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CONFRONTATIONS EUROPE

THE
REVIEW

#138
SPRING 2024

EUROPE FACES THE DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE, EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2024 AS SEEN BY:

GERMANY
BELGIUM
CYPRUS
DENMARK
GREECE
HUNGARY
ITALY
LITHUANIA
UNITED KINGDOM
SLOVAKIA
SWEDEN
CZECHIA
TURKEY
P. 26 TO 73

MAJOR INTERVIEW:

• MARTIN SCHULZ,
FORMER PRESIDENT
OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2024 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

• SYLVAIN KAHN • ROSA BALFOUR
AND STEFAN LEHNE
• ANASTASIYA SHAPOCHKINA
AND HANNA SHELEST

CARTE BLANCHE A NEW NARRATIVE FOR EUROPE

• PHILIPPE HERZOG

CONFRONTATIONS

THE
REVIEW

EUROPE

CONFRONT
IDEAS,
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EUROPE.





Michel Derdevet,
President of
Confrontations Europe

EDITORIAL

While preparing issue 138 of the “Confrontations Europe” journal over the past few months, which you will read just days before the tenth European Parliament elections by direct universal suffrage, we deliberately chose to focus our attention on more than thirteen countries belonging to the European continent.

Why did we not dedicate the following pages solely to the internal French debate on Europe? There are three reasons:

On June 9th, we will not be facing a national choice, a referendum-like moment filled with controversies and political posturing. Rather, for the next five years, it will be about (re)creating a common project enriched by the diversity embodied in the Union’s motto. France will have a decisive role in finding the right balance between member states, and it is commendable that it currently places issues of power and sovereignty, which concern the 360 million European voters called to the polls, at the top of the Union’s agenda. Confrontations Europe has long advocated for this, as our manifesto (see p. 6) specifies and develops, and this is a fight we must evidently continue ardently. But under one essential condition: that France does not adopt a messianic stance that isolates it from its allies. To use a commonly employed image, Europe is not France on a larger scale, even if France can and should think big about Europe. The success or failure of the upcoming European term will depend on this ability to unite and gather support beyond our borders.

The deliberate choice to view Europe beyond our borders is also intimately linked to the functioning of our institutions, particularly the European Parliament, which will be elected from June 6th to 9th. Since 1979, it has essentially operated through the constructive dynamics of social-democratic (S&D), liberal (RE), and Christian-democratic (EPP) sensibilities. According to polls, even if the two far-right groups (Identity and Democracy, and Conservatives and Reformists) could gain strength by mid-June, this central

balance should persist, inherently requiring compromise and consensus on major issues. Therefore, it is essential to understand, from now on, the European perspectives and sensibilities at play in other democracies besides our own, to outline achievable points of balance and progress within the next Parliament.

Moving beyond the solely Franco-French political debate also means trying to surpass the “odd campaign” at work in our country since the beginning of the year, which our friend Sylvain Kahn pertinently addresses later. Yesterday’s staunch anti-Europeans have shed their trappings; exiting the euro is a thing of the past; the concept of sovereignty has been embraced by all camps; and even liberalism has found numerous critics, including among those who were once its staunchest supporters, due to its excesses and the “naivety” Europe supposedly displayed in recent years. This may leave voters perplexed about distinguishing the structural options of each camp, but after all, isn’t the most important thing that as many of our citizens as possible are aware of the essential “European moment” at play? Otherwise, how could we engage in the major strategic and budgetary challenges necessary for the survival of the European project in the future?

After these weeks filled with rich exchanges and debates, I would like to express one regret: the topics related to common goods, social urgency, and the role of citizens and organized civil society have, in my view, been (too) little developed in recent weeks. And yet! In light of the urgent need to accelerate efforts to combat climate change and respond quickly to the precariousness affecting one in three Europeans, we must rethink the modalities of deliberation to reconnect citizens with politics. From June 6th to 9th, we will elect this European Parliament, the only directly elected transnational assembly in the world. But beyond that, it will be urgent to profoundly revisit the methods of dialogue at the local level, in the territories, around Europe; and not solely through “online” citizen consultations... ■



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CONFRONTATIONS EUROPE

For over thirty years, Confrontations Europe has aimed to contribute to the construction of a humanistic and democratic Europe, one that is both competitive and solidarity-driven, and closer to its citizens. Confrontations Europe considers the involvement of civil society in the development of public policies essential, promoting respectful dialogue among diverse histories and cultures to overcome political divides and work towards the common good. Facing the numerous challenges confronting the EU, Confrontations Europe intends to continue and strengthen the conditions for genuine dialogue among business actors, policymakers, experts, and all stakeholders, to generate original and relevant analysis on European integration.

In this context, Confrontations Europe structures its work around three key themes: the sustainability of the European social market economy model facing the imperatives of sustainable development (SDGs), the affirmation of a "Europe as a power" in the world, and the strengthening of European democracy.

A UNIQUE MODEL OF THE SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY TO SUSTAIN

European integration is embodied in the development of its single market, rooted in a unique model of the social market economy at the heart of European capitalism. Today, this model is characterized by the promotion of ESG/RSE principles, and the imperative of environmental transition driven by the goals of the European Green Deal, aiming to make the EU the world's first carbon-neutral market by 2050. This model also aligns with the EU's digital transition, a necessary condition for European success in the face of the fourth

industrial revolution, requiring collective and solidarity-based management of data, increased digital skills among European workers, and the development of necessary infrastructure within the single market (communication, transportation, payment, ...). This European model is also based on better integration of EU industrial policies to ensure market sovereignty. This reorganization of industrial value chains cannot solely focus on job relocation, risking impoverishing neighboring European countries and their collaborations. It implies developing a policy focused on strategic links that determine European competitiveness and the mitigation of dependencies. The reorganization of industrial value chains also relies on diversifying sources of supply, both in raw materials and processed products.

Achieving these objectives requires considerable long-term investments, mobilizing the abundant savings of Europeans, which necessitates completing the Capital Markets Union. This private capital must be directed towards goals that structure the development of the EU economy, making the financial industry an essential service in realizing this model. Finally,

the post-coronavirus European model must be characterized by the demand for quality citizen dialogue, a condition for the involvement of all stakeholders in economic decision-making.

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

Confrontations Europe also supports the emergence of a strong Europe alongside the major powers of China and the United States. This “Europe as a power” on the international stage relies first on its ability to support and promote its norms among its trading partners.

This commitment to fair competition between nations, ensuring environmental protection and improving living conditions worldwide, requires a revision of trade and competition policies in line with these requirements. Furthermore, the EU must consider, in addition to its participation in NATO, its own capabilities based on national defense policies, with the priority being to strengthen joint programs in the defense industry. This ambition is part of asserting an open European strategic autonomy, which is intended to extend national sovereignties without diminishing or erasing them. Confrontations Europe thus advocates for expanding the realm of European common goods, allowing the EU to address the rising political risks in its neighborhood and beyond. Finally, the EU’s place in the world is embodied in its relationship with Southern countries, particularly in a shared destiny with Africa. Confrontations Europe advocates for the emergence of a European Pact for Migrations in two dimensions: supporting the development of origin countries and improving entry and circulation conditions within the single market for workers from third countries, centered around the creation of a European “Blue Card.”

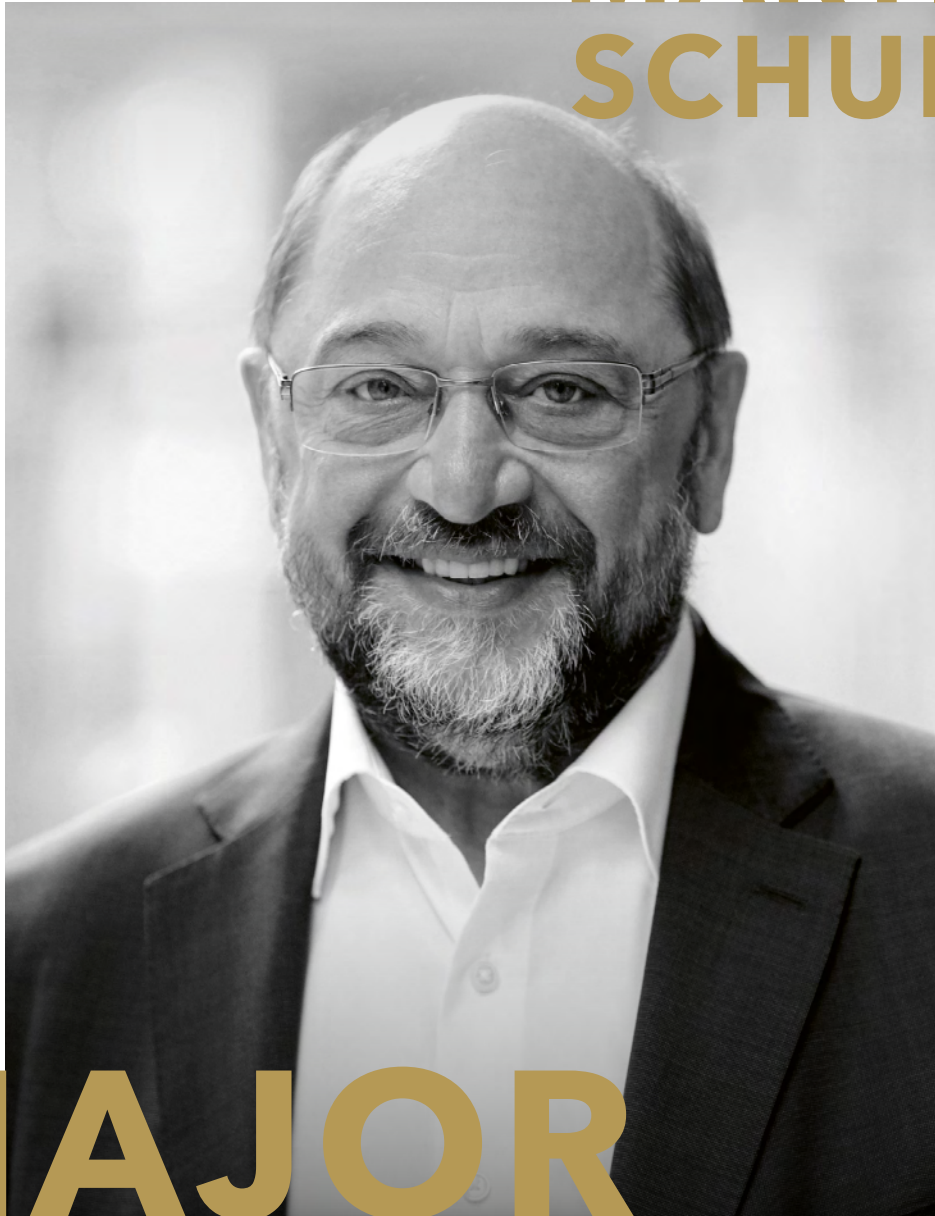
A NEW EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE

Finally, Confrontations Europe promotes a more vibrant European democracy, complementing national democratic cultures. This is essential to establish this dynamic of European common goods on a basis of better mutual understanding and citizen adherence. This democratic process must rely on more engaged EU citizens in community political decision-making. This new European governance is essential for bringing the Union closer to its citizens, a necessary condition for the emergence of a European sense of belonging. This participatory democracy must be based on deliberation and reconnecting citizens with politics. Participatory democracy must be organized at the local level to account for the diversity of national democratic cultures that characterize Europe and involve the maximum number of Europeans. Moving away from exclusivity, it must imperatively address concrete, everyday problems, thereby strengthening territorial dynamics.

In this sense, the Conference on the Future of Europe is a major initiative of this legislative period. To fully realize its potential, this conference must address the establishment of a permanent mechanism for citizen participation aimed at establishing dialogue at the local level, tailored to national cultures and practices, while promoting exchanges and pedagogy, to gradually determine a common European democratic language.

Aware of the significant challenges facing the European Union, Confrontations Europe aims to contribute to enlightening political decision-making at the European level, seeking to be the bridge between society and institutions through open, viable, and constructive conflict resolution. ■

MARTIN SCHULZ



FORMER
PRESIDENT
OF THE
EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT

MAJOR INTERVIEW

"We must continue to encourage citizen engagement in the democratic process."

As the next European elections approach, *Confrontations Europe* wished to gather the testimony and analysis of a key actor in European life over the past decades, Martin Schulz, former President of the European Parliament. The elections of 2024 represent a significant democratic moment in a period of profound transformations: economic, social, environmental, geopolitical... Martin Schulz outlines for us the major challenges and issues of the upcoming mandate.

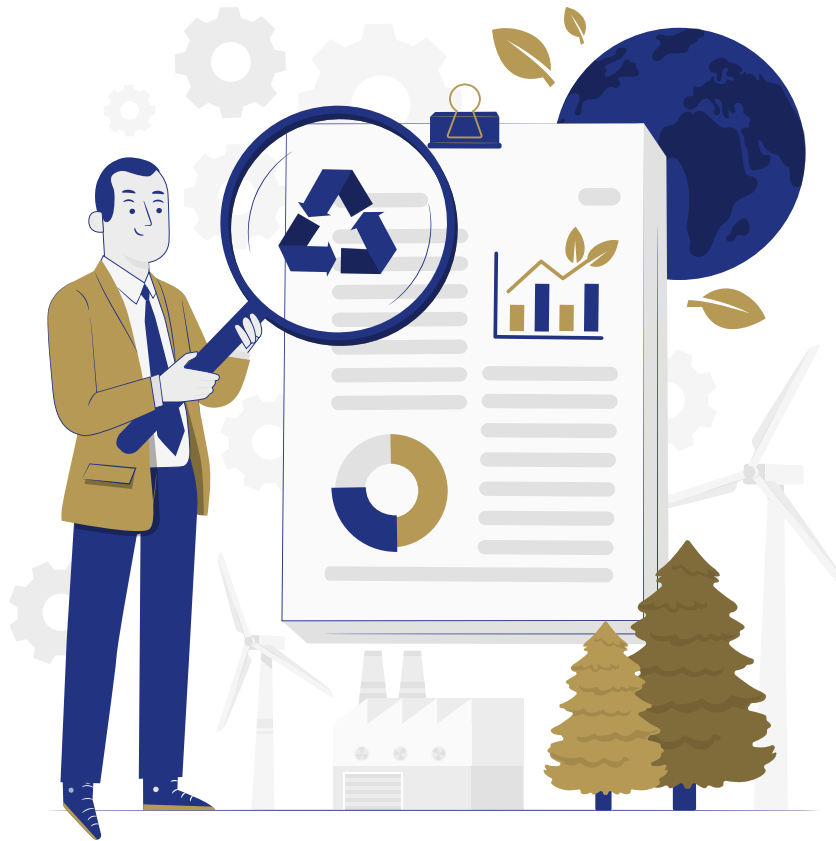
Confrontations Europe: *Confrontations Europe: "Europe will be forged in crises and will be the sum of the solutions brought to these crises," said Jean Monnet. This mandate has been marked by the global Covid-19 crisis and the conflict in Ukraine. Has Europe risen to the challenges posed? Or has the succession of crises shown our limits and risks, in the longer term, to stall the European machine?*

Martin Schulz: Jean Monnet was right to emphasize that Europe is forged in adversity. Indeed, this mandate has faced major challenges, notably the global Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression in Ukraine. These events have tested the European Union's ability to act in a coordinated and effective manner. To some extent, we have succeeded in addressing these challenges by mobilizing resources and adopting emergency measures. We have seen examples of solidarity and cooperation, notably through the post-Covid recovery mech-

anism, but it is undeniable that gaps remain in our ability to react quickly and coherently. We must acknowledge that our response has not been perfect and that there are areas where we need to improve our cooperation and preparedness for the future. It is crucial that we learn from these experiences to strengthen our Union and better prepare for the challenges ahead. Crises reveal our weaknesses and compel us to overcome them to build a more resilient and cohesive Europe.

C. E.: *What have been, in your opinion, the flagship votes of the European Parliament during this mandate? How do they impact the lives of Europeans? Will their consequences be sufficient and visible enough to motivate and encourage Europeans to go to the polls? How to reignite European enthusiasm in those who doubt or turn away?*

M. S.: During this mandate, the European Parliament has adopted several significant measures to address the concerns of European citizens, which have a direct impact on the lives of Europeans. Among these, I would particularly highlight the adoption of the post-Covid recovery plan "Next Generation EU" and the Green Deal, which aims to lead the EU to carbon neutrality by 2050. These decisions aimed to stimulate economic recovery after a recessionary period linked to the pandemic and to set the European Union on the path to ecological transition. Ambitious environmental policies have been adopted during this mandate to combat climate change. Their impact on the daily lives of European citizens will be tangible, but it is essential that we communicate effectively about the concrete results of these actions and do more to make them socially acceptable. To reignite European enthusiasm in those who doubt or turn away, we must demonstrate ►



► that the European Union is able to address the challenges we face and providing concrete solutions that improve the lives of citizens. This requires clear and transparent communication about our achievements and ambitions, as well as enhanced commitment to democracy, solidarity, and cooperation within our Union.

C. E.: Participation in European elections increased for the first time in 2019. Will it also increase in 2024, or will we return to a declining turnout as has been the case since the first direct universal suffrage vote in 1979? What risks and challenges does this pose for our democracy in the short and medium term?

