctance to accept a rise in the Union budget at a time when it has to prepare itself for the Eastern enlargement. Agenda 2000 proposes budget ceilings that, sooner or later, would result in painful rearrangements concerning agricultural policy and the cohesion and structural funds. The point is, this indicates a *de facto*, underlying agreement on the part of all the states not to engage in high European public spending, which would, in time, lead to European big government. In this regard, the theoretical debate may revolve around 'subsidiarity' but the real one revolves around 'spending'.

Sixth, the corollary of governance by rules and budgetary restraint is that there may always be talk of a need for 'leadership with a vision', but the process has developed as if (so-called) charismatic leaders were essentially unnecessary anymore. In fact, the turnover of political leaders almost everywhere (with the notable exception of Germany) has done no harm to recent developments. In some cases (Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom, for instance), it has helped them along. In France (or in Portugal), it has probably been inconsequential.

Seventh, the choice in favour of the Eastern enlargement, as an act of 'necessity' (in which security issues combine with economic interest and a sense of belonging to a common European home), goes hand-in-hand with a non-choice regarding a change in the status quo of the political architecture of the Union. This may reflect a sense of uneasiness with the as-yet-undefined, new style of political leadership that is needed.

5. Redefining leadership.

I would argue that current developments point

in the direction of a certain kind of political leadership: one which will fit in with the general character of the European process and the aforementioned European political association. As indicated at the beginning of this essay, any mention of strong political leadership in Europe usually refers to the strong leadership of gifted and well-meant politicians, or to the big, core nation-states that are supposed to have a calling for protagonism.

In the latter case, current events have not been too kind to the ambitions of some segments of the German and French establishments to lead Europe. Not that these ambitions were ever acceptable in the first place. In fact, as de Schoutheete reminds us, from the very beginning, the people who designed the political architecture of Europe were keen not to allow the influence of the big nations to develop into hegemonic power (1997: 28). And, if we go back to the events that constrained Europeans to come together, namely the disasters of the late 1930s and early 1940s, there was not much in the performance of either Germany or France to give these nations any ground for moral leadership in the new Europe.

The fact is, recent events of about the last ten to fifteen years have shown the strengths as well as the weaknesses of both countries' capacity to lead Europe. Their common determination on the matter of monetary union was most helpful, but it was widely shared by others. On the domestic front, they have been very slow to act on welfare reform, even more so than other, minor countries; and the French have even perfected the art of *cohabitation* by passing on responsibility for this reform from one government to the next. On the international front, they share responsibility for the fiasco of European policy in Bosnia.

In more general terms, of course, there is plenty of room for politicians' leadership in matters European. But not for the kind of leadership even remotely similar to that of the past rulers who shaped the national sentiment of most European nation-states over several centuries. As we have observed, these nation-states were, to a significant extent, the result of massive acts of violence and tribal enthusiasm, which are unthinkable in the Europe of today. There was forced conscription of the masses into armies, their forced submission to tax-extracting machineries, their forced indoctrination in schools and the forced expulsion of those who did not submit, all

at the hands of military officers, functionaries, clerics and school-teachers. This took place with the help of thousands or millions of enthusiasts who shared a sense of mission and a common fate; and thanks to the inspiration and assertive leadership of charismatic kings and statesmen.

That is the past which we must now try, tactfully, to put behind us, and those were the kind of leaders for whom we have no use today. Nowadays, the kind of political leaders we need have to be of a different stamp, and their role in the moral and emotional education of their fellow countrymen (as opposed to their subjects) also has to be different: of a more civil nature. What the European process so far and current developments suggest is that politicians should have an educational influence on the public insofar as they are role models. They are in a position to demonstrate what acceptance of a mode of governance by rules and submission to the principle of political accountability mean. They can do so by showing themselves to be prudent, considerate statesmen who are paradigms in conducting politics in ways opposed to the long-standing statist traditions of secrecy in the highest echelons of power (the *raison d'état* and *arcana imperii*), and to rulers being, de facto, above the law.

Not that I am contrasting actual developments in the EU with wish fulfilment. To the contrary, I suggest that there has been no shortage of prudent (not 'charismatic') leadership in Europe, precisely because political accountability (at the national level) has not been allowed to disappear. Some acute observers of the scene, like Peter Ludlow, recognise that, as of now, "in the most fundamental sense the EU has been (is) rather well led by the European Council" (Ludlow 1998: 48). He goes on to suggest that this is so because it is the normal thing to expect from sensible people having to go through a complex agenda, accustomed to the careful weighing of options and employing well tested rules of procedure. But he may be missing the basic point. In the long run, leaders "lead well" because they have to make decisions on the basis of their obligations to the citizens of their own nation-states to whom they are accountable.

In his otherwise perceptive *plaidoyer* for assertive leadership, Peter Ludlow advances other arguments that I find unconvincing. He refers to a need for what he calls 'mood-management' for the

periods in-between European summits (Ludlow 1998: 48). This way of stating the problem may be indicative of an overvaluation of the role of the media, which is what there is to be 'mood-managed'. The media has an in-built bias towards 'rationalistic' politics and policies and an overdeveloped sense of the dramatic. This may or may not be useful but, in any case, the media requires less of a leader, and more of a media operator, a media office or a master of ceremonies. And the solution to this need is not even remotely similar to an office with a highly charged emotional content. (Are we talking about the office of the US presidency, or the sacred aura of kingship?).

Ludlow's argument for more assertive leadership in order to maintain "a sense of momentum and adventure" (1998: 48) sounds enticing but slightly at odds with the nature of the European undertaking. His words evoke the image of a driver at the steering wheel of an automobile. It can be argued, however, that the European process is not a car race, but an experiment in nurture and growth. It does not require speed or control of the mechanics of European politics and societies; it does require the wisdom and prudence befitting leaders who deal with free people, rather than mechanical parts, and who respect the rules of convivence among them.

As for Ludlow's point that the leaders of European governments are not full-time leaders of the EU, it is easily turned round. Thank goodness they are not, because it means that they have to spend time attending to the crucial business of accounting for their performance to people who know them at close range and are relatively familiar with the issues at hand. In this way, they may not forget, or will at least be reminded periodically of the fact that ultimately they can be dismissed (after victory in war, much talk of national grandeur and other successes), because they are the servants of the people, and not their masters.

It follows that I am reluctant to subscribe to Ludlow's conclusion that there is a need for a reassertion of the Commission's political profile.³

³There is an ambiguity in Ludlow's reasoning in regard to the present political profile of the Commission. He suggests that the Commission "leads most effectively when it does so under the authority of the Council and [he adds] in partnership with the

Of course, it is quite sensible to point out the need for managing carefully the linked issues of the Eastern enlargement and the renegotiation of the rules for agricultural policy and structural funds during the next few years. Particularly so as it has to be done against a background of budgetary restraint as well as welfare and labor market reforms in most countries. But all that follows from this is the need for a reassessment of the European Council's procedures together with the appointment of a highly skilled and respected team of Commissioners, led by a wise, honest and hardworking *commis d'état*, who will act as a stimulus to, and a restraint on, the European Council, and play a most useful role in the larger machinery of the European institutions. Lastly, what stands in the way of a reassertion of the political profile of the Commission is the issue of political accountability.⁴

6. The citizens' voice: reflections on survey results

As I see it, the European process is open-ended and may progress in several directions. But I think that, in view of its almost forty years of accumulated experience, it inclines more towards an order of liberty than towards a political association, which would be a European state writ large; and more towards a political association of a civil kind, with a framework of rules and procedural values that allow people to make their own life-projects, than towards a European Union state with a grand historical project to fulfill, an assertive leadership and a robust foreign policy.

Of course, a civil kind of political association allows for some collective goals to be pursued and some common undertakings: for instance, sharing in the pleasure of living together, or helping a civil

Council" (1998: 49). This sounds a rather selfcontradictory statement: leading has to be either "under the authority" or "in partnership"; he cannot have it both ways.

⁴The problem is not solved by Delors' current proposal (in the spring of 1998) of a (quasi) two-tier process of political elections, by means of which the parties get together to find a candidate and the European elections are then interpreted as giving a mandate for the 'winner' to become president of the Commission. Rather, as it stands now, this proposal could aggravate the problem.

space to develop beyond the boundaries of the European Union (by means of trade, diplomacy, migration or cultural exchanges). But these goals and the means required are relatively limited; and, in any case, intimate a kind of political leadership which is unobtrusive, conversant with, and responsive and accountable to its fellow citizens.

Nevertheless, crucial political decisions are needed from time to time, and the kind required by a civil association are different from the kind typical of an enterprise association. The former needs reassertion of the rule of law, the removal of obstacles to the exercise of people's liberties, and facilitation of the on-going process of cultural, social and economic exchanges. For example, it needed Jacques Delors in his capacity as a statesman, to persuade a reluctant François Mitterrand *not* to divorce the Franc from the Deutschmark (thereby *not* going back on the key decision of Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt in 1978), and to launch the Single Market initiative in the mid-1980s. But we should remember that the first decision aimed at reversing a pattern of mistaken interventionist policies taken since 1981 (for which Delors shared responsibility), and that the second was decisively reinforced by the workings of the principle of mutual recognition (which came to bear on the situation in ways largely unrelated to Delors' action).

I see the European Union as tending more towards an order of liberty or a civil association because there is, in this regard, a profound 'elective affinity' between European institutions and the dispositions of the European public. Prudent management of the existing institutions has resulted in "*une pratique de bon sens et expérience*" (de Schoutheete 1997: 22). It has avoided concessions to hegemonic initiatives or the drift towards a big state; made use of the rules for majority decision-making as a way of arriving at sensible compromises among the partners; and provided for accommodation of national differences by ad hoc transitional periods and exemptions. This practice invites the articulation of self-understanding that avoids the excesses of "*la pensée stratégique*", which (in contrast) is favoured by those who would like to apply the views of business management to European politics.⁵

⁵Such as de Schoutheete, who quotes approvingly the words of an expert in management, Philippe de Woot:

The way in which European institutions function has allowed public affairs to be opened up to considerable public scrutiny, if for no other reason than secrets are difficult to keep when everything has to be translated... into eleven languages (de Schoutheete 1997: 91); and because bargaining takes place between a number of contentious states, and the corresponding lobbies of all kinds, which, in turn, have to account for what they do to their constituencies. All this invites the development of a public space, that is, a symbolic space for cognitive and normative agreements and conflicts among the members of the European polity.