M. S.: Participation in European elections is a crucial indicator of the democratic vitality of our European Union. In 2019, we indeed observed a significant increase in turnout, which is a positive signal for our democracy. However, it is difficult to predict with certainty whether this trend will continue for the year 2024. We must continue to encourage citizen engagement in the democratic process. Several factors can influence voter turnout. On the one hand, European citizens are increasingly aware of the importance of European elections and their impact on their daily lives. Issues such as post-Covid economic recovery, the fight against

climate change, and the defense of fundamental rights are generating growing interest among voters. On the other hand, there are also challenges that could dampen participation. Trends in misinformation, political polarization, and the rise of populism could discourage some citizens from going to the polls. Additionally, perceptions of the effectiveness and legitimacy of European institutions can also influence the level of participation. To counter these risks, it is essential that we continue to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of their vote and strengthen trust in our democratic institutions. This requires clear communication about the stakes of European elections, as well as concrete measures to promote participation, such as information campaigns, public debates, and initiatives to encourage voter registration. The upcoming elections will be decisive for the future of Europe, and it is crucial that every voice counts in shaping our common future.

C. E.: How are the European elections approached in Germany? What importance is given to this election by political parties, the media, and citizens?

M. S.: In Germany, European elections have become an increasingly critical issue

“THE EUROPEAN UNION MUST CONTINUE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE, PROMOTING MULTILATERALISM, RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY.”

for political parties, the media, and citizens. European issues closely affect national interests, particularly in the areas of economy, security, and the environment. German voters are increasingly recognizing the importance of their voice in shaping European policies and are therefore more inclined to participate in European elections.

C. E.: The phenomena of misinformation and foreign interference in elections have intensified in recent years. Is there an increased risk for this European election, and are we ready to address it? What should we do better to guard against this scourge? Do we have the will and the means?

M. S.: Misinformation and foreign interference are serious threats to the integrity of European elections and democracy as a whole. However, I am confident that we have the means and the will to address these challenges, provided we act decisively and collectively. To effectively combat misinformation and interference, we must first strengthen the resilience of our democratic institutions and promote transparency and integrity in the electoral process. This involves measures such as raising awareness among citizens about disinformation techniques and collaborating with digital platforms to combat the spread of false information. Additionally, we must enhance cooperation between Member States and European institutions to exchange information, coordinate efforts, and develop common strategies to combat misinformation and foreign interference. This will require concerted action at the European level, as well as enhanced cooperation with our international partners. It is important to emphasize that the fight against misinformation should not be limited to the electoral period but should be a continuous and comprehensive effort to

promote a culture of truth and accountability in our society. This requires firm commitment from all stakeholders, including governments, the media, digital platforms, and civil society.

C. E.: There is a rise in populism across Europe, and polls predict an increase in the number of seats for far-right / radical right parties in the European Parliament. Is there a risk of institutional deadlock following the elections?

M. S.: We must fight against any democratic backsliding and stop the drift towards the far right in our country and in Europe. It is essential that European institutions remain firm in defending democratic values and the rule of law. This means, in particular, combating all forms of hate speech, discrimination, and xenophobia. Furthermore, it is important to promote constructive dialogue and strengthen cooperation between different political groups to overcome divisions and find solutions to the challenges we face as the European Union. It is true that the increased presence of populist and nationalist parties can complicate decision-making in the European Parliament due to ideological differences and often radical positions. However, our European Union is based on the principle of compromise and dialogue. Members of the European Parliament are elected to represent the interests of their constituents but also to work together in the common interest of the European Union. The rise of populism, observed in many European countries, challenges the fundamental values on which our European Union is based, such as respect for human rights, tolerance, and solidarity. Ultimately, while the rise of populism may pose a challenge to our European Union, I remain convinced that we have the resources and mechanisms necessary to address it. It is essential that we continue to promote a ►

► culture of compromise and mutual respect, as well as strengthen the democratic institutions of our European Union to ensure a stable and prosperous future for all European citizens.

C. E.: In your opinion, what will be the major challenges for the next mandate? Governance of Europe, European defense, environmental transition, economic and financial crises...?

M. S.: The upcoming challenges for the next mandate will require decisive action from European institutions and enhanced cooperation between Member States. Among the major challenges that will arise, I would highlight several key areas:

- **Governance of Europe:** Strengthening the governance of the European Union will be essential to ensure its effectiveness and democratic legitimacy. This includes reforming European institutions to make them more transparent, accountable, and democratic, as well as promoting greater citizen participation in decision-making.
- **European defense:** Faced with growing security challenges, it is imperative to strengthen European defense. This requires enhanced cooperation between Member States in defense, as well as strategic investments in research, development, and modernization of European military capabilities.
- **Climate transition:** The ecological crisis is one of the major challenges of our time, and the European Union must play a leadership role in the transition to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly economy. This involves implementing ambitious policies to combat climate change, promote renewable energy, and protect biodiversity.
- **Economic and financial crises:** The next mandate will also face economic and financial challenges. It will be essential to promote inclusive and sustainable economic recovery, as well as to strengthen the financial stability of the European Union to address any future crises.

Finally, I would emphasize that the European Union must continue to play an active role on the international stage, promoting multilateralism, respect for international law, and global solidarity. These challenges will require strong commitment and concerted action from all stakeholders, and I am confident

that the European Union is capable of addressing these challenges and building a better future for all European citizens.

C. E.: In order to validate the post-Covid recovery plan, it was decided to increase own resources. Will the upcoming elections be an opportunity to reconsider the subject in order to provide the European Union with a budget commensurate with its ambitions?

M. S.: It is clear that the question of the European budget is not simply a matter of numbers. It is also a question of political priorities and strategic choices. The European Union must invest in key areas such as ecological transition, research and innovation, social and regional cohesion, as well as promoting employment and economic growth. To do this, it is necessary to strike a balance between different priorities and to mobilize resources effectively and equitably. This may involve structural reforms of the European Union's financing system, as well as efforts to strengthen the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion at the European level. It is evident that deeper discussions will be necessary to ensure that the European Union has adequate means to achieve its objectives. The upcoming European elections could indeed be an opportunity to reopen this subject and debate ways to provide the European Union with a budget commensurate with its ambitions. The goal is to ensure that the European Union has the necessary means to achieve its ambitions and meet the expectations of European citizens. This will require open and inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders, including Member States, the European Parliament, and civil society. European citizens must be convinced that their vote contributes to shaping the future of Europe and ensuring its long-term prosperity.

C. E.: The candidate in the American elections, Donald Trump, said he would encourage Vladimir Putin to attack the "bad payers" of NATO. Will this push European institutions to deepen the theme of strategic autonomy, which has been at the heart of discussions at the end of this mandate?

M. S.: Donald Trump's statements regarding NATO and Vladimir Putin are concerning and highlight the need for the European Union to strengthen its strategic autonomy. European institutions must indeed deepen this crucial

theme that has been at the heart of discussions at the end of this mandate. It is essential that the European Union strengthens its ability to act autonomously on the international stage, ensuring its security and defending its common interests. This will require in-depth dialogue between Member States and enhanced cooperation in the field of defense and security.

C. E.: Finally, if you were to express three wishes for the next mandate to be a success and strengthen democracy in Europe and in the world, what would they be?

M. S.: Europe concerns us all. Our fundamental values are an international task for which we must fight in our own country. Respect for plurality of opinions and the duty of compromise are the recipe for democracy. We have reasons to be discouraged, but we do not have time to be discouraged. As a social democrat, I have no right to be discouraged. If I were to express three wishes for the next mandate to be a success and strengthen democracy in Europe and in the world, I would first wish for greater solidarity among the Member States of the European Union, based on mutual respect and cooperation. Secondly, I would like to see a more inclusive European Union that gives voice to citizens and is committed to promoting fundamental rights and social justice. Finally, I wish for Europe to strengthen its role on the international stage as a guarantor of peace, democracy, and universal values, collaborating closely with its partners around the world to address shared challenges. ■

“RESPECT FOR THE
PLURÀLITY OF OPINIONS
AND THE DUTY
OF COMPROMISE
CONSTITUTE THE RECIPE
FOR DEMOCRÀCY.”



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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2024: POLITICAL DECODING AND ANALYSIS

By Sylvain Kahn,
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for History of Sciences Po. Latest published work:
Europe Facing Ukraine, PUF, 2024



In France in 2019, three lists benefited from an electoral dynamic: the Greens, La République en Marche (LREM), and the RN (National Rally). The increase in participation at that time mainly benefited the three political parties that had an extremely clear vision of what they expected from Europe. In 2019, the RN represented the French version of nationalist and sovereigntist parties, euro-critical or eurosceptic. In the European Parliament, they are divided between two groups, ECR (to which Reconquête recently affiliated) and ID (to which the RN is affiliated). For them, Europe is part of the problem, or even the problem.

In 2019, the Greens and LREM, now known as Renaissance, belonged to the parties and political movements that believe the challenges facing Europeans can be democratically resolved on a European scale. In this family, one mostly finds parties whose societal project is fully and primarily oriented by ecological issues, and those, often fundamentally liberal and democratic, focused on individual emancipation. Ecologists and liberals are most often unequivocally pro-European:

for these types of parties, Europe is part of the solution, or even the solution.

These politically contrasting families have one thing in common: they are very consistent in their European doctrine. In the RN - its only point in common with Renaissance and the Greens - there is no division or internal tensions regarding Europe. The eviction of F. Philippot (RN's former vice-president) from the National Front due to its refusal to give up on "Frexit" and the euro exit, and then, the insignificant score of his list (the Patriots) in 2019, illustrated this.

Conversely, in the right and left traditions inherited from the 20th century, those whose parties have been "in government" and have built the political Europe from the ECSC to the Lisbon Treaty - the Christian Democrats and conservatives on one hand, and the socialists and social democrats on the other - one finds, in each national delegation, pro-Europeans and much less European, or even sovereigntist, currents. Depending on the times, or their situations (in government or in opposition), these ambiguities have been particularly prevalent within the SFIO and the PS. The EPP,

“IN THIS CAMPAIGN, DEBATES AND DIVISIONS FOCUS EVEN LESS ON THE LEGITIMACY AND VALIDITY OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION THAN FIVE YEARS AGO. IT FOCUSES MORE ON THE LEGITIMACY AND RELEVANCE OF SUPRANATIONALITY, AND... ON THE CONTENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES.”

like LR, Forza Italia, the British Tories until Brexit, the CSU..., has been torn for 40 years between “Europeanists” and “sovereignists,” between proponents of more or less supranational Europe. The RPR, which preceded LR as the declared heir of Gaullism, did not join the EPP until 1994.

In 2019, these “government” parties did not attract voters: the electoral trend was towards ideological coherence on Europe; the PS and LR were punished for their lack of clarity on European policy.

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been lines of division in France between parties called pro-European - UMP, PS - and others called anti-European - RPF, FN, PC, FG. In this configuration, these two major families were, before 2017-2019, positioned as Europhiles. Despite their ambiguities, they said: “We must advance Europe because it is a value. We must advance Europe because it strengthens our political achievements and our national community, and it protects us against the damages of globalization and against the war that nationalism leads to.” This

was the story of the “European rescue of the nation-state” (title of Alan Milward’s book), of national objectives and interests achieved and consolidated by Europe. In quite different styles, F. Mitterrand (from 1984 onwards), then J. Chirac (from 1995 onwards), as well as L. Jospin (in 1997), adorned themselves with a European leader’s costume with this type of discourse, in an approach that remained somewhat external to the philosophy of supranational politics. Conversely, there were Eurosceptic and Europhobic parties that said: “No, it’s not at the European level that it’s played out, it’s at the national level, and we must defend it against Europe, because Europe destroys the nation.”

In 2024, the situation in which the campaign takes place is very different for two reasons. Firstly, the EU is engaged alongside Ukraine in resisting Russia’s invasion. Secondly, the response to Covid-19 in 2020 ended the “fifteen-year” crisis opened in 2005; it had the effect of a revival of European construction - similar to those of 1984, 1969, 1955. With the response to these two very worrying and almost simultaneous external shocks - Covid-19, ►

- Russian aggression in Ukraine - European construction is once again seen as a solution in public opinion.

In this campaign, debates and divisions focus even less on the legitimacy and validity of European construction than five years ago. It focuses more on the legitimacy and relevance of supranationality, and even more so on the content of public policies to be implemented at the European level within the framework of the EU. None of the forces involved questions the legitimacy of the recovery plan or European borrowing; but they oppose each other on the primacy of European law and the conditionality of access to funding on respect for the rule of law. None of them calls for the abolition of Frontex, but they differ on its missions. Regarding European construction, Orbán's line, in power since 2010, has imposed itself throughout the European family of radical and extreme right, the RN's program is the prototype of a formerly Eurosceptic extreme right party that is "Orbanized": the EU, despite this supranational Commission that must either be infiltrated or eroded, is a resource to protect each nation against the non-European world and to promote not only the economy but also "illiberalism".

In this landscape, the inflation of agricultural and energy prices has imposed a front line: the Green Pact, stop or continue? Is one adhering to the EU as a model for combating climate change and for a habitable world, or to the EU as a model for growth and for both industrial and post-industrial society (in the sense of Bell and Touraine)? In this debate, the RN is more attractive than LR, since the EPP, to which LR is affiliated, supported the Green Pact until the summer of 2023 and N. Sarkozy initiated "the Grenelle de l'environnement". The "continue" line seems to benefit more the PS and Renaissance than the Greens, because the latter, rightly or wrongly, and unlike German ecologists, are perceived as doctrinaire or radical by a part of the electorate concerned with advancing the fight against climate change and for transition; they are also perceived, rightly or wrongly, if they were in power, as ready to embrace the cause of degrowth and exit from consumer society instead of proposing how to adapt it.

European migration policy is another polarizing topic. Behind this title are opposing representations. On one hand, Islamist fundamentalism perceived as polymorphous or highly localized, expansive, or circumscribed; on the other hand, societal cohesion that would be primarily a social problem and of solidarity, or rather a cultural problem and of community assertion. There are parties for whom the scandal is first constituted by shipwrecks in the Mediterranean and the English Channel and by the "encampment" (Michel Agier) of migrant people; and parties for whom the scandal lies primarily in the departure and arrival of unauthorized migrants, without visas. There are those who consider that respect for the rule of law is first and foremost respect for asylum law procedures and a priori reception, and those who consider that respect for the rule of law is first and foremost respect for decisions rendered by asylum law courts and respect for "obligation to live the french territory".

In this context, in the European Parliament, all French parties except one, Renaissance, chose to vote against all or part of the European Pact on Asylum and Migration, and to make it an electoral argument. A paradox when one knows, in particular, all the work done upstream of this vote within the two major EPP and S&D groups (of the PES).

To the surprise of a certain number of commentators, Ukraine is not very divisive or differentiating. As much as in 2017 and 2019, France had distinguished itself by the structuring cleavage between pro-Russians and admirers of Putin's regime on one side, and on the other, supporters of the Atlantic Alliance and a policy aiming to contain within acceptable limits Russian mafia imperialism. Since February 2022, support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia has become a consensual policy. A small part of the political forces - LFI, the PCF, and Reconquête - are explicitly against supporting the war effort in Ukraine. On this subject, the RN keeps a low profile, cultivating ambiguity. Its group abstained during the vote on March 12, 2024, in the National Assembly on French support for Ukraine.

In 2024, compared to 2019, E. Macron's and Renaissance's very pro-European posi-

tioning is weakened by the French domestic reforms desired by the President of the Republic: part of his electorate from 2017 and 2022 reproaches him for the pension reform and the immigration law that was passed with the right and the far right. Are they also reproaching him for his changes in stance on, not support for Ukraine, but the place to be given to Putin and Russia in European foreign and defense policy? On these different subjects, R. Glucksmann, for these voters, provides rectitude and anchoring. However, it will be important to closely monitor the program of his list beyond his personal discourse: the PS has had, in the past, sometimes vague or ambiguous positions on European issues.

It is possible that, the closer we get to the vote, the more the dynamics of 2019 are replayed: namely, the choice for one of the lists for whom Europe is clearly and unequivocally the solution, with the idea that it is better to have a good compromise among Europeans to move forward together, rather than the opposite, risking standing still to not compromise supposed grand principles, as seen on the asylum and migration pact. In this hypothesis, the reasons that favored Macron's attraction to a part of the PS electorate in 2017, and then in 2019, could produce similar effects in 2024, but to a lesser extent. From this perspective, V. Hayer's positioning, resolutely running as an incumbent, claiming the mandate and the Commission's record - a record which, objectively, is particularly dense, especially as it de facto includes a revival of European construction - could perhaps be a winning bet. The other parties that could claim this record and these advances refuse to do so, even the Greens, who nevertheless left their mark on the achievements of the past five years. Will this be enough to convince those known as left-wing Macronists and other disappointed with the presidential record? Part of the answer could lie in the potential impact of E. Macron's second Sorbonne speech.

In any case, the strong cumulative attractiveness of the two radical right and extreme right lists is favored by the abandonment of their Eurosceptic discourse and return to the franc, in favor of a sovereigntist posture and taking power within the EU.

The results of the European elections in France will determine the color of the 81 French seats, but the entire 720 seats in Parliament will need to be considered to define the new coalition and dynamics for this term. ■

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EUROPE CHALLENGED. THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE EUROPEAN UNION



By Rosa Balfour,
Director at Carnegie Europe



and Stefan Lehne,
Senior fellow at Carnegie Europe

THIS TIME IT COULD BE DIFFERENT

2024 is set to show how much the political landscape in Europe has changed. According to a research study by the University of Amsterdam, 32 percent of voters voted for anti-establishment parties in 2021, a rise from 12 percent in the early nineties.⁽¹⁾ Radical-right parties make up about half of this share and have risen faster than any other group.

Europe has been living with populism for

several decades. It rose where the traditional mainstream parties of centre-right and centre left were losing ground. Populism has a “thin ideology,” mainly focused on fomenting the anger of “the pure people” against the “corrupt elites,” has risen on both the left and right-wing of the political spectrum,⁽²⁾ has hindered and influenced the European Union and its policies, but without challenging its basic tenets and functioning.