Ostensible opinion and the people's opinion

A distinction should be made between two variants of the public opinion that expresses itself in the public space: between what we may call 'ostensible opinion' and 'people's opinion'. Ostensible opinion is displayed by the strategic actors who have privileged access to the public arena, such as state officials, party, union or business leaders, media leaders and journalists, bishops, philosophers who enjoy being in the public eye, and entertainment stars. It should be distinguished from the opinion of ordinary citizens, who may write an occasional letter to a newspaper or respond to opinion polls, but most of the time debate among themselves, or keep silent, and vote.

Some connection and some degree of correlation is to be expected between the opinions of the people and those of the political and cultural elites, but only within limits. We all remember, for example, that on May 12, 1992, members of the Danish Parliament voted 5 to 1 in favour of the Maastricht treaty, and on June 2, 1992, three weeks later, the Danish people voted (by a slight majority) against it (de Schoutheete 1997: 96). In other words, 'ostensible public opinion' and the 'people's opinion' may differ in degree or in kind.

In the following pages, I intend to show that there is a plausible argument to the effect that people's understanding of European institutions and policies is relatively close to the 'civil'

"Une vision tangible et partagée crée une situation dans laquelle l'entreprise est tirée vers l'avenir plutôt que poussée par le passé", suggesting that they should be applied to Europe's present predicament.

understanding I have sketched out so far. I base this claim on a first assessment of the survey data from Eurobarometer 44.1, carried out in late 1995.⁶

It is not unreasonable to suspect that public opinion is, in a quasi-systematic way, somewhat different from the opinion prevailing among the cultural and political elites, though I shall not pursue this line of inquiry far. Suffice to say that, according to this survey, only a minority of people feel that "any political parties (33.4%), trade unions (16.2%) or other professional organizations (14.1%), newspapers (37.6%), radio (27.5%), or TV stations (35.9%) generally represent their views about Europe or the European Union". The implication seems to be that the ostensible opinion of parties, lobbies and the media does not quite reflect the opinion of ordinary people, at least not from the latter's viewpoint. There is more to this than mere 'subjective' or uninformed opinion, as

⁶ The public opinion data referred to in this chapter come from a set of some 20 questions prepared by myself and applied as part of Eurobarometer 44.1, whose fieldwork was carried out between November 11 and December 19, 1995. (I discussed the wording of the questions first with my collaborators in Madrid Juan Carlos Rodríguez and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca; then with Karl Heinz Reiff [European Commission, Directorate General X] in Brussels). This is a face-to-face survey, conducted on samples representative of the population of each one of the fifteen European Union member countries aged 15 years and over. National samples consist of around 1,000 individuals, with some exceptions (former East and West Germany have samples of 1,000 individuals each; Luxembourg has 770; and Northern Ireland is overrepresented with a sample of 300). Results for the total European Union are then duly weighed. The confidence limit of a sample of 1,000 individuals for $p=q=50\%$ is $\pm 3.1\%$. It could be argued that the results would differ if the same questions were asked today. It is true that late 1995 was not a moment of 'Eurooptimism', but neither was it the spring of 1998, despite the relative success of national strategies for meeting the Maastricht criteria. In Spain, at least, an analysis of the evolution of the public mood regarding Europe between 1994 and 1998 suggests that there have been some changes between late 1995 and the present (possibly due to less frustration with domestic politics, which were affected by a wave of political scandals between 1993 and 1996, and to a more positive perception of the economy) but they are not very significant (CIS 1998). I will discuss the general results for the European public taken as a whole, with only minor reference to national differences.

the suspicion of a difference seems corroborated by data suggesting that the public's ranking of priorities with regard to things European is different from the elites'.

An order of liberty

In the survey, the public were asked two questions that explored their views about the main aims of the Union, and the meaning of European citizenship. Taken together, their answers seem to suggest a remarkable 'civil disposition'. They were asked "which of the following aims should be given priority in the European Union over the next few years", and then invited to select a maximum of three answers out of a list of ten items. Four of these items could be grouped under a general heading of *pax et iustitia*, that is, of ensuring a peaceful and legally protected environment where individuals may pursue their particular aims. As such, these items were mentioned by 55% of the respondents ('maintaining peace in Europe': 17.1%; 'fighting terrorism, drug-trafficking and crime': 15.6%; 'respect for law and justice': 13.3%; 'individual liberties guaranteed': 10%).