The radical-right parties of the 2020s have a more distinct ideological profile than populism. Unlike the extreme right, the radical right

accepts the essence of democracy but rejects its liberalism (minority rights, rule of law, the separation of powers).⁽³⁾ Along these lines, pluralism, the separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, and women's and LGBTIQ rights have been dismantled in Poland (by the now defeated government of Law and Justice) and Hungary. Radical right leaders such as Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban believe that 2024 will be a 'turning point'. Elections in the EU, the US, and elsewhere will mean that 'the global political stage will look completely different.' He sees the wind blowing in his favour.⁽⁴⁾

Recent setbacks in Poland and Spain have shown that the relentless rise of radical right parties is not a foregone conclusion. However, current polling for a number of national elections and for the European Parliament election of June 2024 indicate a strong likelihood of their continuing electoral success. Many radical right parties have achieved voting shares of 20 percent and more. Several have joined coalition governments or have entered into parliamentary support agreements. The radical right is now in or supporting governments in Finland, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden. In the Netherlands, Gert Wilders's PVV may lead a minority government. In Austria, the radical right is expected to perform extremely well in elections in autumn 2024. In other countries they have become the leading opposition group.

A stronger right-wing flank in the European Parliament and a European Council with a greater number of governments involving the radical right could bring about change in the

European Union. The question is what that change may look like.

WHAT THE RADICAL RIGHT THINKS

Following the UK Brexit referendum of 2016, Eurosceptic parties, including the radical right, have seen a certain moderation of positions towards the European Union. Demands for their countries to leave the EU or the Euro have been mostly abandoned. The messy and painful departure of the UK has turned such initiatives into vote losers in electoral campaigns. Whether this shift 'from exit to voice'⁽⁵⁾ represents a genuine change of attitude or just a tactical adjustment may vary from case to case, but their ethnonationalism makes them deeply hostile to the EU. Many of these parties now propagate a "European alliance of nations,"⁽⁶⁾ organized strictly along intergovernmental lines. Some demand a renegotiation of the EU treaties leading to a repatriation of powers to member states, others just reject any further transfers of competencies to the European level or more majority voting.

Aside from a deep antipathy towards the European Union, these parties align with each other in their radical anti-migration sentiments, especially racially or religiously determined. Some, including Alternative for Germany, have embraced 'ethnic replacement' theories. They oppose any significant EU role in regulating these matters as well as international rules such as the Geneva Refugee Convention or the UN migration pact.

They also converge in their scepticism toward climate policies. Some parties have moved away from climate denialism in favour of landscapes of rural nostalgia, such as in France, Sweden, and Finland, but they include many climate deniers among their followers. They have been fomenting the 'green backlash' against the EU's Green Deal and exploiting farmers' protests. ►

(1) <https://popu-list.org>

(2) Cas Mudde (2004), *The Populist Zeitgeist, Government and Opposition*, 39 (2004), p. 542-563.

(3) Cas Mudde (2019), *The Far Right Today*, London, Polity Press

(4) <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/pm-orban-2024-will-again-be-a-year-of-success>

(5) Albert O. Hirschman (1972), *From Exit to Voice. Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Harvard University Press.

(6) <https://www.euractiv.fr/section/elections/news/marine-le-pen-reinstalle-le-duel-avec-emmanuel-macron-dans-ses-propositions-sur-leurope>

“THE EUROZONE AND MIGRATION
 CRISES, THE PANDEMIC, AND
 THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE
 WITH ITS ECONOMIC FALLOUT HAVE
 PUT GREAT STRESS ON EUROPEAN
 SOCIETIES. SOME OF THE MEASURES
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- ▶ Another area of convergence among these parties are deeply conservative family values against women’s and LGBTIQ rights. In recent years, these parties have strengthened their international ties precisely around these shared values, through networks such as the Conservative Political Action Network⁽⁷⁾ and the Budapest Demographic Conference.⁽⁸⁾

EU policymakers have drawn comfort from the fact that the radical right was sharply divided by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In Poland and the Baltics, Russia has long been perceived as a threat across the board. In Italy Giorgia Meloni’s FdI-led government commitment to Western efforts contrasted with pro-Russian sentiments of her coalition partners and the Russia-friendly views of earlier Italian governments. But the radical right maintains a critical stance toward US and EU policies, which in their view shares some responsibility for the crisis. A number of parties maintain their open sympathies towards Russia. Sanctions and military support for Ukraine could be affected if the international context changes. Should Donald Trump, as next US President, pursue, as he has promised, a peace deal with Russia, European unity over Ukraine will likely come to an end.

CONTAINING THE RADICAL RIGHT?

The respective nationalism of the radical right has undermined the ability of these parties to influence European politics. In some respects, the radical right has performed below its collective weight. Policymakers in Brussels have been playing transactional diplomacy with radical right leaders in order to reach the minimum common denominators needed to move policy forward. These tactics may have allowed the EU machine to move forward, but do not address the political context in which the radical right has risen.

The Eurozone and migration crises, the pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine with its economic fallout have put great stress on European societies. Some of the measures taken by governments in response to these challenges and at times also the failure to respond to widely shared grievances have eroded the trust of major parts of the public towards the governments. Radical right parties were quick to exploit this alienation and skilfully used social media to further foment anger and frustration.

A major part of the responsibility for the success of the radical right also lies with established mainstream parties. As political scientists Cas Mudde and Jan-Werner Müller have long argued, these parties - fearful of the new competition - started to adopt ideas of the radical right, which as a result gradually became normalized, in some countries even turning into part of the political mainstream. However, their hope that this strategy would help retain their traditional electorate rarely paid off. In practice, extensive research has shown that voters usually prefer the real radical right to their imitators.

IS THE RADICAL RIGHT UNSTOPPABLE?

A more successful strategy to contain the radical right could include the following elements.

First, mainstream parties should remain firm in their commitment to the principles of a liberal democratic society. They should promote respect for the rule of law both on the national and the European level and ensure that the instruments developed by the EU to this end are applied consistently and not subject to transactional bargaining.

Second, a functioning democracy relies on dialogue and compromise. Democratic political forces should therefore engage in dialogue with

all parties that are not racist and respectful of democratic processes and explore the potential of persuasion and socialization.

Third, mainstream parties need to seriously address the grievances that drive voters towards these parties. They need to better explain their policies on migration and climate and make sure that the losers from economic and technological change are not left behind.

Fourth, isolating these parties and keeping them out of government can be a workable strategy in some cases, but will not work in others. When the participation in a coalition cannot be avoided, mainstream parties should ensure that the coalition agreement contains strong guardrails ensuring that the government as a whole, remains committed to democratic principles and European integration.

Fifth, a stronger representation of radical right parties in the European Parliament and in the Council in the coming years might well be inevitable. But they will still be only a minority. If liberal democratic forces work well together and stick to their shared principles, the damage can be contained. ■

(7) <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/feb/27/controversial-rightwing-figures-spoke-alongside-liz-truss-at-cpac-event>

(8) <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/meloni-to-be-keynote-speaker-at-budapest-demographic-summit>

THE FUTURE OF UKRAINE'S DEFENSE⁽¹⁾



By Anastasiya Shapochkina,
Eastern Circles



and Hanna Shelest,
Ukrainian Prism

In the run-up to the Washington summit in July, NATO is preparing the "Mission for Ukraine," including a \$100 billion of military assistance over five years, and a takeover from Ramstein group of arms deliveries. While the move is labelled "unprecedented" by Western press, it also reflects the fear from Ukraine that NATO is substituting money for the real prize: an invitation to membership, which would be on par with the political decision by the EU last winter to start accession negotiations.

In fact, the financial package is strengthening an earlier apprehension by Ukraine's defense expert community: that numerous bilateral security agreements signed in recent months with Ukraine will serve for the West as

an "excuse" to dodge the subject of NATO accession altogether.

Furthermore, financial and military aid creates a one-way street where Ukraine is a poor cousin recipient, while Kyiv is striving to project the image of a military industrial partner looking for joint projects which would strengthen its defense capacities in the short-run, its sovereignty and its role as a guardian of European security in the long-run. Yet,

(1) By Anastasiya Shapochkina, Eastern Circles, based on the comments by Hanna Shelest, Ukrainian Prism, at the conference "Securing Ukraine - Securing Europe", organized by Eastern Circles - Maison de l'Europe - Prism Ukraine and Ukrainian Center for Defense Strategy Analyses on March 18, 2024, in Paris.

“AMMUNITION AND AIR-DEFENSE SYSTEMS REMAIN UKRAINE’S MOST PRESSING NEED AND ARE IN THE LOWEST SUPPLY. THIS IS WHY THE CZECH INITIATIVE [...], WAS A WELCOME SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR KYIV...”

despite a growing number of military industry delegations and MOUs (memoranda of understanding) between Ukrainian and Western defense companies, only Rheinmetall has signed an actual JV production agreement in Ukraine.

Ammunition and air-defense systems remain Ukraine’s most pressing need and are in the lowest supply. This is why the Czech initiative after the Weimar meeting in March supported by several EU states to find and fund 800 000 artillery rounds, including outside the EU, was a welcome show of support for Kyiv, especially as the US has remained inactive since last October. So is the latest European Parliament initiative this week, led by the MEP and former Belgian PM Guy Verhofstadt to block the Council’s budget implementation until more Patriot missiles are delivered to Ukraine.

In addition to the need for more ammunition and air defense, Ukraine needs Western partners to start implementing the sanctions, which today are so impotent that Russia-made rockets and drones are stuffed to the brim with Western components. Instead, on March 22, the day when Ukraine experienced the heaviest Russian missile and drone attack so far, inca-

pacitating half of its energy infrastructure, the US made a “historic” phone call to Kyiv to ask Zelensky for an end in bombing Russian refineries.

Ahead of the Washington summit, what Ukraine fears most is the vagueness of Vilnius, when the US was hiding behind Europe’s back. The “open door” policy does not answer Ukraine’s aspirations, as Kyiv knows all too well that doors can open to air the room, without letting anyone in. The rhetoric about Ukraine becoming a NATO member only after the end of the war is also unacceptable to Kyiv, as it has been used by Russia since 2014 to make the war last, indefinitely. What Kyiv is looking for is NATO membership, not any new form of partnership, an “enhanced opportunity” or any other wiggle language. It is the difference between a promise and a commitment, and a test for the Alliance, watched closely by Moscow and Beijing. ■



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EUROPEAN ELECTORAL ACT REFORM: A FURTHER STEP NEEDED

By Stefan Seidendorf,
Deputy Director of
the Franco-German Institute, Dfi



From June 6 to June 9, 2024, Europeans will head to the polls to elect the only supranational assembly endowed with genuine competencies and legislative powers. But how many will actually vote? Likely around 50%, making it comparable to the turnout in American presidential elections, where one in two voters participates. Intriguingly, these elections, which unfold within a single country following nearly two years of national campaigning that captivates the nation, and ultimately pits two clearly identified and defined figures against each other, do not significantly outpace the European vote in terms of turnout, despite seemingly having every reason to ignite more public passion...

Voting schedules vary across member countries between June 6 and June 9 – a setup that does not lend itself easily to media coverage aimed at timing and suspense. Four of the twenty-seven member countries will grant voting rights starting at 16 years of age, one (Greece) from 17 years, and the rest from 18 years. Europeans will elect 720 parliamentarians, but for each citizen, only a portion of these candidates will be eligible for selection on their ballots (those within national contexts). The proportional representation system with pre-established party lists at the national level complicates both the connection between voters and their

representatives and the emergence of a truly pan-European campaign.

How can this be remedied? Partly, and hopefully, through the educational efforts currently being deployed by European and national institutions, as well as civil society organizations to explain the importance and stakes of these elections, thereby reminding citizens of their duty, will have an effect. More fundamentally, a more “European” election must be established. For this, a reform of the electoral act, which outlines the parameters of the election and dates back to the first elections in 1979, seems inevitable, although it will not be an easy task.

Reforming the “EU Electoral Act” is no simple task...

To establish the rules for electing the EP, the treaties prescribe a complex procedure. Unlike other legislative procedures, the initiative lies with the EP. According to Article 223 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, this next must then be unanimously approved by the States in the Council, before the deputies must give their consent, with a simple majority. The text thus accepted must then be ratified in all member states, according to their respective rules.

“MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, a MORE “EUROPEAN” election MUST BE ESTABLISHED. FOR THIS, a REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL ACT, WHICH OUTLINES THE PARAMETERS OF THE election AND DATES BACK TO THE FIRST ELECTIONS IN 1979, seems INEVITABLE...”

TOWARDS a REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL CODE?

A majority of parliamentarians are aware of this challenge. After many months of negotiation, they proposed a reform of the electoral code in 2022. Naturally, this legislative initiative remains stalled in the Council for now, there is no chance of the new rules being applied to the upcoming election. And upon closer inspection, there is even another reform effort, begun in 2018, that still needs to be completed...

European Electoral Act Reform: Where Are We Now?

Initially, the European Electoral Act was established in 1976, ahead of the first European elections in 1979. It defines the common principles that must guide the States in establishing the respective rules governing elections to the EP in each member country. It is not, therefore, a uniform electoral code throughout the EU.

A significant attempt at reform was initiated by the EP in 2018. After

laborious negotiations, it was validated by the Council (unanimously), and then approved by the EP. However, ahead of the elections of 2019 and 2024, there remain two member states that have not ratified this reform (despite it being approved by their government in the Council). Therefore, the reformed act of 2018 cannot yet come into force for the 2024 elections...

In the meantime, the EP has initiated a new reform of the electoral act. The reform proposal was presented by the EP to the Council of Ministers in 2022. The Council has not yet been able to find a compromise that would allow it to approve this new reform unanimously, before sending the text back to the EP...

As a result, the 2024 elections will therefore take place based on a very broad electoral act, which



► MAKING ELECTIONS MORE UNDERSTANDABLE

The reform proposed by the parliament in 2022 incorporates many elements from the “Conference on the Future of Europe” (2021-2022). These proposals provide a fairly accurate picture of the necessary reform to make European elections more accessible, visible, and understandable. In summary, it is about making these elections more European and at the same time more democratic by improving the closeness of the relationship between parliamentarians and citizens.

For greater pan-European visibility, these elections should take place on the same day. To reduce the dispersion of votes, a minimal electoral threshold seems advisable, while keeping in mind the importance of allowing the European Parliament to reflect the full diversity of Europe.

To combine citizen proximity with a truly European dimension, the EP suggests that each voter should have two votes. One (as is currently the case) to elect national deputies who will sit in the Parliament, and a second to elect twenty-eight deputies from pan-European lists. The proposition to then select, from these deputies, the future European Commissioners, especially the President of the Commission, seems utopian today but undoubtedly moves in the right direction. It would strengthen the link between the election results and the policy to be implemented thereafter by the new Commission. Well-regulated, the composition of this “European list” will take into account past concerns that an automatic link between “lead candidates” in the European elections and their subsequent designation as President of the Commission would systematically benefit delegations from “large countries,” particularly Germany.

If “European lists,” transnational in nature, were established according to succinct rules that guarantee equal access for candidates from different countries, they could truly play the unifying role hoped for by Emmanuel Macron, who first spoke of “transnational lists” during his speech at the Sorbonne in 2017.

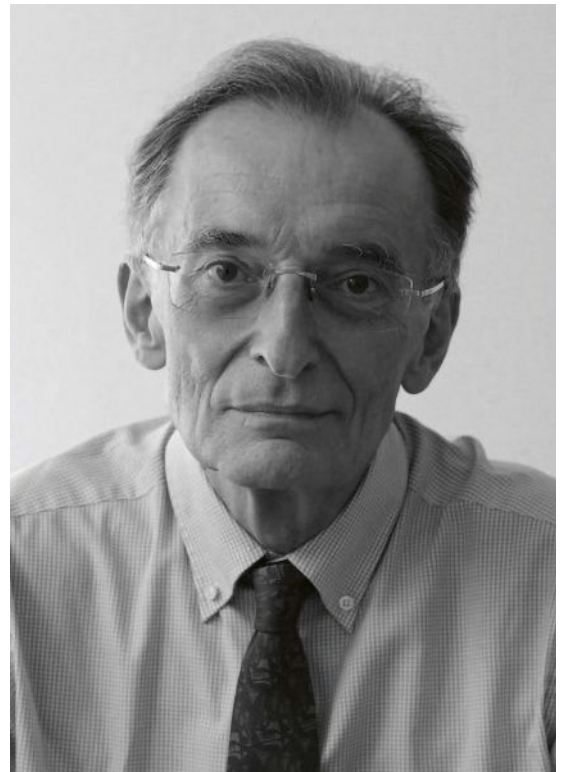
More challenging will be establishing closeness with citizens. Today’s system of

voting by proportional representation, with closed lists proposed by national parties, significantly complicates the establishment of a link between voters and elected officials. Except for a few deputies who “stand out,” the majority of EP members remain unknown to the public. Yet in democratic systems, accountability to voters is the most important and powerful tool citizens have to assert their rights. A system that replaces this direct link between voters and elected officials with parties that define, through mostly citizen-detached negotiations, closed lists, does not allow for such a connection – and may even degrade the legitimacy of the institution if party calculations become too visible. It would be more logical to combine the reform that will introduce pan-European lists with a significant change that would establish a majority voting system for the “national” vote, based on several constituencies, at least in the larger member countries (Germany, Italy, France, but also Poland, Spain). And as such a reform closely resembles a “Franco-German compromise” between “European lists” and a “lead candidate” system, why not also discuss the establishment of some cross-border constituencies, along the Franco-German border, between France and Spain, between Italy and Austria, or between Germany and Poland? The truly European character of the election would undoubtedly be enhanced by such a bold move. ■



IMMIGRATION: DON'T FALL INTO THE TRAP

By Jean-Louis De Brouwer,
President of the Egmont Institute



A divisive subject if ever there was one, immigration, is generally considered to be one of the defining issues of any election. This postulate seems to apply universally, whatever the geographical context or polling level concerned.

At first glance, this is no different when it comes to the European elections on June 9. Both the findings of various surveys on voting intentions and the results of recent elections in certain member states support the hypothesis of a shift in the center of gravity of the European political system. And the perception of an unsatisfactory response to the challenges posed by immigration is no small part of the reason.

The absolute necessity of preventing such a development was, moreover, one of the main arguments of the political and institutional players determined to reach an agreement, whatever the cost, on the Asylum and Migration Pact. This has now been achieved, and the European Union, in the decisive moments of a legislature that is undoubtedly historic in many aspects, has at least equipped itself with a political framework capable of reassuring public opinion, worried by the apparent inability to manage a phenomenon that is increasingly perceived as uncontrollable.

Nothing is less certain. We will not go into the many uncertainties surrounding this complex legislative package. Unclear, it leaves many grey areas as to the conformity of its measures with fundamental rights. Its implementation will take a long time (two years) and will require considerable resources, particularly budgetary. It will rely on cooperation between institutions and Member States, which in the past has often been haphazard, and above all it presupposes the restoration of a particularly damaged sense of trust and solidarity between them.

The Commission has understandably welcomed a system that secures external borders by organizing rapid procedures for processing applications for international protection, and by providing for forms of solidarity between Member States⁽¹⁾. Nevertheless, there is a strong feeling that this is a technocratic response to a societal need, and even an excellent communication campaign in the run-up to June 9 will be difficult to remedy.

More worryingly, certain political forces, including those who supported the agreement, already seem to be calling into question the validity of this hard-won accord. Beyond the outright refusal to apply the agreement, they are pointing to its inadequacies and the need to "go further".

But to go where and to do what? Undertaking a new legislative effort at the end of an exhausting journey would be nonsense. The aim, then, could be to consolidate the Pact's effectiveness through political initiatives designed to complement it. In addition to strengthening border controls and combating criminal networks of smugglers, most of these concern relations with third countries. These may take the form of vague "agreements" aimed, under the guise of a multi-sector partnership fueled by massive financial transfers, at securing the cooperation of these countries both in controlling migration in transit on their territory and in implementing a return policy, with more than disappointing results. Other avenues would involve exploring the possibility of outsourcing responsibility for receiving and processing applications for international protection. Added to this would be greater openness to "chosen" migration, more essential to meet the needs of an economy with a skills shortage, or even to cope with the consequences of an inevitable demographic transition.

What if we are debating the wrong issue? An opinion survey conducted in January 2024 in twelve member states (including France) by the European Council on Foreign Relations is revealing in this regard⁽²⁾. On the one hand, it shows that immigration is only secondary to economic uncertainties, past and future pandemics, climate change and the war in Ukraine in people's perception of the crucial issues of the day. On the other hand, it would appear that the "centrality" of the immigration debate is above all an effect of the effective political "marketing" of nationalist and populist parties, who have made it one of their main selling points.

"...THE MAJORITY
OF MIGRANTS
ARE PART
OF LEGAL
SCHEMES...!"

The facts bear out this analysis: the majority of migrants are part of legal schemes (work permits or family reunification), and those detected as staying illegally have not, for the most part, fraudulently crossed the European Union's external borders. What is more, tightening border controls has no direct effect on reducing migratory pressure⁽³⁾. And let us not forget that the European Union takes in only a very limited proportion, on a global scale, of populations fleeing persecution or natural disasters, and that few lessons have so far been learned from the formidable capacity to welcome, overnight, Ukrainians fleeing Russian aggression.

This could be a trap that political parties advocating better migration management should avoid falling into, otherwise, as the saying goes, voters will prefer the original to the copy. At a time when democracy is at its peak when elections are being held, every player must focus on the real priorities - often influenced by the national context - of those called upon to vote (and hope that

many of them turn out to vote). Being clear and educational about immigration is part of this approach, without making it the focus of the debate. But this is a difficult exercise, given the "toxic" nature of the subject and the raw sensitivities involved. And we dare not even mention the impact that the slightest incident linked to migration could have in certain member states just a few minutes before the vote. ■

(1) Achieving a balance on migration: a fair and firm approach, Communication from the European Commission, 12.3.2024.

(2) A New Political Map: Getting the European Parliament Election Right, Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, European Council on Foreign Relations, March 2024.

(3) EU Migration and Borders. Key Facts and Figures, European Parliamentary Research Service, briefing March 2024.

THE EU AT A CROSSROAD

By Professor Andreas Theophanous,
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Undoubtedly, the EU currently faces multiple challenges. It will not be an exaggeration to say that in addition to euroscepticism we are also faced with populism which at times may lead to dangerous outcomes. Yet, despite much criticism on multiple themes, the EU remains one of the most desirable, if not the most desirable place, in the world to live in. Consequently, the critical approach that is expressed in this article has as a major objective to modestly contribute to actions which can make the EU an even better place, as well as an effective international political entity which inspires credibility and respect.

I divide the history of the EU into three periods. The first one from the Treaty of Rome in 1958 until the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany. The second one from the Treaty of Maastricht until the introduction of the Euro in 1999. And the third one from the beginning of the new 21st century until today.

The objectives set in the first period were more or less fulfilled. There was healing of past wounds, economic reconstruction was achieved, Western Europe had an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity and

the future seemed promising. The European Community by 1991 had become the European Union, Germany was reunified without war, the Soviet Union disintegrated and communism collapsed.

With the Treaty of Maastricht, a major goal was to achieve a common currency, the Euro. This objective too was implemented. It should be noted though, that there was a strong reaction by Britain, which opted to stay out of the Eurozone although it fulfilled the criteria. Some years later Greece became a member of the Eurozone, although it is still questionable whether it fulfilled the criteria. This was a time when there were voices from the Left throughout Europe that European integration was associated with social disintegration. It was during this time that there was also criticism for the architecture of the Eurozone. In the 1990's we also witnessed the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia. The EU could have played a more constructive role in this major crisis.

The record of the EU since the beginning of the 21st century had been more problematic. The economic crisis was not handled well. The policies of the Troika were unnecessarily harsh, creating more problems than those

resolved. In the cases of Greece and Cyprus, this harshness was unparalleled. And it would not be an exaggeration to say that there was no solidarity nor social sensitivity. That there was a need for economic restructuring and rationalisation there is no doubt about it. However, this could have been done with a lower social cost. After all, in both cases there were both endogenous and exogenous factors for the crises.

The Covid-19 crisis was an additional turning point for the EU. It was understood that the consequences would have been devastating if the EU insisted on the terms and conditions of the Stability Pact. In April 2020 at the Eurogroup meeting, decisions were made for monetary and fiscal easing. At the same time there was a statement admitting that the way the Eurocrisis was managed could have been better.

Brexit was another setback for the EU. During the economic crisis, several actors and analysts expressed the view that eventually Greece would withdraw from the Eurozone. This did not happen, despite the very harsh policies of the Troika and the heavy socio-economic cost imposed on the Greek people. Instead, we had Brexit. This was not a good outcome – neither for Britain nor the EU. It is essential to understand the causes of this development. Inevitably, these include British perceptions about the Union as well as the way the Eurocrisis was dealt with. Over time, Britain was an uneasy partner; at the same time though a useful one. It is not a positive development that today in Germany part of the population considers the withdrawal of the country from the Union as an option.

One can also raise the issue of the immigration crisis. Most people feel that this issue is not addressed in the best possible way. And inevitably this leads to socio-economic and political repercussions.

The war in Ukraine was a great setback for the EU. The EU today has less security and less prosperity. I have no doubt that the Russian invasion and the war could have been prevented. With strong European leadership, an agreement could have been reached, which would have been much better than the current situation. Such an agreement could have taken into consideration the security concerns of all parties involved.

At the same time, I cannot avoid the temptation to mention that the EU fails to adopt the same standards in relation to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the continuing Turkish

occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. We should recall that the Republic of Cyprus is a member state of the Union since May 1, 2004.

Given the relevant developments, what are the issues that the EU is facing?

- 1) It is essential to think about a new socio-economic model which provides more opportunities to people and also reduces inequality between and within countries.
- 2) There is no doubt that an environmental policy is imperative. Nevertheless, given that the transition to the green economy entails a huge transaction cost it is essential to revisit how this will be promoted in the best possible way. Indeed, the hastiness to replace hydrocarbons without socially balancing acts may prove counterproductive.
- 3) The EU should reassess the dilemma between deepening and widening. The answer to this dilemma depends on the priorities of the Union.
- 4) It is of utmost importance to think about a new European security architecture. Given that the geographical position of Russia cannot change, eventually this issue must be addressed accordingly.
- 5) Immigration is a complex issue and requires a comprehensive policy approach. At the same time, it is important for the EU to consider ways which would lead to the reduction of migrant flows. Indeed, peace, reconstruction and development in Africa and the Middle East would be major strategic steps in the right direction. The challenge for the EU is to find ways to contribute toward this desired outcome.
- 6) The EU has been facing issues relating to democratic deficits. It is essential that these are addressed effectively.
- 7) Last but not least, it is important that the EU pays particular attention to issues of public accountability and legitimization.

Indeed, the EU is at a crossroad. It must act in ways which reestablish its vitality and credibility internally and externally. ■

THE EU GREEN AGENDA IS INCREASINGLY SHAPED BY ECONOMIC SECURITY CONCERNS



By Ditte Brasso Sørensen
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When the European Green Deal (EGD) was presented in December 2019, the Fridays for Future movement was at its height and the European Parliament elections in May were seen by many as having delivered a strong green mandate. With the EGD communication the Commission saw an opportunity to link economic growth and the green transition.

Today, the EU faces serious competition not just from China, but also from the USA, following the Biden-Administration's unprecedented Inflation Reduction Act. At home, the journey from green visions to sector specific regulation has caused the EU's green agenda,

and particularly its environmental policy initiatives, to become increasingly contested.

Indeed, years of crisis management is shaping a consensus among European policymakers that the EU is operating in an insecure geopolitical environment. This is beginning to leave its mark on the EU's green agenda in the form of a growing focus on economic security, which is likely to shape the EU's green growth strategy under the next Commission.

Assuming that we will see a continuation of the von der Leyen Commission, recent communications on everything from the Net Zero

Industrial Act, Biotechnologies, and the 2040 climate target gives us the best indication yet of how the in-coming Commission's approach to the green transition is changing and what we could expect in years to come.

A TALE OF THREE OBJECTIVES

In recommending a climate target of 90% by 2040, the Commission is laying the groundworks for the next iteration of the EGD and asserting that the imperative of the green transition will henceforth be flanked by two equally important and complimentary objectives: ensuring a just transition and achieving sustainable competitiveness.

Versions of both objectives have been present since the EGD's inception. After all, the EGD aimed to both make a business case for the green transition and secure a "just and inclusive" transition.

Indeed, 2023 has reminded policy makers just how disruptive political transformation can be when it is perceived to be unjust. Be it Germany's embattled coalition government's pledge to phase-out heat pumps, or comprehensive farmers' protests; the fear of social unrest has refocused policy makers attention on the importance of social and sector dialogue. A renewed focus on economic redistribution in favour of economically vulnerable groups, regions, and hard-to-abate-sectors like agriculture, is likely to be an area of focus in years to come.

An equally important, yet still emerging reformulation of the Commission's original green pledge, is the changing character of the EU's sustainable competitiveness and how it is increasingly being influenced by economic security concerns. The EGD has always been a growth strategy. Yet, a perception among EU policymakers that the EU's geopolitical environment has been changed by growing geopolitical competition and insecurity, is

increasingly reflected in the conceptualisation of the EU's sustainable competitiveness.

ECONOMIC SECURITY LOOMS LARGE

The race to decarbonise and make an economic success of it has become increasingly competitive in recent years. The Biden-Administration's Inflation Reduction Act has prompted a steep change in green industrial policy, with the EU struggling to compete with an unprecedented regime of tax credits to strategic green technologies. Likewise, China's long-term and large-scale support for critical green technologies has underlined the need for the EU to intervene actively to remain a competitive producer of green technologies.

Today, policymakers are responding to competitive pressures from a global clean tech race, by deploying an increasingly vertical industrial policy, characterised by an interventionist logic, which has been described extensively by scholars like Reinhilde Veugelers and Simone Tagliapietra. The EU's Net-Zero Industry Act and the recent communication on Biotechnology both seek to simplify the regulatory environment and spur investment in the manufacturing capacity for strategically important green technologies, emblematic of this policy shift.

Yet, the scale of fiscal interventions deployed by the EU's competitors is of a magnitude and speed, that the EU will struggle to match. Unlike the US, at this stage, the EU has no tax cuts to offer. The EGD from 2019 recognizes the need for considerable investments to meet the EU's 2030 target but focuses primarily on light-touch initiatives to nudge and de-risk private investment towards EGD objectives.

Such horizontal measures focused on optimising framework conditions still feature prominently in the 2040 communication. ►

- Yet, moving forward, the EU is likely to build on instruments like the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP), that streamline access to and mobilize existing EU-level funding and focuses resources on strategically important sectors and technologies.

However, the EU's recent shift from a horizontal industrial policy focused on optimising framework conditions, to a gradually more interventionist, vertical industrial policy is not just a response to competitive pressures; it is also a response to policymakers' reassessment of the geopolitical environment the EU is operating in.

The COVID-19 pandemic started a conversation about supply chain resilience and strategic dependencies, which has since been accelerated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While the EGD recognizes the importance of sourcing strategic materials for green industries, the 2040 communication establishes a renewed focus on diversifying "sources of supply [...] resilient to supply chains disruptions, price volatility and other shocks." The communication's references to strategic autonomy, reducing dependencies, and de-risking supplies speaks to how concerns about economic security are beginning to shape concerns about the EU's competitive sustainability.

On this point, it is necessary to read the 2040 communication in the context of the Commission's economic security strategy from June 2023.

The economic security strategy identifies several economic risks such as risks to the resilience of supply chains, including energy security, risks to physical infrastructure and cyber-security of critical infrastructure, risks related to technology and technology leakage, and risks of weaponization of economic dependencies, or economic coercion.

To mitigate these risks the strategy proposes three actions including promoting competitiveness and growth, protecting through targeted instruments, and partnering with like-minded countries. For the purposes

of this argument, the broad goal of promoting competitiveness and growth, including of the technological and industrial base, is key.

The strategy goes beyond protective measures, usually associated with security concerns, such as inbound investment and export screening, or instruments to counter economic coercion. Instead, to quote from a recent article by Tobias Gehrke of the European Council of Foreign Relations, maintaining the "ability to innovate, produce, and commercialize critical technologies" – long-term sustainable competitiveness – itself becomes an economic security concern.

The Commission underscores this in its 2040 target as it explains that "by remaining a global leader and trusted partner in climate action, Europe will simultaneously strengthen its strategic autonomy and diversify sustainable global value chains to be the master of its fate in a volatile world."

We are already familiar with this line of reasoning when it comes to energy security. What is different is the application of economic security to a growing range of sectors. This is reflected in the Commission's list of ten critical 'technology areas' which include, among others, green and green-enabling technology areas like advanced semi-conductors, biotechnology, energy technologies (including Net-Zero technologies), and advanced materials, manufacturing, and recycling technologies.

This growing focus on a broadly defined vision for economic security is likely to provide a powerful justification for doubling down on sustainable competitiveness as key to achieving net-zero. Indeed, the push for a more vertical industrial policy and economic security are likely to be mutually reinforcing concerns that we expect to shape the form that sustainable competitiveness will take.

The EGD was never just about rapidly decarbonizing Europe, it was also always a green growth strategy. But comparing the EGD to the recent 2040 communication, with its redoubled emphasis on sustainable

“THE EGD WAS NEVER JUST ABOUT RAPIDLY DECARBONIZING EUROPE, IT WAS ALSO ALWAYS A GREEN GROWTH STRATEGY.”

competitiveness, we get a sense of the direction that the EU’s green policy may take in years to come.

This is a green transition that is increasingly shaped by a vertical industrial policy and that must be understood in the context of a global clean tech race. This clean tech race, shaped by exogenous shocks of COVID-19 and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, is likely to be increasingly responsive to a logic of economic security, where it is not just a question of making a good business case for net-zero, but where sustainable competitiveness is itself a security concern. ■

IN SEARCH OF CLIMATE-INCLINED SUCCESSORS IN THE EU LEADERSHIP



By Dr George Dikaios,
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During an election period, many things are said. For example, Ursula von der Leyen, incumbent President of the European Commission, and candidate for a second term, in mid-February 2024, claimed -according to Politico (21/2/2024)- that her main goal for the second term is to make the European Union more "competitive", weakening her climate profile. What does this mean, though, for the EU's green policy? Is it going to alter the current Commission's direction that is characterized by the European Green Deal (EGD)?

The EU has established itself as a global leader in combating climate change by, first and foremost, putting forward and implementing bold climate actions, especially in contrast to

other countries or regions around the world. During the current term (2019-2024), the European Commission pushed the climate agenda significantly forward. In December 2019, the EGD was presented as the EU's new growth strategy, aiming to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The EGD offers a comprehensive plan to mainstream green strategies into most European policies. To ensure that the EGD would bear fruit, the European Climate Law was adopted in June 2021, rendering the political declaration of climate neutrality by 2050 a legally binding target. Moreover, the Law set a target for decreasing emissions by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990. The Fit for 55 package was launched to implement the above target by reviewing upwards already existing climate and

energy legislation and measures concerning a broad array of different sectors and introducing new ones.