This is far more than the 21.6% of respondents who opted for substantive aims that would presumably require interventionist state policies. Three of these may have a redistributive character: 'promoting social welfare': 8.7%; 'reducing regional inequalities': 5.9%; and 'ensuring farmers' incomes': 3.4%; and another is more concerned with foreign policy: 'defending EU interests in the world': 3.6%. The two remaining items may be considered either way, as general aims that may or may not require interventionist policy. These were promoting 'economic growth' (10.8%) and 'protecting the environment' (11.7%).

In any case, the way the public orders its priorities stands in telling contrast to the agenda of European politicians. The latter seem to pay little attention to the establishment of a common legal framework and to the internal security arrangements which should be an outstanding objective of the European Union in the next ten years according to the public. Also, politicians tend to focus on substantive public policies and, de facto, spend most of the European budget on redistributive policies (reducing regional inequalities and ensuring farmers' incomes), which seem to be of secondary importance for most Europeans. Finally, politicians employ their

rhetoric à propos the place of Europe in the world and the defense of European economic interests in it, an issue which apparently ranks low in the public's order of concerns.⁷

Nevertheless, interpretation of the answers to the question about the aims of EU has to be made in connection with other answers. In order to explore some aspects of the meaning attributed to the concept of citizenship, the public was asked "which of the following rights are the most important for citizens of the European Union", and invited to select two answers out of nine items. Once more, the answers suggest a 'civil' reading of the political association the public belong to. At least, the overwhelming majority of answers refer to rights to be enjoyed by people who want to be able to "live and work anywhere in the European Union" (37.8%) and demand legal and (when abroad) diplomatic protection (32%). So, freedom of labour mobility (and the right of residence that goes with it) is placed first although it has come last on the list of priorities of the European political class and the economic and union leaders, and still has far to go before being implemented. Together, these two 'civil rights' accounted for c.70% of the answers. By contrast, the four items referring to 'political rights' (to vote and stand as a candidate in local and European elections while residing in another member state) attracted only 12.9% of the answers.

There may also be some connection between the perceived meaning of the European citizen and the idea of 'social citizenship', but the balance between the number of items offered on 'civil' rights (4), 'political' rights (4) and 'social' rights (only 1), that would have allowed us to compare their relative weight, is not correct. The fact is that 17.1% of the answers point to "social protection regulations throughout the EU" as one of citizens' most important rights. There are, however, indications to the effect that 'welfare policies' are seen mostly as the responsibility of the national state.

⁷Curiously enough, national differences do exist but are not glaring. Spain, Portugal and Greece tend to be more sensitive to the redistributive issues. Scandinavian countries are more sensitive to the environment. France and the UK seem slightly more interested in the place of the European Union in the world.

The balance between staying together and the politics of difference

There is no civil association (*pace* Oakeshott, who seems to have too much of an instrumental view of *societas*: 1990) without a minimum of substantive goals shared by all the citizens, and this includes the goal of staying together as a goal in itself, to enjoy each others' company so to speak. We may surmise that most Europeans share in this feeling to some extent if we consider the fact that their being in favour of the community (an index of 2.4 on a scale of 1 to 3) goes beyond the perceived benefits obtained from their being part of the Union (index 2.1).

At the same time, the general reluctance to a two-speed Europe may be interpreted in the light of this community oriented disposition (and the positive evaluation of the equality of rank among partners that comes with it). Even though, in general terms, the public would prefer a somewhat faster rhythm of integration (index 4.8, on a scale of 1 to 7) than the actual rhythm (index 3.4), this does *not* imply acceptance of a two-speed Europe. Considering that "there are countries which are ready to intensify the development of a common European policy in certain important areas", people were invited to state their preference as to whether these countries "should do so without having to wait for the others", or "should wait until all member states were ready for it". The fact is, most respondents prefer these countries to wait (57.1%) rather than moving on their own (42.9%).⁸

There is, however, a strain of ambivalence beneath this feeling of pan-European solidarity, or community. The public was asked "which of the following two statements comes closest to your opinion: 'One of the main reasons for the EU is to avoid war between member states', and 'even if the EU were dissolved tomorrow, a future war between any of its current member states would be unthinkable'". The fact is, 49% opted for the first statement, and 25.9% for the second one; the implication being that, were it not for the presence of the Union, a war between the states is *not* 'unthinkable'.