The above efforts met and had to compete with the severe imbalance that the Covid-19 pandemic created, since early 2020, in everyday life. This unprecedented-for-the-recent-years crisis coincided with the EGD and could have derailed it. However, the EU addressed it by introducing a green recovery scheme and earmarking large amounts of money. It introduced both in its Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU -its ad hoc package for the pandemic recovery- robust climate spending targets of 30% and 37% respectively. Thus, it actively demonstrated its adherence to its climate ambition. Is this enough for the EU to be a climate leader and pioneer in mitigating its greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)?

According to the United Nations Environmental Program, global emissions should decrease by 7.6% annually from 2020 to 2030 to achieve the 1.5°C target. For the EU, this translates into a 65% reduction by 2030 compared to 1990. Thus, the bar is not set high enough to begin with. Furthermore, existing measures of the EU fall short of the -55% target, as the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC) highlights. Indeed, observing the latest available data from the European Environment Agency, in 2021, the EU had decreased its emissions by 30.4% compared to 1990. This means that emissions need to be reduced by around 20% in less 9 years, while the already-observed reduction of ~30% was achieved in 31 years. This reveals the challenge: the EU must enhance its efforts to achieve its -55% goal and intensify them even more to reach 90-95% reductions by 2040 to achieve the 1.5°C target, as ESABCC again underlines.

At the same time, besides its internal goals, which, despite the shortcomings, are among the most ambitious globally, the EU has to tackle another challenge: it has to preserve intense climate diplomacy to persuade other actors to commit to and implement equally ambitious climate policies. The EU-27 is the 4th emitter globally, accounting for around 7% of global emissions, while the top 3 emitters are single states. Specifically, China, the US, and India account for around 30%, 11%, and 7% of global

emissions, respectively, while other states like Russia, Japan, and Brazil come lower in the top 10 list, with around 5%, 2.4% and 2.2% each. Thus, with the EU's emissions presenting a downward trend, it is in its interest that other actors commit to substantial emissions reductions too. Otherwise, the rest of the world will continue emitting and performing business as usual, while the EU tries to use less and less energy; thus, challenges for the EU's competitiveness will arise. Now, the geopolitical and geoeconomic weight of the EU remains at the top of the world, but with allegedly a declining trend. It may take decades for the EU to become obsolete. Still, one should ask: Do greener policies and targets align with a strong international presence and robust internal affluence and prosperity?

This complex equation becomes even more complicated considering the war in Ukraine since early 2022 and the war in Gaza since mid-2023. In the case of greener goals, externalities create needs that fight against climate targets. An example of this situation is the subsidies on fossil fuels that the European Commission has raised during the last few years as energy security becomes thinner. Moreover, externalities also impact internal fronts in a world where almost everything is interconnected. For instance, the green reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, which started a few months before the European elections 2024, has resulted in excessive opposition, leading policymakers to retract.

Currently, the EU has achieved to a certain extent the decoupling of its economic growth and competitiveness from intense resource consumption and high GHG emissions. The EGD is all about perfecting this decoupling. The new European leadership (2024-2029) will be burdened with the task of implementing it even more strictly. This situation will become even more byzantine due to the foreseeable rise of populists, as well as members of the European Parliament who do not have climate change as a priority. Within this framework, the new President of the European Commission will have to make brave choices toward the well-embedded belief that the EU is and must continue to be a climate leader. Otherwise, decades of effort will remain a dead letter. ■

COMPETITIVENESS IS A KEY ISSUE FOR EUROPE

by Gergely Fejérdy (PhD),
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Each election brings new opportunities. The 2024 European Parliament elections are no exception. In this context, it is advisable to establish a hierarchy among the many challenges the European Union currently faces and to focus, at the community level, on areas that could prove to be decisive. The responsibility of representatives elected to the European Parliament will be to provide concrete and appropriate responses to issues in a way that serves the common interests of Union citizens in a real and tangible manner. This will also help to reduce disillusionment with European integration, as in recent legislatures, Members of the European Parliament have often placed greater emphasis on ideological and societal issues than on common competency problems such as competitiveness. Yet, progress in this area is necessary if the European Union wishes to meet the challenges it faces.

2024 could signify changes for the Old Continent, not only because of the European Parliament elections but also due to several

other global political events that could influence the new cycle that begins after the elections. Above all, the November U.S. presidential election could be unusually important for the future of Europe. The identity of the 47th President of the United States and their approach to world conflicts could pose a major challenge for the EU in terms of defense and security policy, but the consequences will extend well beyond these areas. For Europe, Washington's policy on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, as well as on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and rivalry with China, are of vital importance. The European Union's dependence on the United States is partly a historical legacy, but it is also a conscious choice. The world's leading power, with a similar civilizational past, and the Old Continent are linked by a thousand threads weaving a system of alliances, but this does not mean that their interests are necessarily always aligned.

The past twenty years have shown that the European Union is increasingly dependent,

“In a HIGHLY Tense INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT, IN THE SHADOW OF a WAR IN ITS NEIGHBORHOOD, EUROPE needs DECISIVE MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE UNITY OF THE UNION AND ENSURE GREATER AUTONOMY.”

that its medium and long-term competitiveness is deteriorating, especially for the United States and China, while its defense capabilities are not even sufficient to defend itself. Long after the end of the Cold War, it seemed that the new era would offer an opportunity for peaceful development. Twenty years ago, in 2004, the accession of most countries from the former Eastern Bloc to the EU, and their admission to NATO twenty-five years ago, underscored the triumph of the Euro-Atlantic alliance and dispelled any caution, including towards Russia. It was precisely at this time that Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent, came to power in 1999 and has since continued to exercise power in various forms, denouncing the status quo and weaving imperial dreams. Meanwhile, the European Union has been forced to face crises that have followed one another at an unusual frequency, further weakening its position on the world stage: in 2008, the economic crisis; the rescue of the single currency, the euro, on January 31, 2020; Brexit, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020; and finally, the Russo-Ukrainian

war starting in February 2022. To top it all off, climate change is, year after year, a major problem, with repeated droughts and floods. A strong and competitive economy is one of the essential tools for meeting these challenges, as it is the only way to generate the financial resources without which it will be impossible to respond.

The 2024 Commission report, published in February, paints a mixed picture of the EU's competitiveness: while it is the world's leading exporter, it trails far behind the United States and China in terms of R&D and innovation, especially in cutting-edge technologies. It is also very disadvantaged in terms of capital market investments. It is enough to recall that 30 years ago, the European Union filed seven times more patents than China. Today, China's patent filing rate is fourteen times higher than Europe's! It can also be noted that twenty companies valued at over \$100 billion have been created in the world over the last twenty-five years, but among them, nine are American, eight are Chinese, and none are linked ►

► to a member state of the European Union. This phenomenon is not new, and numerous reports and attempts have been made over the past decades to improve the situation in the EU.

For the cycle starting in 2019, two main directions were identified to improve Europe's standing: the digital transition and the green transition. The latter is extremely costly and requires considerable effort, even in the absence of the specific circumstances the EU faces. A much more balanced approach should be adopted in this area, as forcing member state populations into mandatory, often ill-considered, and ideologically driven reforms would be a Pyrrhic victory rather than a fundamental and lasting change of mindset. It is also important that radical measures be taken in this area, not only in Europe but also in the rest of the world. The EU should use all means at its disposal to try to facilitate this evolution on a global scale. The green transition is also related to the energy issue, which has been particularly compromised by the EU's choice of sanctions against Russia, putting Europe at a serious competitive disadvantage, while, for example, very polluting coal-fired power plants had to be returned into service.

In the new cycle beginning in 2024, it will be important to seek a better balance between reducing energy consumption and achieving greater autonomy, considering the realities of each member state. A number of additional measures would be necessary to improve competitiveness. The digital transition should remain a priority, but the emphasis should be on industrialization, concluding trade agreements in Europe's interest, reducing excessive administrative burdens, developing infrastructure networks, attracting skilled labor, strengthening the educational system, etc. This last point is particularly important, as it represents a long-term investment that pays significant dividends if properly valued.

In a highly tense international context, in the shadow of a war in its neighborhood, Europe needs decisive measures to strengthen the unity of the Union and ensure greater autonomy. Instead of ideological battles, it is

important to focus on competitiveness, which is a key factor, as successes in this area can impact all the issues that currently concern us, whether it be defense policy, environmental protection, promoting economic cohesion, etc. Since it is an old truth, as emphasized by the outgoing European Parliament Member 25 years ago, Otto von Habsburg: "Only an economically strong nation, only an economically strong continent has a chance to survive, those who sacrifice the comfort of the moment for the great national, European, defense necessities." "The European economy is necessary if we want to live in a world where economies the size of the United States are developing. Europe can only survive through the united action of all its sons and daughters, by the rational use of all its resources. Only then can we achieve the economic and financial independence of Europe, a sine qua non-condition for our continent to truly regain its status as a world power."

Let us dare to set this goal for ourselves today as well. ■



YOUTH AWAITS ENVIRONMENTAL PROPOSALS: WHAT RESPONSES FROM EUROPEAN PARTIES ON THE EVE OF ELECTIONS?

By Stefano Feltri,
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During the hottest summer in recent human history, in July 2023, a young Italian woman in her twenties, Giorgia, got to the microphone to ask a question to the Italian minister for the Environment, Gilberto Pichetto Fratin at the end of a public event. "I am worried for my future, my home region, Sicily, is plagued by wildfire, and I am suffering from eco-anxiety," Giorgia's voice cracked, and she started crying.

The video went viral because when minister Pichetto Fratin, who has no reputation for being sympathetic with environmental activists, tried to answer, he was so moved that he started crying too.

However, on the eve of the June 2024 European elections, the climate crisis has disappeared from the list of top priorities of European parties.

In her bid for a second mandate as EU Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen has softened her message on climate after her party - the European Popular Party - called for a "regulatory pause" in that field.

Climate has become a major generational cleavage: a 2023 survey asked 10.786 young Europeans what the top priority in the EU

policy action should be. The most popular answer - with 67 percent support - resulted fighting the climate crisis.

However, as the elections approached, EU institutions and national governments proved surprisingly open to conceding everything that farmers and agroindustry lobbyists asked for. The so-called farmers' movement has, at least temporarily, overshadowed the green rhetoric that used to be so present in any Commission document or event.

According to the most recent economic literature, there is no empirical evidence of the widely commented "green backlash": green transition policies do not negatively impact the support for the government implementing those policies. Populist and nativist movements profit more from increased concerns about migration.

But due to the increasingly hostile geopolitical context, priorities in the European debate have shifted from climate to defense and security. This is no good news for young Europeans, for two reasons.

First, as terrible and tragic as they are, wars usually end in a few years, and the passing of

time makes the ceasefire easier because all the parties involved in the fight run short of ammunition, resources, and troops.

On the contrary, the climate crisis does not follow the same path: as times go by, mitigation and adaptation policies become more expensive and less effective.

Rising temperature is a more dangerous enemy than Russian President Vladimir Putin, especially for younger generations.

Secondly, defense-oriented industrial policy has a relevant side effect for young people: older generations can stop any criticism by saying that national governments and the EU institutions must invest today to build a safer future for tomorrow, in the interest of today and future children.

Since military research and development, as defense procurement, takes time, policymakers' message is that they are allocating public resources to security to prevent future wars, rather than to impact current conflicts in Ukraine and in the Middle East.

However, the shift from climate to defense in the public discourse has moved the policymakers' horizon back to normal: the future is an excuse to have a higher deficit and rising public debt today, with higher public investments in the defense sector and, if needed, temporary support to mitigate the social impact of the geopolitical crisis.

On the other hand, the climate crisis requires a different approach, with immediate higher taxes on high-emission industries and goods, international cooperation, a redistribution of resources, and technology transfers from the EU (and the US) to the Global South. Also, brown industries and fossil fuels are supposed to become more expensive.

According to another survey at the European level, administered by the European Investment Bank in 2023, 66 percent of all Europeans are in favor of stricter government measures to impose a change in personal behavior. The share is higher - 72% - for people under thirty.

However, the EIB is one of the many top EU institutions that is shifting its priorities from climate to security: the EIB's new president Nadia Calvino is under pressure by national governments to soften the limitations that have so far prevented the EIB from supporting military or dual-use technology projects.

At the peak of the pandemic crises, in 2020,

the EU and the national governments approved the so-called "Next Generation EU" to build a more resilient European Union in the interest of a generation that was seriously damaged by the social disruptions that came as a side effect of anti-contagion policies.

Grants and loans total 712 billion euros, with Italy as the main beneficiary country, since it was the most negatively impacted by the pandemic, according to the European Commission's criteria.

Less than four years later, the first assessment is far from enthusiastic: Italy is struggling to respect milestones and targets, and a significant chunk of the funds has been allocated to very traditional infrastructure projects with no specific impact on future generations, the European Public Prosecutor's Office uncovered frauds and scams related to "NextGenEU" projects and funds for hundreds of million euros, in different countries.

Therefore, there is no surprise that skepticism is on a rise on the idea of replicating the NextGen approach to fund with common European debt other initiatives at the EU level.

The next generation named after the EU plan bears no responsibility in the disappointing outcome of the 712-billion-euro investment, but young people will be the most likely casualties of the disaffection for long-term planning that will be a lasting legacy of the NextGeneration Plan.

For all these reasons, young Europeans in their twenties have no reason to be optimistic on the policy outcome of the June 2024 European elections.

However, all major events that shaped the 2019-2024 term were totally unpredictable: a global pandemic outbreak, a major energy crisis, a war on the Eastern European border of the EU.

Therefore, there is no reason to assume that we can predict what will come in the next five years, and policy priorities that today look like set in stone might change once again. ■

A NEW ERA? EU'S CLAIMS TO EXERT INFLUENCE IN GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION ON AI

By Justinas Lingevičius,
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International Relations, and Political Science



After official adoption of the Regulation AI Act in March 2024, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that 'The EU's AI Act is the first-ever comprehensive legal framework on Artificial Intelligence worldwide. So, this is a historic moment. The AI Act transposes European values to a new era⁽¹⁾. Thus, the emerging EU AI policy has been presented as not just another policy initiative of the Digital Decade, the EU framework towards digitalisation by 2030, but also as a defining point of European techno-politics, a new era. And the EU desires to be influential in it.

A potential of such influence has not come from vacuum. The case of AI has been built on a success story of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), seen as a prove that 'the EU is capable of setting rules impacting the digital economy globally⁽²⁾. This has even been titled as the 'Brussels effect' - to export EU adopted regulation to global markets⁽³⁾. No surprise that the leaders of the EU institutions have used the opportunity to claim the moment of history here presuming that being a pioneer of the AI legislation will push others to follow the lead. However, differently from GDPR which came as a novelty in 2016, AI has already been a

matter of competition where different state, international and corporate actors have been proposing their approaches and similarly aiming to influence future AI standards in preferred ways, meaning that the contest is far more complex than before.

Therefore, the EU finds itself in the geopolitics of AI and its governance. Its own response and proposal to that - the already mentioned AI Act based on the 'rights-driven approach' arguing for agreed rules, liberal democratic values, and multilateral cooperation⁽⁴⁾. By establishing different categories of risks, the AI Act suggests that we need to investigate use cases of AI: prohibit those that are unacceptable in terms of the European values and strictly monitor and regulate those that might cause harm to fundamental rights. In this way, safety, transparency, and

(1) European Commission. 2023. 'Statement by President von der Leyen on the political agreement on the EU AI Act'. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_6474.

(2) Cervi, G.V. Why and How Does the EU Rule Global Digital Policy: An Empirical Analysis of EU Regulatory Influence in Data Protection Laws. *DISO* 1, 18 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44206-022-00005-3>

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“IN THIS way, safety, TRANSPARENCY, and TRUSTWORTHINESS SHOULD BE GUARANTEED as REASSURANCE THAT AI WILL NOT BE EMPLOYED FOR MALICIOUS actions AGAINST EUROPEAN CITIZENS.”

trustworthiness should be guaranteed as reassurance that AI will not be employed for malicious actions against European citizens.

The outgoing European Commission will certainly place the ‘tick’ to the adoption of the AI Act as one of the major achievements in the field of digital policies during this term. However, as AI developments could be considered as ‘moving target’ due to constant improvements and new applications, the implementation phase will not be less testing. How these agreed and adopted rules will work, how introduced concepts such as human-centrism and trustworthy AI will be turned into practices, not the least - what mistakes and successes will emerge as lessons and breakthroughs. Therefore, lessons learned might become even more important arguments for influence than the adoption of the rules.

Also, temporality plays a big part in these considerations as well. When the European Commission released its initial Proposal for Regulation the AI Act back in April 2021, such a widespread accessibility of ChatGPT was not on a horizon. Though the architects of the AI Act claim that it is the future-proof piece of legislation and leaves enough room for maneuvering in the future, there is little doubt

that such claims will not be challenged by new forms and breakthroughs in AI. Therefore, resilience and adaptability might become another argument to claim EU rules and overall approach as common ground potentially attractive to others as well.

Though the EU has already received a lot of interest and aims to build digital partnerships with like-minded, the question on others following this example is not without a reason. Differing positions are already noticeable as well: for instance, despite introducing the EU-US Trade and Technology Council in 2021 to align views, visions on AI governance between the EU and the US stress different priorities. As mentioned, for the EU it is about establishing regulation on uses of AI which are required to meet European values and respect fundamental rights. Where the US remains market-flexible and focused on voluntary conducts and agreements with businesses rather than setting binding regulation. Also, the other significant difference between the two – strategic documents suggest that the US highly prioritizes the security and military matters of AI and builds its thinking on that as well. While the EU’s AI Act excludes the military element from the policy scope and places it within the field of single market. ►

► Looking ahead, this exclusion could become one of the important limitations of the EU efforts to set the tone internationally. Of course, in the case of the EU this always bounces back to the point of shared competences where military and security matters are put as exclusively disposed by member states. Therefore, the AI Act is presented as representing the given mandate to the European Commission and the legal basis of single market. However, recent practices – the European Defence Fund, the EU Defence Technological and Industrial Base and the Global Tech Panel – suggest that the ambition of geopolitical Commission also comes with more proactiveness in approaching technologies through the lens of defence and security matters as well.

Secondly, the changing international environment and the Russia's invasion to Ukraine also challenges to reconsider the role of emerging technologies including AI for security. Ukrainian experience and already evolving technological solutions in the battlefield suggest the involvement of private companies testing their applications, AI enabling role and weaponisation of dual use technologies such as drones. Therefore, The EU will inevitably be contested to come up with a more comprehensive approach towards military AI. The EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence and the European Defence Industrial Strategy released by the European Commission suggests that the EU reacts to security challenges and discusses EU-level defence integration where technologies are also involved.

Therefore, after adopting the AI Act, the EU should consider moving from a fragmented debate towards a more articulated position on AI in the military realm. This would even

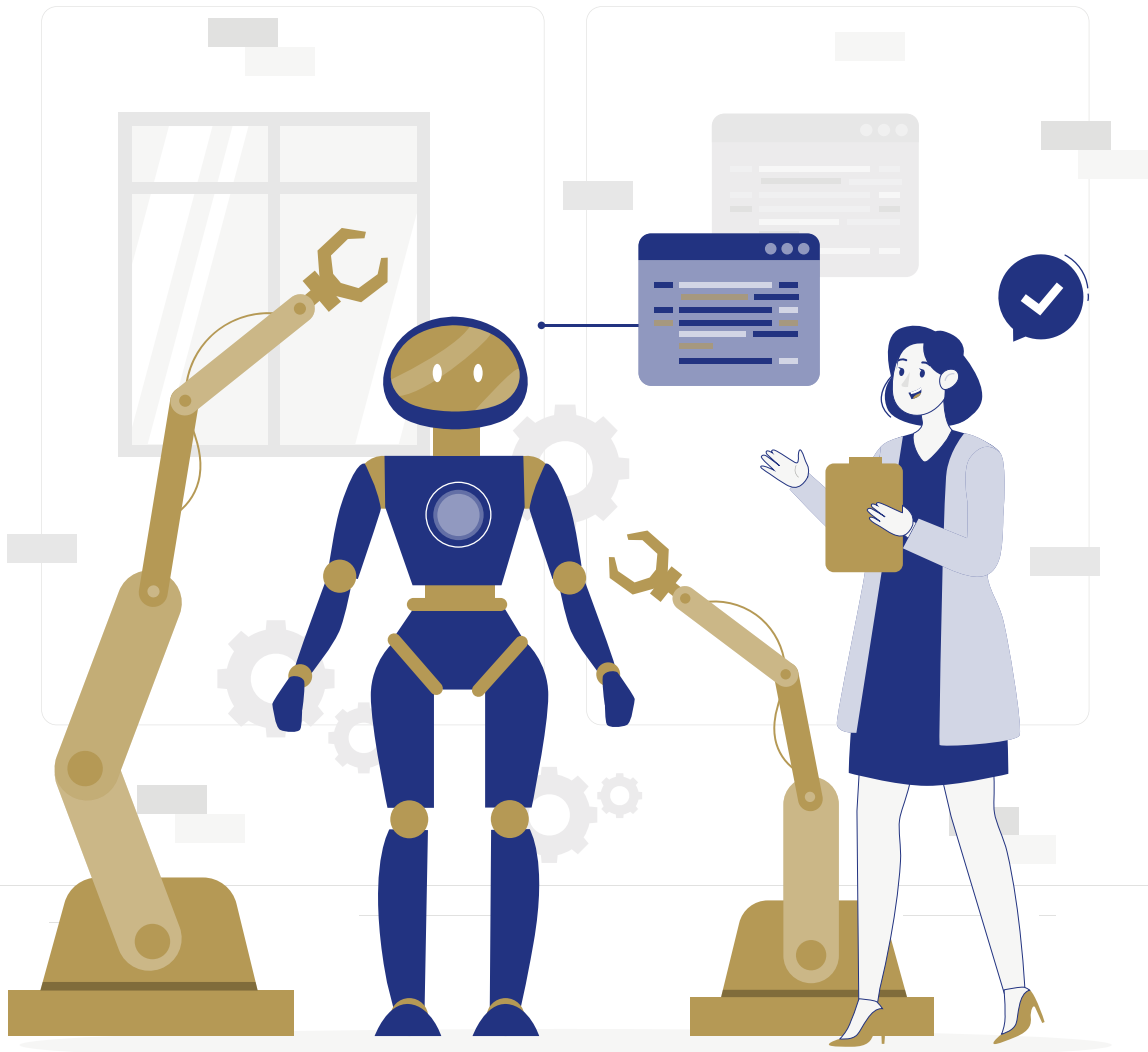
strengthen its voice internationally where advocating for respect to human rights, transparency or multilateral engagement does not seem to be opposing to more strategic views.

The current security situation in Europe brings another point of temporality where the changing international and regional environment suggests increasing relevance of emerging technologies including AI. As mentioned, the EU has been already discussing the extent of defence integration and moving beyond existing taboos that military and security is not a part of a 'mandate' of the peace project. Therefore, the decision to exclude the military realm from the AI policy scope could be

reconsidered to come up with a more comprehensive outline of issues at stake. Again, this is not completely new for the EU knowing that the European Defence Agency and Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space have been initiating and supporting various R&D programs and instruments related to military AI. Given the dual use nature of AI, such a conversation seems to be inevitable and would bring even more openness and leverage internationally where military AI is already brought by

the US, China and even Big Tech companies. Finally, it would demonstrate readiness for this new era which unfortunately turns out to be less secure and more competitive. ■

“...IT IS ABOUT ESTABLISHING REGULATION ON USES OF AI WHICH ARE REQUIRED TO MEET EUROPEAN VALUES AND RESPECT FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS...”



THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UK AND THE EU



By Richard Morris,
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Brexit is history

The starting point for this discussion is the recognition that the UK is a Euro-pean state outside the EU. Although c. 60% of the UK population now be-lieves Brexit to have been a mistake, there can be no return to the status quo before the Brexit referendum in 2016.

Intervening mega-events, particularly COVID, the Ukraine war, migration, climate change and digital developments, let alone Brexit itself, have changed both the EU and the UK irrevocably, and both are dynamic entities. The question for the UK is its future relationship with its most important neighbours, recognising that the EU may well be a different sort of union by the time the UK rejoins it.

The current political outlook in the UK is poor
Rebuilding the relationship is made more

difficult by the current state of British politics. With an upcoming General Election, none of the three main UK-wide political parties will face facts about UK/EU relations. Any idea of a new pro-EU party is doomed by the UK's First-past-the-post electoral structure. The non-party European Movement UK (EMUK) is consequently of significant importance in representing the views of 60% of the UK population on this critical subject.

So, how does a new UK/EU relationship evolve?

A pre-requisite for the UK joining any form of European union is a sustained period of national renewal, at both public and political levels. It is improbable that the EU would consider UK accession or believe in the UK as a reliable long-term member state without compelling evidence that this has happened.

Furthermore, the EU is naturally focussed on its own internal affairs, including its 2024 Elections and the extraordinarily complex and interlinked issues of enlargement and deeper integration necessitating Treaty change. It would not want to enter new disruptive EU/UK accession talks pending resolution of these matters.

What are the key elements of UK national renewal?

- Recommitment to values which are fundamental for the EU, but which have been repeatedly abused by recent UK governments: democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.
- Good, stable governance and redevelopment of UK soft power overseas.
- Commitment to the underpinning philosophy of the EU: a limited pooling of sovereignty for the common good.
- Recognition of the need for essential regional collaboration on mega-issues such as trade, defence, science, education, climate, health, and digital developments.
- In summary, a new national self-image of the UK's place in the world.

What will induce this renewal process?

As so often in politics, acceptance of a mistake and a change of direction will be driven mainly by adverse events, especially:

- Economic damage: there is a wealth of economic data and expert opinion demonstrating the adverse impacts of Brexit on trade, foreign direct investment, debt levels, public services, and cost-of-living; it is a slow puncture, accelerated by both active and passive divergence between EU and UK regulation.
- War: the Ukraine war has already galvanised UK/EU relations, with coordinated sanctions, arms supplies, Ukraine reconstruction planning and its potential NATO and EU membership.
- US Election: the prospect of a Trump presidency and US withdrawal from its global responsibilities, especially in defence, demand the most urgent pan-European collaboration.

How can EMUK best support this process?

- By focussing on the future not the past.
- By constantly monitoring the adverse impacts of Brexit and using the evidence to promote the upside potential from participating in the governance of our own continent.
- By emphasising how, as a future member of a European union, the UK will have more control of its own future and more global influence.
- By continuing its "step-by-step" campaigns to restore UK/EU collaboration, leading to the inescapable conclusion that the UK should be part of both the Single Market and Customs Union.

- By mobilising young people.
- By promoting a deeper understanding of the EU throughout the UK public.
- By creating a climate in which a new generation of pro-European political leaders will emerge.

Following renewal, what new UK/EU relationship might emerge?

If the UK develops as outlined above, our fellow Europeans are likely to welcome us back into some form of union. The UK's contribution, whether as a marketplace, a source of funds, a nuclear power, or a leading democratic state, would deliver huge benefits to any European union in both internal and geopolitical terms.

Much, however, will depend on the progress of the EU itself over this period.

The current contest between nationalist and liberal democratic forces within the EU will profoundly affect the 2024 European Elections and thus the EU's future structure and directions.

Concurrently, the tension between the EU's contrasting objectives of enlargement and closer integration (as is demanded by citizens and civil society) may provoke Treaty Change, adding to the current uncertainty.

From a UK viewpoint, a looser EU structure (such as the "concentric circles" concept launched by President Macron) might facilitate accession, but might both reduce its influence (compared with full membership) and weaken the global power and effectiveness of the Union.

EPILOGUE

The future shape of the UK/EU relationship will be primarily dependent on developments within the UK. Brexit was made in the UK and must be reversed there. This begs the question as to whether the UK will ever want to return to its historic role, beyond short-term self-interest, as a major player in the shaping of a democratic continent of Europe.

Pro-Europeans won this argument in previous generations. We now need to win it all over again. ■

BUILDING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP: FROM ELECTORAL REFORM TO PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

By Vladislava Gubalova,
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The 2024 European Parliament elections are here. Yet, even though proposals for electoral reform abound, these elections will be no different procedurally than the past ones. The sense of citizens' agency will be just the same and bolstering of the EU's democratic legitimacy will mostly only stay in words. Toppled with the most likely scenario of far-right surge in the new European Parliament (EP), it is urgent to start acting in building European citizenship and work from the bottom up to avert future erosion of the Union's legitimacy and further citizens' disenchantment.

THE ELECTORAL REFORM PROPOSALS

There have been times of heightened discourse on the need for electoral reform at an EU level, providing for numerous suggestions (e.g., around Brexit, Emanuel Marcon's Sorbonne speech) but rarely have led to concrete steps by the decision-makers.

Ahead of the 2024 elections and with the Conference of the Future of Europe conclu-

sions, in May 2022 the EP voted favorably to advance a new proposal for more comprehensive reforms in the European Electoral Act. The proposal included among others: the creation of transnational lists to elect twenty-eight additional MEPs (an EU-wide constituency), common minimum ages for candidates and voters, a common minimum electoral threshold (building up on the 2018 Council decision for larger national constituencies⁽¹⁾) and establishing a quota to ensure gender equality.

Benefits of reforming the current European electoral process have been for long highlighted. These include the potential empowerment of citizens and actual bolstering of the overall democratic legitimacy of the Union, cultivating European identity and community, and elevation of the legitimacy and accountability of the EU institutions. To the very least the introduction of small size transnational list (28 seats out of 720 in 2024) can serve as useful experiment. However, no real advancement has been observed in the last 20 years. The Council did not move forward with the latest proposal.

The issue of constructing transnational

“... IT IS URGENT TO START ACTING IN BUILDING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND WORK FROM THE BOTTOM UP TO AVERT FUTURE EROSION OF THE UNION’S LEGITIMACY AND FURTHER CITIZENS’ DISENCHANTMENT.”

lists is often related to the process of appointing the President of the European Commission. The idea of giving even more say to the citizens in choosing the Commission president through the Spitzenkandidaten⁽²⁾ procedure seems reasonable. Yet, in the current system and observing the 2024 pre-EP election preparations by the European parties—the possibility is all but gone. Nevertheless, appointment of the Commission president through a legally binding interinstitutional agreement between the Council and the EP would be highly beneficial for the transparency and the credibility of the President.

In the context of surging far-right, anti-systemic and Eurosceptical parties ahead of the EP elections, there is the lingering feel of major missed opportunities in bolstering the sense of ownership and engagement by the European citizens, in making advanced towards a more unified European community and in strengthening the legitimacy of the Union, democratically and institutionally.

Certainly, any reforms come with challenges. In the case of transnational lists, for example, these include non-exhaustively: the balance between all MS (small, mid-sized and

large)⁽³⁾, the harmonization of the election procedures, their implementation and financing, logistical difficulties of transnational campaigns, and challenges with voting preparations. Not to the least reforms require unanimity within the Council, the formal assent of the EP and the ratification of all national parliaments—a process that can take years. ►

(1) The Decision related to setting a minimum threshold of entry (2-5%) in large constituencies/large member states (MS). It has not been ratified by all MS and therefore is not at disposal for the upcoming elections.

(2) The term Spitzenkandidaten has been not successful in gathering support to the process itself and should be dropped from use.

(3) Even though the geographical balance proposed by the EP rapporteur in the 2022 Proposal is more effectively respected than in the previous proposal, it remains a concern.

▶ same OLD, same OLD...

There is reassurance in the known. Having the EP elections as virtually twenty-seven separate national elections, with little involvement and engagement from the European parties locally makes it all too comfortable for the member states. So far EP elections, especially in the Central and Eastern European countries, have been focused almost exclusively on domestic issues.

Yet, there is not much appetite to transform the EP elections campaigns as more European-minded, rather the preference lays in nationalizing the EP elections. National parties see an additional platform to present themselves to the local voters as a springboard for next national elections. Such outlook on the 'use' of the EP election for domestic gains, hardly leaves place for the possibility of transnational lists introduction, which would necessitate also European-wide campaign with European issues on the agenda.

Furthermore, many national parties make little effort to explain the transnational dimension of these elections. The absence of connecting their campaigns to their European

party family, questions the transparency of the process and stifles awareness-raising and visibility of the European dimension of the European elections.

Similarly, European parties' leadership, structures or their links to different national parties are practically unknown to the ordinary citizens. Such 'Brussels is too far' separation is a missed opportunity to engage voters in a meaningful and sustainable manner. With the possibility for much more Eurosceptic European Parliament to be elected this year, the mainstream parties seem disengaged and slow, still comfortable even if their positions will erode (seats loss).

WHAT TO DO?

In the current state, where the probability for forthcoming election reform is not encouraging, focusing on building citizens' sense of European identity from below can be one possible step in achieving their empowerment. Consequentially, their heightened awareness and regular involvement in various participatory formats has the potential of building a demand for change from below.

Some important lessons can be learned from the experience of the Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE). Beyond the final conclusions which ambitiously point out at reforms in all European policies and dimensions (often necessitating treaty changes), the process itself is perhaps the most valuable benefit for the citizens. While in countries like Ireland or France participatory and deliberative democratic mechanisms have been demanded, facilitated, and successfully implemented, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) these are relatively rare, unknown, and even if enacted often not implemented successfully.

On the one hand, the COFE process exposed the lack of participation culture in the CEE. It was seen at times from the approach by the national governments, conducting pro forma activities and stifling the potential for actual participation. In other cases, as in

“THE SUCCESS OF SUSTAINABLE AND REGULAR CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT DEPENDS ON EFFORTS FROM MULTITUDE OF STAKEHOLDERS FROM NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO CIVIL SOCIETY, LOCAL AND EUROPEAN PARTIES, AND EU INSTITUTIONS.”

Slovakia, the government proceeded with serious commitment to the exercise. For the most parts the effort was not immediately rewarded. The participation was mainly triggered by the usual suspects, gaping holes were exposed in lack of knowledge and interest of the population in deliberating European issues.

On the other hand, through the exposure of some COFE activities an opportunity came about to learn what deliberative democracy might look like, to start on building a sustainable culture of participation. Most CEE countries are celebrating this year 20 years since their accession into the EU. The societies have transformed significantly since their communist past. However, often there is lingering sense of that communist legacy in hesitation to be part of participatory actions, to speak up, to ask questions. Toppled with continued prioritization of daily socio-economic challenges in most debates related to European affairs, the participatory culture in the region is lower to in their Western European and Nordic counterparts. With new generations basing themselves in the digital space, where one click is enough to become a participant in a debate, CEE societies, given the right learning process, can accelerate in bolstering meaningful citizens engagement.

The success of sustainable and regular citizens' engagement depends on efforts from multitude of stakeholders from national and local authorities to civil society, local and European parties, and EU institutions. Some recommendations could be advanced for next steps.

First, improvement of EU participatory instruments. Currently, there are many such tools (e.g., European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), petitions to the EP, citizens' dialogues, and public consultations). However, often only already committed entities or citizens with high awareness and expertise take advantage of the set participatory channels. These should become more visible through European-wide public campaigns and approachable through user friendly online platforms and accounting for different groups' needs in in-situ formats.