⁸The only exceptions are the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

Belonging to Europe is balanced by the public's insistence on national differences. And the general attitude in favour of the Union is also in favour of public policies which are coordinated at the European level, but not necessarily dealt with by means of European collective decision making, while it is felt that some crucial public policies should be kept in the hands of the nation states. Thus, European coordination is deemed essential for the enforcement of crucial laws and rules concerning policies on competition, monetary policy, the fight against sexual discrimination, consumer protection, environmental protection and the prosecution of drug trafficking. The same applies to foreign policy *latu sensu*: foreign trade, immigration policies and the right to political asylum. Also, people already seem to be used to agricultural policy and regional transfers policy being handled by the European authorities, and seem to think that research policy should also be coordinated on a European wide basis.⁹

Nevertheless, the public's inclination to see some policies raised to the 'European level' remains ambiguous. It is a commonplace that defense 'belongs' at this level (53.9%). However, when asked about the procedural rules for making a crucial decision in this sphere, such as "a decision to send troops to fight a war outside the European Union", and asked to identify "who should take the decision", 39% of the public opt for "the governments of countries willing to send the troops", 15% opt for a unanimous decision of the heads of state and government of all member states, and 29% suggest a majority vote but with the important caveat of "reserving to each member the right not to send troops". Only 10% would accept a majority vote at the European Council

⁹National differences count in this respect. The peripheral, rich countries of the second wave of European integration, Denmark and the United Kingdom, and those recently integrated into the community, Sweden, Finland and Austria, are most reluctant to cede control of their affairs, including defense, currency and agriculture. In contrast, the public in countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece seem inclined to cede the ultimate responsibility of the state in more areas. Support for the euro tends to be greater in Southern countries, with enthusiasm reaching a peak in Italy. The euro has been seen as threatening to the national identities of Denmark, the UK, Sweden, Finland and Austria; clearly this is not the case in Spain and Italy, with public opinion divided on this issue in Germany.

obliging every state to send troops.

At the same time, it is expected that matters relating to welfare policy should be dealt with at the nation-state level. Europeans seem to locate welfare policy in the terrain of domestic policy, though they feel uneasy about the reform of their (national) welfare systems. This is possibly because most of them no longer belong to the generations of the post-war period, for whom the welfare system was something that had to be built out of hard work (as suggested by Helmut Schmidt in Yergin, Stanislaw 1998: 323), but to generations that consider the welfare state as a right to be enjoyed and a mark of identity of their status as full members of society. Thus, most of them (at least at the time of this survey, in late 1995) still indulged in the wishful thinking that reforms may not be that necessary.¹⁰

The location of welfare policy in the domestic arena applies to pensions, health, education (also a cultural issue) and, to an extent, unemployment, which people suspect the states have not been able to handle properly. However, although most Europeans seem to think that "all the states working together in the EU to fight unemployment and to create jobs would be helpful", it seems most likely that this answer does not imply that Europe is expected to provide the solution for the problem. For instance, in the case of Spain, there is evidence that the public responds to the question "who is to be trusted with the responsibility for solving the problem of unemployment" by indicating the national government (c.53%) rather than the European Commission (c.16%)(CIS 1998).

More on community: immigrants and borders; the enlargement, and the reasons for it

As Michael Walzer has put it, "where there is a long-established majority, politics is bound to draw on its particular history and culture," and (I would add) the connections between nationality and political institutions may be accepted as compatible with the civil character of the polity "so long as minorities are protected and the rights of citizenship are fully available to their members"

¹⁰National differences count to some extent; Nordic countries (Sweden and Finland) insist on keeping their welfare state as it is, followed by 'corporatist' countries such as the Netherlands and Germany (but not by Austria).

(Walzer 1992: 12-13). In this context, which so far is the European one, immigration is a problem "since members of the majority do not want to be outnumbered in their own country", and arguments about immigration are not necessarily racist, though some of them may be so; therefore (concludes Walzer), a sensible argument can be made in favour of restrictions on the admission of foreigners.

However, if these considerations are applied to migratory movements within the European Union, those who do so are going against the perception of a large number of Europeans as to what their 'European citizenship' and the rights attached to it mean. Hence, as limits cannot be enforced openly, those desirous of preventing other European workers from coming to their countries do so in a duplicituous way. They accept the 'principle' of labour mobility; but in fact they maintain the rigidities of the labour markets, thereby reducing the chances for labour mobility. This has been the method employed so far by the political elites and the unions.

In contrast, Europeans' attitude towards migrants from non-EU countries is more straightforward. Their answers can be taken as an indication of the degree of people's awareness of belonging to a community with boundaries vis-à-vis the rest of the world, and of their willingness not to blur the distinction between citizens and residents; this is shown by the fact that the public favours retaining the status quo as regards the present rights of non-EU immigrants, and only about 1 in 5 (21.4%) would favour an extension of these rights.¹¹

However, we then come to the crucial, 'historical' issue of European enlargement to the East, in the aftermath of the 1989 'revolution'. The public was asked whether or not "countries of Central and Eastern Europe such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia should become member states of the EU", and if the answer was 'yes', they were asked 'when'. The answer was 'yes' in a proportion of 5 to 1; and about half the respondents said they should join in ten years or less. Now, the reasons given for a 'yes' answer stress security interests (48.8%) but refer also to 'a moral duty' (23.1%) and to

¹¹More (1 in 3 or 4), for some reason, in countries with few immigrants, like Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland.