Furthermore, crucially the instruments need to conduct significant connections to

actual decision-making. Without real follow up on the results of these activities the participation loses its meaning and fails to serve its purpose—engaging and empowering citizens (contributing to the overall democratic legitimacy of the Union). Therefore, rather than designing more and new tools strengthening the existing ones is a worth investment. For example, Citizens' Panels, an element with high success during COFE, should be permanently institutionalized to become not only a regularly used mechanism but to have an integral contributing part to drafting, evaluating, and reorienting EU policies.

Second, the European Parliament elections should be approached through a different paradigm. An initial step is to create a participatory element in debating the party platforms (European party citizens panels) and at national level some sort of primaries for the EP candidates. It carries the potential for bolstering linkages between citizens, national parties and European parties and increasing the commitment from citizens.

Another step in the right direction would be launching election campaigns much earlier. When asked citizens often state that the European elections are secondary in importance for them. Instead of seeking solutions on how to entice voters, parties have resigned to such reality. Candidates are often revealed just couple months before with little to no awareness- raising until the very end. Such leisurely approach to campaigning not only prevents the building of engaged citizenship but also falls prey to disinformation and malign influence.

Citizens of the European Union are concerned. It is time to invest in building European citizenship, a committed community that, given the shaped opportunities and redirecting European policies, can truly contribute to the future of the Union. To achieve this goal, it is essential to recognize and address the obstacles to participation and engagement, tackling the roots of the problem and fostering a culture of active participation within the EU.

This entails not only revising and improving existing mechanisms but also innovating ►

“ESTABLISHING YOUTH COUNCILS AT THE EU, NATIONAL, AND LOCAL LEVELS CAN PROVIDE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A VALUABLE AVENUE TO EXPRESS THEIR IDEAS AND CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC DEBATE.”

- in how we conceive citizen participation and political engagement. It is crucial to make EU politics more accessible and understandable for its citizens, breaking down the perceived barriers of distance and complexity that often separate EU institutions from its citizens.

Civic education plays a significant role in this context, informing citizens not only about their rights but also about their responsibilities as active members of the European community. Educational initiatives should emphasize the importance of political participation and how each citizen can contribute to European democracy, whether through voting, participating in citizen dialogues, or engaging in local and European initiatives.

Furthermore, leveraging technology and digital platforms to facilitate broader and more inclusive participation can play a transformative role. The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has shown societies' capacity to adapt to virtual forms of communication and participation, thus opening new avenues for democratic engagement.

Finally, it is imperative to restore trust in EU institutions and in the European democratic process. This requires increased transparency, accountability, and effective communication on how decisions are made and how citizens can influence those decisions. Strengthening the legitimacy and cred-

ibility of EU institutions involves the active involvement of citizens in the political and decision-making process.

Building an engaged and informed European citizenship is a long-term project that will require continuous and concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including EU institutions, member states, civil society, and most importantly, the citizens themselves. It is only through active and informed participation that we can hope to build a stronger, more united, and more democratic European Union for future generations.

The path to a more engaged and democratic European Union lies in the ability to translate civic engagement from concept into concrete action. This means creating tangible opportunities for citizens to play an active role in policymaking not only at the European level but also within their local communities. Decentralizing democratic participation to better reflect and serve the needs and concerns of grassroots citizens is essential for strengthening the sense of belonging and European identity.

An essential step in this process is to encourage a culture of dialogue and ongoing exchange between citizens and decision-makers. This could take the form of regular public forums, online consultations, and citizen assemblies addressing European, national,

and local issues of importance. These dialogue spaces must be inclusive, allowing all segments of society to share their perspectives and contribute to decision-making.

Collaboration between EU institutions, civil society organizations, educators, and the media is crucial for effectively disseminating information and combating misinformation that can undermine trust and engagement. By providing citizens with reliable and accessible information about the EU, its policies, and its impact on their daily lives, we can increase their capacity to participate meaningfully in debates and decisions.

The importance of youth in this process cannot be underestimated. By actively engaging young Europeans through civic education, exchange programs, and dedicated participation platforms, we can cultivate a future generation that not only feels concerned but also capable of influencing the course of the European Union. Establishing youth councils at the EU, national, and local levels can provide young people with a valuable avenue to express their ideas and contribute to public debate.

Ultimately, building a stronger European citizenship relies on recognizing and valuing diversity within the EU. This means acknowledging different identities, cultures, and languages as assets that enrich the European project rather than as obstacles to unity. Celebrating this diversity through cultural and educational initiatives can help build bridges between citizens of different member states, strengthening the sense of a common European identity.

Long-term commitment to European citizenship requires bold vision and renewed commitment from all stakeholders. As the European Union continues to evolve, the need for active and informed citizen participation has never been more critical. Through a collaborative, inclusive, and forward-looking approach, we can not only address current challenges but also lay the foundations for a more resilient, democratic, and united European Union for years to come. ■

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HEALTH POLICY AND THE EP ELECTIONS 2024

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As the current term of the European Parliament and the Commission is ending, after an exceptionally crisis-ridden five-year period, it is time to take stock and gaze forward towards the upcoming political cycle. While the 2019-2024 term has implied significant leaps for the EU's role in health against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic - including immediate action such as advance purchase agreements of vaccines and medical equipment, but also reforms for a strengthened so-called European Health Union - many questions remain for the next institutional cycle.

As the lessons from the pandemic risk to fade with time, setting out the directions of EU health policy for the next political cycle will be crucial. As argued by think tanks and experts, this applies not least to the recognition of interlinkages with other policy areas such as security and strategic autonomy, climate, and environmental policy as well as research, digitalisation, trade and last and not least the EU's global role.

What has been achieved and where do we stand, four years after Covid-19 first hit the European continent? After the EU's initial problems and the joint management of the crisis that then followed, a series of initiatives were also taken to strengthen the EU's role in

health policy. The rationale was that the pandemic had exposed inequities between and within member states, shortages of essential medicines and equipment as well as general lack of preparedness and coordination at EU level in face of a virus that transcended borders. According to the Commission, the pandemic showed the importance of coordination also in normal times, to address underlying public health problems and vulnerabilities in European health systems - the justification for a so-called European Health Union was thus broader than just preparedness and response to future health threats.

Some legal proposals under this umbrella however were more directly related to the experience of the pandemic. As an example, the role of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has now been boosted, and with a mandate that includes the tasks to monitor the availability of critical medical products. The same goes for the previously rather weak European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), which now has a clearer mandate and will be able both to issue recommendations and assist member states with a Task Force in the event of an outbreak. In addition, a new EU Agency for Health Emergency Preparedness and

“THE PANDEMIC HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF COORDINATION EVEN IN NORMAL TIMES, TO ADDRESS PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES.”

Response, HERA, has been established. The latter will work to finance and coordinate the development and procurement of medical countermeasures such as vaccines. In financial terms, the EU's health program has also received a substantial increase of almost ten times its previous budget.

Other reforms derived only indirectly or not at all from the experiences of the pandemic, such as that of the European Health Data Space (EHDS) meant to promote the sharing of health data and interoperability, revisions of the EU's pharmaceutical legislation as well as a much-praised EU Action Plan on Cancer that had been promised by Ursula von der Leyen already at the start of her tenure⁽¹⁾. Some of the pharmaceutical files and the EHDS proposal are still under negotiation and may have to be handled by the next legislature.

Also on in its external relations, the EU's role external role has grown since the pandemic, well beyond its traditional role in health-related development cooperation. With the recent adoption of Council conclusions on the EU's new global health strategy⁽²⁾, the next Commission will have a key role in implementing this ambitious agenda which is not without tensions given its strong stance

on both values and multilateralism as well as strategic interests of the EU. The over-all ambition to forge strategic partnerships is likely to be a key priority, to secure access to health-related products and medicines as well as global goodwill in general. Strengthening health care capacities around the world is one of the five focus areas of the EU Global Gateway strategy.

Will these issues and the future of health policy more generally feature in the EP election campaign and the priorities of the next Commission? To start with, while citizens often rate health policy as an area where they would like to see more Europe - during the Conference on the Future of Europe, citizens called for health and healthcare to be included among the shared competencies between the EU and member states - it is unlikely that health policy will feature greatly in the electoral campaigns. Issues including security and the war in Ukraine, the cost-of-living, migration as ►

(1) A European Union of Health (europa.eu)

(2) EU Global Health Strategy:
Council approves conclusions - Consilium (europa.eu)

► well as climate change, are now arguably of much greater salience for both citizens and politicians.

Still, the outcome of the elections will surely matter for EU health policy. The EP's role so far has generally been that of a keen supporter of deeper European integration in general and policies such as consumer rights, health, and environmental protection in particular. Already in July 2020, the EP called upon the European institutions and the Member States to "draw the right lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and engage in far stronger cooperation in the area of health"⁽³⁾. This pro-integration stance may change in the next legislature, as coalitions of the three centrist groups may no longer easily dominate decision making in the EP.⁽⁴⁾

What exactly the forecasted strengthened role of the radical right-wing parties in the EP might mean for the EU's role in health policy, however, is not very clear. While transfer of competences is sensitive and anyways the remit of the member states, much of what the EU does in health is supporting and complementing the action of the member states, and this is still perceived as uncontentious. As an

example, conservative MEPs from European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Party have supported the EU's initiatives on non-communicable diseases and the extension of the ECDC mandate, including as rapporteurs. As for the European People's Party (EPP), the leadership seems more occupied to stop what is referred to as "over-regulation" related to the EU's Green Deal and with issues such as security and migration. When health protection comes though regulation affecting farmers or the private sector, such as regulation of pesticides or the shelved revision of the REACH regulation on chemical safety however, we might not expect favorable alliances in the next legislature.

Apart from the alliances that are possible in the new EP, another aspect to be seen is in which areas the EP party groups will push the new president of the European Commission. Without engaging in overspeculation, there is probably a greater likelihood of continuity for EU health policy if Ursula von der Leyen is allowed a second term by the member states. A medical doctor by training and known for her strong leadership during the pandemic, as well as her (by now unrealistic) statements in favour of making health a shared EU and member state competence, she may want to defend the health portfolio against unfavorable splits and to propose a fairly ambitious mission letter to the new Commissioner in charge. Following the repercussions of the pandemic, the position may now seem more attractive now than it used to - generally the portfolio has been held by smaller member states like Malta, Lithuania and right now Cyprus. Aspects related to preparedness, strategic autonomy when it comes to supply chains and the EU's external role also gives the portfolio a somewhat more geopolitical importance this time around.

Others that will want to have a say over the new Commission's political line on health are the civil servants, who will of course pass on their recommendations to their new political masters. After a period of a lot of legislative proposals, one might now rather expect focus on policy integration in other areas. One such example could be a push for more focus on the interlinkages between animal, human and environmental health (One Health perspectives) as well as intersections between health and climate change. Such a "greening"

"THE OVERARCHING
ambition TO FORGE
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
WILL LIKELY BE A KEY
PRIORITY."

of the European Health Union was also something supported by citizens in the Conference on the Future of Europe and has been highlighted as a desirable next step by policy experts and think tanks⁽⁵⁾. The EPC has gone as far recommending a “planetary health approach across all levels of governance to encourage transdisciplinary action” and suggested the appointment of a “Vice President for the Well-being Economy”, ensuring coordination towards a more holistic approach, compliant with the Treaty provision that requires a high level of health protection in all of the EU’s activities and policies. Whether these ideas will fly remains to be seen.

To sum up, 2024 promises to be an interesting year for European democracy and policy making, also when it comes to health. Ultimately, public debates about the future direction of the Union, possibly facing a new historic enlargement and related institutional and policy choices in the near future, can hopefully contribute to higher voter turnout and ultimately, democratic legitimacy of the Union. ■

(3) 21. European Parliament Resolution of 10 July 2020 on the EU’s Public Health Strategy Post-COVID-19 (2020/2691(RSP)) [(accessed on 22 June 2021)]. Available online: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0205_EN.html

(4) Protected: A sharp right turn: A forecast for the 2024 European Parliament elections (ecfr.eu)

(5) Planetary_Health_DP___CERV.pdf (epc.eu)

RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE: MISSION UNFINISHED

By Pavel Havlíček,
Researcher of Association for International
Affairs (AMO) - Prague



The topic of reconstruction of Ukraine has emerged practically already since the first days of the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and occupied the attention of Ukraine and its international partners and donors ever since. While some people called the first phase in the run up to the international donor conference in Lugano romantic, ever since the autumn 2022 it has become clear that this will be a longer-term effort with many obstacles and limitations both coming from Ukraine and its backers.

In mid-2024, some of the challenges keep being the same as in 2022, while there are several new opportunities ahead of Ukraine, the international community, and the donors. These also include ways on how to overcome the existing problems, which should be on our mind in the EU after June 2024 and the elections to the European Parliament, which will also help to form the thinking of the new European Commission, which is spearheading the efforts in the international arena.

THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

In the middle of 2024, the debate on Ukraine's post-war reconstruction is framed by a few key notions that have emerged out of the previous development and more than two years of discussions both in Ukraine and internationally.

First, it became clear that the reconstruction is and must be happening already today and it is impossible to wait for the post-war period, which can take time and is hard to predict, while the life in Ukraine continues. Thus, the efforts of the international community switched from the early humanitarian period (fast recovery) into stabilisation and development mode, which primarily concentrates on the critical infrastructure and key projects, including in energy, which need to be repaired to keep Ukraine on the right track.

Second, the reconstruction is perceived

as part of the bigger picture of Ukraine's integration into the EU, which has been generally acknowledged after the December 2023 European Council's decision to open the accession talks and begin the practical phase of the enlargement already during the first half of 2024.

Third, the role of private capital became more evident and together with insurance of the international investments entered the centre stage of the public debate, including during the upcoming international donor conference in Berlin, which is taking place in mid-June 2024. The statement that the public resources cannot cope with the immense scope of the damage has been accepted by all parties.

Fourth and lastly, the notion of building back better, closely interconnected with the Ukraine's integration within the EU became a fact, which motivated both the EU's approach and shaping of its financial tools, including most prominently within the Ukraine Facility, as well as for the rest of the international community.

To add to this, the financial allocations and needs keep growing over time, when they reached more than 500 billion USD, as estimated by the World Bank and its partners in their latest, still rather conservative, report monitoring the period until the end of 2023.⁽¹⁾ At the same time, the budget for the reconstruction was cut by Ukraine and deprioritised by its partners too focusing on the macro-financial stabilisation and the war efforts.

Finally, the issue of international coordination and leadership keeps being fragmented and contested by partners of Ukraine. The US, which wanted to be in the centre of the debate, is stuck with its own problems paralysing the US support and funds.⁽²⁾ On the other hand, the EU find itself in a difficult position to deal with the overwhelming task on its own.⁽³⁾ Other parties, including at the level of the G7, while expressing their ambitions, do not play a consistently significant role, dedicating limited resources and not picking up the coordination role that was left to the EU. ►

CHALLENGES aHead

While these key notions have shaped the debate until today, it is also clear that a number of challenges and obstacles influenced on the process so far.

The most important fact is that it became practically impossible to predict when the hot phase of the conflict would end, or at least be cooled down to the degree manageable by the international donors and partners of Ukraine. Therefore, the issue of ensuring the investments and taking risks while rebuilding Ukraine already today, even more when starting completely new projects, came to the centre of international attention. This was the case during the last year's London international donor conference in June as much as it remained an issue in 2024.

(1), (2) et (3) https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-russia-why-west-is-losing/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=alert&utm_campaign=Why%20the%20West%20is%20losing%20Ukraine

“THEREFORE, THE ISSUE OF ENSURING THE INVESTMENTS AND TAKING RISKS WHILE REBUILDING UKRAINE (...), CAME TO THE CENTRE OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION.”

► HOW TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES?

The new EU institutions coming from the European Parliament elections in 2024 will have several key challenges ahead for late this year and beginning of the following one.

Firstly, they will together with the EU members need to find the political consensus and will need to launch an efficient and well-resourced process of Ukraine’s enlargement. While it will take time, it offers the best way how to make the reconstruction sustainable and based on shared values and principles, including of the Green Deal, that would secure the success of the whole efforts until the very end.

Secondly, the EU will need to mobilise the courage to unblock and put in place the frozen Russian assets, particularly those belonging to the Russian central bank. While there has been some movement on this, individual EU states proved hesitant how far to go and where to potentially invest the newly found resources. Even if it is only the interest rates from the frozen Russian money, it can prove invaluable to fund the reconstruction for the years to come, ideally on the top of the promised 50 billion EUR.

Lastly, the EU will not only need to take the lead but also more skilfully navigate the whole international effort, which is now fragmented and missing the US role in the overall process. The challenge of seeing Donald Trump in the White House again in January 2025

should motivate the Europeans to establish a wider coalition of partners beyond the G7 network to make the process sustainable and bullet-proof post-US presidential elections.

While not being easy, this seems to be the only way to mobilise not only the resources, but also the global efforts on this crucial task that will shape the future of the European continent and the international order for the years and decades to come. ■

- <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099021324115085807/pdf/P1801741bea12c012189ca16d95d8c2556a.pdf>

- <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-ukraine-aid-war-50-billion/>

- <https://www.ceps.eu/freeze-seize-and-tax-thats-how-to-make-russia-and-its-enablers-pay-for-ukraines-reconstruction/>

- <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-moves-toward-using-profits-from-frozen-russian-assets-for-ukraine>



IN SEARCH OF EUROPEAN GEOSTRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

By Bahadır Kaleağası,
President of the Paris Bosphorus Institute



The age of artificial intelligence has begun. It is also time for Europe to enter a new age of intelligence, a geopolitical intelligence. Relations with Türkiye present in this respect an opportunity for the European Union to move forward and deserve therefore to be analyzed in the perspective of the European elections and beyond.