'economic interests' (19.9%).¹²

It is assumed, however, that there will be a price to pay for the enlargement. People were asked to consider the following statement *cum* question: "At the present time, farmers in all member states as well as the less developed regions of the EU (mainly in Greece, Ireland, Southern Italy, Portugal and Spain) receive aid from the EU. Imagine that in ten years from now, several countries from Central and Eastern Europe are members of the EU. If their level of economic development is lower than the EU average, and the share of agriculture in their economies is higher than the EU average, what would you prefer to happen?". They were given three choices: "Increase the amount of money available so that both current and new member states can receive aid according to the same rules as now"; "keep the total amount of money available the same, and share it out between current and new member states according to stricter rules"; or "exclude the new member states from aid programmes during a transition period".

Many people chose "keeping the total amount the same and redistributing it" (38.4%), which suggests a (quite understandable) willingness *not* to pay a price for enlargement if possible. A more drastic version of the same attitude is that of the smaller minority (12.2%) that favoured "exclusion of the new members" from enjoying these benefits (thereby keeping the present level as it is). These two answers amount to half the respondents expressing a refusal to pay a price for the Eastern enlargement. By contrast, a significant minority (28.5%) is willing to "increase the amount of money available".¹³

¹²Significant minorities (21% to 24%) in France, Belgium and Austria (countries which are among the most reluctant to extend migrants' rights) are against enlargement; and significant minorities (31% to 44%) in Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland (countries which are more distant from the Central and Eastern countries) have no position on the issue. Among the people with a positive answer, those from the Scandinavian countries and Germany emphasize the security interest; those from Austria, the economic one; and those from Spain and Portugal, the moral duty.

¹³Of course, national differences are reflected in this matter. Greece, Portugal and Spain (who, it may be supposed, expect others to pay most of the price for the Eastern enlargement), and Italy, would prefer an increase in the money available (between 37% and

Leadership and public authority

A series of responses to a variety of questions dealing with political leadership and public authority in Europe are better understood from the viewpoint that most Europeans share a 'civil disposition'. Three expectations follow on from this: that people will see political leadership as playing a supportive rather than an overly dominant role in the ongoing European process; that the issue of leaders' political accountability will loom large in people's political sentiments; and that people will refuse to accept the so-called 'protagonist nations' playing a leading role. I think that the data tend to live up to these expectations.

First, let us consider people's views on the way the European process works. People were asked the following question: "In your view which one of the following statements best describes how the EU works in practice today?" They were given a choice between: "a grouping of countries having achieved a substantial degree of political integration and making efforts to solve common problems together" or "a grouping of countries pursuing primarily national objectives but doing so within the common EU institutions" or "a grouping of countries trying to gradually adapt their governments and institutions so as to achieve closer integration of their economies and societies". Now, I confess I have some reservations about the exact wording of these statements and I think the formulae should be perfected. However, as they stand, they are useful as a first step towards a better understanding of people's (cognitive) views on the matter. I think the key contrasts are as follows.

The first statement gives an impression of activist politicians leading the process towards a common goal; and, as such, it is close to the normative discourse of many European politicians about a 'European project' (to be articulated by them). The second statement suggests an instrumental view of Europe and European politics

44%). At the other extreme, a significant minority (between 17% and 23%) in France, Belgium and Austria (again, the countries relatively most reluctant to extend the rights of foreign migrants, and less inclined to accept the entry of Central and Eastern countries) opt for the outright exclusion of the new entrants from these benefits.

as a means to achieve national goals, but the emphasis is still on politicians leading the process. Both suggest a goal-oriented process, even though the goals may be different. In contrast, the third statement suggests a cognitive map by which the European process is seen as evolutionary, so there is a 'gradual adaptation' to an evolving situation characterised, mainly, by 'economies and societies' coming together or being integrated (presumably partly on their own, and partly with the help of politics).

The point is that, for the moment, the largest minority (of 'evolutionists': 37.3%) subscribes to the third statement. Some distance behind, a minority of 'instrumentalists' (24.1%) sees European politics as subordinated to national goals. Finally, an even smaller minority (21.7%) of 'European-finalists' subscribes to a view of the process as being explained by what Aristotle would characterise as its 'final cause', that is, its very orientation towards a European objective proper ("*attiré par l'avenir*" so to speak, and a European *avenir* at that).¹⁴ On the other hand, 34.7% expect that, in ten years time, this 'European finalism' will have prevailed, so that by then the EU will be functioning in a Europe-oriented way, anyway. This is a fascinating development. It may reflect a mix of an expectation and a wish (in other words, a quasi-normative statement) and/or it may reflect the influence on people of the prevailing political discourse in the political milieu and the media. Thus, it may be that, when speaking about the present, people trust their own cognitive maps, but when talking about the future, people distrust their own perceptions and views, become uncertain and adopt the language of the 'specialists of the future', that is, politicians and journalists (among others): they pay tribute to their rhetoric and imitate it.

People's emphasis on political leaders' accountability rather than on their abilities for 'leading the pack' seems to be corroborated by several indices.

First, people were asked to respond to the question: "When democratically elected political leaders take decisions about the future of the EU, in which of the following ways would you prefer them to do this?", and were given just two choices:

¹⁴The labels of 'evolutionists', 'instrumentalists' and '(European) finalists' do not have any normative connotation; they refer to different ways of understanding what is going on.

"with determination and based on clear and appealing objectives", or "step-by-step, explaining their actions to the citizens and taking their opinion into account". Once again, the wording could be improved, but the general thrust of the alternative seems clear enough (and was clear enough for most of the respondents who made a choice, with 10.7% choosing both, and 8.2% abstaining). It highlights two styles of leadership. On the one hand, there is 'determination and clear objectives', which belong to the language of politicians biased towards finalist discourses and activist politics: politicians with a vision and a project, followed by 'their' citizens who trust them. On the other hand, we have 'step by step, explaining and taking into account'. Language that belongs to a different style of politician who is cautious, prudent, keeps in close touch with the sentiments of his fellow citizens, and understands leadership as a way to help them to make up their minds. The European public chose the second style with a resounding margin of 3 to 1 (59.8% vs. 19.6%), a normative preference that fits in with a cognitive view of the European process as the adaptative institutional evolution mentioned above.¹⁵

It cannot be concluded from these considerations that Europeans are particularly distrustful of European political institutions, at least to the extent that their detachment (in terms of trust and perceived influence) from European institutions is not significantly greater than their detachment from their own domestic political institutions. In general, comparisons about levels of trust when applied to different kinds of institutions or groups should be handled with care. The terms of reference may be equivocal. Thus, if we are asked whether we trust our friends and people in the street, the very meaning of 'trust' as applied to 'friends' or 'anonymous people' is different, because of the different expectations and normative considerations attached to it. We measure our friends against a yardstick of

¹⁵In France and Italy the preference for a conversant and gradualist style of leadership is less marked: the proportion is only about 1.5 to 1. This may be for different reasons. Possibly, people in France are more used to talking about clear-cut projects, as having 'clear and distinct ideas' seems to be part of the Cartesian national heritage; while, in contrast, in Italy, where politics tends to be a fairly complicated business, people may have developed a nostalgia for clear and distinct political goals.

relatively high expectations of understanding and help in case of need, and if we find them lacking, say we do not quite 'trust' them. But, we measure 'people in the street' against a very different yardstick. We may expect the bare minimum: not to be attacked by them without pretext and/or previous warning and therefore say we 'trust' them not to rob us, for instance, or simply not to give us the wrong directions. The apparent result is that people in the street fare better than our friends, in terms of 'level of trust'. But this masks the fact that our friends are probably relevant and important to us in a way that people in the street are not. By the same token, a comparison between the 'trust' placed in national government (of which great things may be expected) and the 'trust' placed in European institutions (of which very little may be expected) may prove spurious.

However, the most interesting point is as follows. In general terms (and allowing for specific variations), countries where a relative majority of people want their national government's area of competence to be reduced, trust it less, feel they have less influence on it, and tend to look more favourably on European institutions. In this respect, Italy is possibly an extreme example of this tendency, as if Italians (or at least a large number of them) long for a European political class to substitute for their own.

Apparently consistent with this generalised propensity to prefer politicians who explain and can be held accountable for their deeds, is the fact that a majority of people do not want a differentiation between 'leading' and 'following' countries to develop (as we have already noted, the majority is against a two-speed Europe, which would enable those countries that want to go faster to outrank those that take their time).

In terms of how things really work in this respect, people's perceptions are somewhat ambiguous. A majority of 54.7% thinks that with respect to the "decisions taken within the institutions of the EU, especially in the Council of Ministers", a small number of big and economically strong countries dominate. However, when it comes to specifics, and people are asked to identify these "big and economically powerful member states", the distribution of frequencies is fairly scattered. In the end, only 16% of the answers identify Germany both as a big and economically strong country, and as one 'dominating' Europe; and similarly, only 14%

mention France and 10% mention the UK.

We can also examine the normative side of the matter. People were asked "when the Ministers from the member state governments take joint decisions by vote in the EU Council, which of the following would you prefer?" They were given three options: "their votes should have a weight in proportion to the population of each country: if a country has twice as many inhabitants as another, it should have twice as much weight", or "their vote should have a weight which does not only take into account the population of each country: if a country has twice as many inhabitants as another, it should have more weight but not twice as much", or "each country, big or small, should have one vote". 49.2% chose the third option, with no proportional nuance of any kind; 23.2% preferred a moderate application of the proportional principle, and 14.2%, a strong version of it.

Neither Euroenthusiasts nor Eurosceptics: a mild and steady support for the European process

It is, I think, quite fitting for the evidence presented here and for my general argument, that the public's general mood and emotional attitude cannot be easily characterised as pertaining to either of the two familiar stereotypes of Euroenthusiasts and Eurosceptics. Civil people, that is, people attuned to a civil kind of political association, do not lend themselves easily to political enthusiasm. Nor is it likely that Europeans who take an interest in the European process (a gradually evolving process, step by step) will see themselves as the mirror image of the 'patriotic masses' of the nation-states (and much less so of those masses in the 'good old days' of the 'citizen-soldier' and '*la levée en masse*'). And they may be unmoved by the elegiac tone of those politicians who say that Europe needs to be able to evoke an emotion or affection.¹⁶

According to this survey, if they have to choose the words expressive of their general attitude towards the European Union, Europeans prefer 'in favour' (of the EU) to 'against' (72%/28%), 'optimist' to 'pessimist' (57%/43%) and 'hopeful' to 'fearful' (66%/34%). But they also prefer

¹⁶For instance, Jacques Delors in his prologue to *de Schoutheete* (1997).

'indifferent' to 'enthusiastic' (53%/47%), 'non-involved' to 'involved' (60%/40%) and 'disappointed' to 'satisfied' (54%/46%). These mixed feelings are affected by the wording of the questions and the context (the precise historical moment) in which the questions are asked. However, I believe that, in the final analysis, we should accept the simple statement of being 'in favour' (as opposed to 'against'), reflected as it is by Europeans' consistent support for the process over so many years (in spite of being somewhat disappointed with regard to the perceived benefits they get from it). This is why I think that it all comes down to a general attitude of mild and steady support which goes well beyond a mere rational-instrumental attitude, and which implies a moral and emotional commitment to keep the process going.

7. Putting citizens first, and other alternative routes

It seems that the Europeans of the late XXth century have been given another chance to unite around an order of freedom, and thereby to set their historical trajectory right. It is as if they were able to bridge the abysses of this century and continue with their XIXth century liberal experience, which, were we to adopt Benedetto Croce's (hopeful and Hegelian) viewpoint, could be reconstructed as a long march towards freedom and (a) unity (of sorts) (Croce 1996 [1931]). And as if successive generations of men and women have been able to learn from their own mistakes and from those of their predecessors, while remaining committed to the core values and institutions of a liberal order, with regard to both domestic politics and international affairs.

The ongoing result (so far) has been a 'civil' or 'free' or 'open' society (the labels may vary), governed by laws and rules of convivence and based on a permanent conversation among citizens and professional politicians in the public space. At the same time, the process implies (and cannot continue without) an appeal to the liberal dispositions of the public, which are supposed to develop as the latter become accustomed to the work of free institutions and the public debate. In turn, this implies a disposition not to exclude anybody, and therefore, to include also nonliberals as long as they play along with the institutions and accept the game rules of the debate, in the

expectation that, in the long run, this will 'civilise' them.

Looking back over the events of the last two centuries (and taking a dose of Pangloss' optimism) it might be thought that European liberals had managed, in the end, to 'civilise' their historical adversaries, catholics and socialists, and to reconcile nationalists and cosmopolitans, but there are two crucial provisos. They did so only to the extent that, in the end, most citizens had to understand and assimilate two painful lessons. Firstly, the need to stand up against aggression: for that, they had to go to war and defeat their enemies. Secondly, the need to domesticate their (so-called) charismatic political leaders along with the party apparatus, the professional politicians and the state machineries that were under their control; and for that, they had to put the rule of law and the mechanisms of political accountability and public debate at the center of politics.

Now, as we approach a new century, we have to apply these lessons to new scenarios, which, so far, appear mild by comparison to those of the past, but are still fairly demanding (and may veer off course at any time). In this respect, there are two tasks crucial to Europe's prospects. One is the Eastern enlargement, which is the only way to make sure that the sorry chapter of communism on European lands will be finally closed. The second is mutual adjustment to the rhythms of the process of evolution of the European institutions and the civic dispositions of the European public.

As I have argued in this essay, both institutions and dispositions point to the emergence and consolidation of a political association of a 'civil' character in which, since 'rules' and 'debates' are at the heart of the matter, it is not the political leaders but the citizens themselves who play (have actually played, and *should* play) the main role. This is what may be encapsulated by the motto 'putting citizens first'.

On the negative side, the motto implies a refusal to let a network of European leaders fall into the temptation of indulging in what they themselves like to believe is 'high politics' (but which, to a less charitable observer, might look more like manipulative politics). Falling into temptation is of course easy. It is easy when politicians feel the urge to do something, imagine they have a vision to share with the European masses, and assume

they know better what the right issue is or how to select the right people for the right places just by looking at the personnel moving along in the networks they are familiar with.¹⁷ Then, they move forwards to 'mobilise' the masses by means of media sympathisers, party machines, skilful propaganda and political campaigns. In the meantime, they look around for 'new ideas' (the bigger the better) and for new ways to reach out to people and manipulate their feelings. And, if they come up with the wrong initiatives, or the wrong candidates and then face disaster or procrastination, they end up blaming the locals, '*ces frustrés paysans*', who do not understand them at all. This would be a sorry story, and in order to avoid it, a reality check is needed again and again, almost *ad infinitum*. Above all, it would be a story of 'enlightened despotism' which is deeply inimical to an order of liberty.

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¹⁷And they may even dismiss as 'local gossip' the very serious problems these chosen candidates might have in their own countries.

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