The AI revolution is not the only geopolitically game-changing show in town. Simultaneously, impressive progress is upon us in space technologies, quantum computing, renewable energy technologies, biotech health solutions...

China! Its financial, social, and ecological problems and its global competitiveness, its emerging global lead in solar power, electric cars, smart cities, and critical raw materials...

Democracy! Half of the planet's population vote in some way in 2024. India, the world's most populous democracy, continues its geopolitical rise; Indonesia, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Mexico, the UK, the European Parliament... Having elections does not exclude authoritarian tendencies and the erosion of democracies whereas the US presidential elections, in the oldest constitutional democracy, will have more than ever a global impact.

And wars! Ukrainians, Palestinians, Yemenis,

Syrians, many people in Africa are subjected to the murderous violence of war.

In the tangle of globalization and technology, the world is changing faster. The European Union is changing; naturally, Türkiye's global position and its course within Europe are on the move.

A more positive relationship between the European Union and Türkiye is a decades-long project of advocates from all over Europe and across the Atlantic. Drawing on history, witnesses see how this relationship can be an excellent win-win algorithm, as much as it can rapidly turn out to be a lose-lose situation or even a triple win-or-lose equation—with political, economic, and social resonance reaching far beyond the Continent. The challenge is to upload this historically well-tested algorithm into the twenty-first century: rebooting a new version of Türkiye's European integration with updates on democratic conditionality, foreign and defense policy cooperation, and an economic framework.

The Türkiye debate's focal point is "Europe's geostrategic sovereignty." Türkiye should evolve to be a net contributor to Europe's security and global competitiveness. No matter how significant today's drawbacks are, such as the definition of freedom of expression and

tensions like the Cyprus imbroglio, the guiding question for the EU ought to be: “how can Türkiye, in the near future, become a country that is progressively in convergence with the values and interests of European citizens?” This includes citizens of the Turkish Republic as well.

Ultimately, when it comes to relations with the EU, the key factors in the equation are tomorrow’s Europe, Türkiye, and the global environment: x_1 , x_2 , x_3 .

A “delightful” mathematical equation with three unknowns that we all “love”.

GLOBÄL OUTLOOK

Let us start with the “easiest” one. Global change. Yes, the geopolitical context is changing rapidly. One of the most important bets of these times is the increasingly complicated relationship between Washington and Beijing. The global financial system, trade and technology are at the heart of this rivalry: cybersecurity, hypersonic and cyber weapons, space rivalry, the search for substitutes to the US dollar in international trade, digital currency projects, social media tools... Two different visions of social life are in competition and interaction. At the same time, there is a fast-rising India moving slowly and partially closer to the wider Western world; a shrinking Russia, a changing Saudi Arabia, a young Africa...

Globalization prompts increased mobility and prosperity to human civilization, but also stimulates us to be more innovative to deal with global viruses of all kinds: biological, digital, and financial; the disinformation virus contaminating our democracies; and also, the viruses of terrorism, organized crime, corruption, and unemployment. Most importantly, the CO₂ virus endangers the human civilization⁽¹⁾.

Predictions are impossible, but a Europe with a strong strategic influence in a changing world is important. This requires a more effective institutional order and a wider geography of security, economic, legal, and regulatory standards.

TÜRKIYE’S EQUATION

Türkiye is the other unknown in the equation of EU-Türkiye relations. A Türkiye that abides by the legislation and jurisprudence of the Council of Europe, of which it is a member, and becomes a much stronger state of law and a society of freedoms, will be a significant added value in tomorrow’s Europe. Democracy is essential for a strong Türkiye not only in Europe but also in the world in the 21st century. The most important source of soft power for Türkiye in all areas such as diplomacy, security, counterterrorism, trade, investment, tourism, technology, science, culture, and visas should be a respected democracy. Of course, this soft power should also rely on the rule of law and human rights breakthroughs, reliable economic management, structural reforms, especially in the constitution, judiciary, education, taxation, employment, and agriculture...

Political tensions between Türkiye and the EU are real and challenging. However, nonconstructive policies of engagement are also part of the problem. They have been stimulated by years of ever weaker partnership, deadlocks, prejudices, and policy errors from both sides. Thus, we cannot find in more negative policies—blocking, suspending, or sanctioning different aspects of the EU-Türkiye relationship—a relevant solution to contemporary problems. As Albert Einstein would have said: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

Excluding Türkiye from Europe has been very costly for citizens of both the EU and Türkiye. If Türkiye had been deeply, skillfully engaged—on issues such as foreign and security policies, rule of law, refugees, economic growth, and energy policy—when the opened accession negotiations began in 2005, the sequel today would be much different. ►

(1) Bahadır Kaleağası, « Global Viruses and Goals », Analyses website, Institut des relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS), 2020
www.iris-france.org/148215-global-viruses-and-goals.

- Including Türkiye would have strengthened the EU as a global power and would have contributed to the development of Türkiye as a European democracy in convergence with European values and interests.⁽²⁾

THE BRUSSELS EFFECT

The European Union is the global economic power with the most numerous and deepest economic agreements with other countries in the world, from Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam to Latin America. Meanwhile, the EU making progress towards a transatlantic economic area through the Trade and Technology Council with the United States. It also has strong economic ties with India and China, the world's most populous countries. In the 21st century, the EU continues to be influential as a powerhouse of standards in the international economy.

Europe emerged from the pandemic crisis by strengthening its policies on finance, trade, health, digital transformation, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and climate change. In the Russia and energy crisis, the EU has also managed to develop a more common foreign policy. In the face of Hamas' terrorist acts and the Israeli government's military violence against civilians, however, a common EU policy has not been effective, even though many governments and influential segments of the EU public opinion have taken a clear critical stance. Conflicting positions have emerged from many capitals.

On the other hand, the European Union ought to overcome very important challenges. While managing the energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is trying to increase new sources of energy supply and develop clean energy technologies. Inflation is down to around five percent but not yet under control. Policy coherence is lacking on immigration policy, the fight against terrorism, travel visas and many foreign policy files. Most importantly, the EU and Western democracies are facing a tough test in the 21st century. Income inequalities, social insecurities, disinformation, and extreme populist movements are in a spiral of mutual influence.

FLEXIBLE INTEGRATION CIRCLES

At the end of 2023, Jacques Delors, the legendary President of the European Commission, passed away. His leadership marked the history in crucial stages such as the revitalization of the European integration process in the 1980s with the "European single market", the establishment of the European Union after the Cold War's end, and the Euro project. Since those years, the debates on federation, confederation, variable geometry, multi-speed progress, concentric circles, enhanced cooperation and differentiated integration systems resulted in various treaty changes. The argumentation on "whether first to deepen institutionally or widen to new members" is also still relevant today.

A continental European design is gradually taking shape: the euro zone is at the core of a European Union, which is moving towards an increasingly federal structure. Beyond that is a circle of countries that are not full members of the Union but are closely integrated economically and in terms of regulatory convergence: Türkiye, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, the UK, the Western Balkans, and the Black Sea countries... The rules of transitivity between the circles should become clear. It may even be possible to establish a special link with the Eurozone system without being a member of the EU. The largest circle is the broad European geography from the Atlantic to the Caspian Sea: a flexible confederal structure that will enhance the perspective of a Europe that will not shrink in a global environment that is expanding in every direction.

Ankara was right to respond positively to French president Macron's the European Political Community initiative, a step toward a broad circle of membership with forty-seven member states on the continent. The first summits were held in Prague in October 2022, Moldova in June 2023, and Grenada in October 2023; United and Kingdom are next in line. Türkiye can take at least three initiatives in this regard: top-level participation; a proposal to host a summit in 2024; and most importantly, building on this new political framework with concrete policy and harmonized legislative proposals in areas such as

energy, green finance, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, defense industry and migration.

The future of Europe debate has a detailed legal and technical depth. Many scenarios are possible. Some of them require the reform of existing EU treaties. It is a challenging process triggering very sophisticated balance of power calculations among the European states and their domestic priorities. In an EU with an increasing number of members, the unanimity rule at the EU Council of Ministers is still the most problematic issue for decision-making in many areas such as the common foreign and security policy (with the exception of certain clearly defined cases which require qualified majority, e.g. appointment of a special representative), citizenship (the granting of new rights to EU citizens), EU membership, harmonization of national legislation on indirect taxation, EU finances (own resources, the multiannual financial framework), certain provisions in the field of justice and home affairs (the European prosecutor, family law, operational police cooperation, etc.) and the harmonization of national legislation in the field of social security and social protection. All are related to the notion of statehood.

The “unanimity vs qualified majority” debate’s intensity has gone through various ups and downs since the early years of the European integration process. The rule encourages tougher negotiations and according to its defenders, enhances the democratic legitimacy, strengthens unity, improves implementation, and offers small states a shield against the demands pushed by the largest countries. However, the arguments to abandon it are also strong: unanimity hinders decision-making, fosters a lowest-common-denominator mindset, and prevents the EU

from achieving its full potential on the global stage. Kyiv experienced several episodes of EU’s policy uncertainties in its defense against the Russian invasion, as did Ankara when it firmly supported, together with all the EU capitals, the UN peace plan on Cyprus only to see the island’s Southern part to reject it and yet becoming an EU member, resulting in the blocking of many advancements in the EU’s policies vis-à-vis Türkiye.

ROADMAP

Türkiye is unlikely to give-up its status of EU accession country. Nor would it negotiate a tailor-made special status under the current circumstances. Ankara should wait until there is a better institutionalized European differentiated integration system to re-define its European orbit. This may not necessarily be a full membership to the EU as we know today. Once again, this is a complicated equation with many variable factors in 21st century’s space-time continuum.

Meanwhile, on the more tangible and practical level, a successful modernization of the EU-Türkiye customs union also is an important asset for the EU. Progress on the customs union would involve the extension of the model to include services, agriculture, public procurement, and dispute settlement mechanisms. This needs to be a twenty-first century version partnership which also covers the European digital single market,⁽³⁾ the European Green Deal,⁽⁴⁾ and more broadly Türkiye’s commitment to converge with the EU’s Sustainable Development Goals policies. Concurrently, the pandemic-triggered changes that are worth reemphasizing in the global supply and value chains in trade, services, logistics, tourism, finance, technology, and data mobility highlight the importance of the ►

(2) Bahadır Kaleağası, « EU and Türkiye: Time to Act, » Euractiv, 2016 www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/eu-and-türkiye-time-to-act.

(3) European Commission, « Shaping Europe’s Digital Future: The European Digital Strategy, » Commission webpage, accessed in March 2021 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/content/european-digital-strategy>.

(4) European Commission, « A European Green Deal: Striving to Be the First Carbon-neutral Continent » Commission webpage, accessed in March 2021 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

- proximity factor: being closer to the EU is important. Another “Brussels effect” enters the picture at this point: business. Europe’s most representative and influential voice of the private economy. The BusinessEurope, The Confederation of European Business, lists the EU-Türkiye customs union’s modernization among its key proposals to EU institutions and governments in view of a post pandemic economic recovery and global competitiveness.⁽⁵⁾

Symmetrically, for Türkiye as well the relations with the EU are a matter of global competitiveness. They are therefore a matter of republican values, democratic standards, national security, economic prosperity, and social progress. More than Europe, this is all about Türkiye’s Western anchor. In this respect, the “West” is a trans-geographical concept: North America, Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia... Recent definitions like “global South” and BRICS are also important but vague. Countries such as Brazil, India, China, and Indonesia do not have the geostrategic priority alignment to become a unified political or economic bloc. Moreover, China and other countries have deep relations with the “West” in many areas. Türkiye needs to strengthen itself within the Western world and at the same time become a country that is more open to the East and the South, to every global direction on the strategic compass.

In this perspective, a chain of positive developments supports each other. On the one hand, progress in the European Union process. To be respected, trusted and influential in the world with high democratic, economic, and social standards, a smart investment climate, advances in science and technology, and in all areas of social life, especially women’s rights. To rapidly increase its attractiveness not only in the West but also in the East and around the world in all dimensions, from diplomacy to investment, finance to cultural relations. On the other hand, as Türkiye’s relations with the rest of the world deepen, the country plays a more influential and constructive role, this time in Europe. This formula is very clear. Dilemmas such as “Europe or Eurasia?” are irrelevant to Ankara. Türkiye’s rise in world politics and economy depends on its ability to emerge as Europe’s Eurasian gateway.

In the European Union institutions’ new term, reengaging with Türkiye also would propel convergence on various foreign policy topics such as Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caucasus, the fight against terrorism, and management of the refugee crisis. In a nutshell, “bringing the modernization of the customs union to the negotiation table provides the EU with the opportunity to capitalize on Türkiye’s continued interest in the matter. It will help Europe to establish a rules-based communicative space where the EU and Türkiye can negotiate their positions. As such, the EU can contribute to the de-escalation of the present conflicts with Türkiye without jeopardizing Ankara’s cooperation. Moreover, resocializing Türkiye back into diplomatic circles may help Europe convince Türkiye to abide by agreements.”⁽⁶⁾

IT IS DEMOCRACY...⁽⁷⁾

Europe’s future is marked by existential questions. Shall European states ultimately commit to a prerequisite level of coherence and solidarity to craft the EU’s new global role? Will there be agreement to transfer more effective economic policy competences from member states to the EU’s supranational level? How can Europe continue to generate soft power for a more democratic, greener, human-

(5) « Business Europe, Proposals for a European Economic Recovery Plan », April 30, 2020, www.buseneseurope.eu/sites/buseur/files/media/position_papers/buseneseurope_recovery_plan_final_30_04_2020_v2.pdf.

(6) Sinem Adar, Nicola Bilotta, Aurélien Denizeau, Sinan Ekim, Dorothee Schmid, Günter Seufert, Ilke Toygür, and Karol Wasilewski, « Customs Union: Old Instrument, New Function in EU-Türkiye Relations », Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP Comment, 48 (October 2020), www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2020C48_CustomsUnionEU_Türkiye.pdf.

(7) Bahadır Kaleağası, « Europe’s geostrategic sovereignty and Türkiye », The Atlantic Council, 2021 www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/europes-geostrategic-sovereignty-and-Türkiye

centric, and safer world? Türkiye can be a part of the answer to these questions. The only realistic strategy for Türkiye's global competitiveness is to reposition itself as the West's Eurasian gateway of democracy, economic dynamism, and social progress.

The EU's capitals, including Athens and Nicosia, can either be idealistic or realistic. However, both ways of thinking point toward more benefits from reengaging Türkiye in the European integration process, including conditionalities on concluding, not initiating, different phases such as a modernized customs union. Maybe there also is a third way: extreme and short-sighted populism. There is enough historical evidence to argue that the more Türkiye will be excluded from the EU's sphere of influence, the more it will become part of the problems which in turn nourish populist demagoguery and threats to Western democracy. In the end, the main purpose of all these thoughts and recommendations is the search for a better twenty-first century democracy. ■

For more information:

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CARTE BLANCHE

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ESSAY

« *A new narrative for Europe* »,
by Philippe Herzog



Philippe Herzog, former Member of Parliament European and Advisor by the Commission, President founder of Confrontations Europe

A NEW NARRATIVE FOR EUROPE

"A New Narrative for Europe" is a critical and engaged essay by Philippe Herzog, a project that could be summed up by the following declaration: "A European political project is not an obligation but a choice. I always fully embrace it, and that's why I want to contribute today to the refoundation of our Union in a radically new context compared to its origins."

The European project is a complex system, made up of multiple interactions. The process of European integration is both profoundly concrete in that it directly affects our daily lives and abstract, as it is the result of ideas, a diverse history, and narratives. Its materialization in the form of the European Communities and then the European Union is subject to a lack of definition. What will the EU

become? We have the choice to ponder the meaning we want to give to the European project, and this is what Philippe Herzog invites us to realize here. Kundera speaks of points of no return in human life and of modern people who cheats by seeking to ignore these moments. Yet, if we consider the European Union today and structural challenges for which we must find solutions, we may be

at a moment where we can acknowledge a point of no return and project ourselves towards the future, towards a consensual political project whose original purpose, as stated in the Treaties, is to create an ever closer solidarity among peoples.

ACQUIRING AND SHARING A HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Confrontations Europe: The European motto is "United in Diversity," but you believe that the Union as an institution fails to bring together populations, notably due to the relegation of the role of culture and education. For you, there is a need today, on the contrary, to rethink European education and to become aware of the importance of culture as a cornerstone of the European political project. What would you propose today to promote, consolidate, regenerate, this common European consciousness? What are the obstacles?

Philippe Herzog: The unity of Europeans in their diversity was a centuries-old task, and Europe first united through culture. However, in terms of political organization, it was fragmented into feudalities, states, rival, and bellicose empires. That is why the creation of an economic community, after the two world wars, was a remarkable innovation. But the idea of a federal political community is now lost sight of. European nations want to remain nations, and wanting to imitate the United States of America is a mistake; we need to federate differently. Currently, our nations wish to remain in the Union more out of interest than out of a desire to form a society together. This is not inevitable, but the failure of the teaching of European history is evidenced by the work of the Council of Europe. It is a renunciation that leads to national retreats and tensions between Europeans who do not recognize each other. And this hinders the effort to acquire a common consciousness at a time when there is a great need for a new vision of the world.

European humanism has lost its vitality; fears, dualisms, and indifference are taking hold. The deficiencies and biases in the education of leaders and in the public information space are significant handicaps. I call for a

major effort in reeducation. This is not about reforming competencies in treaties or centralized decisions; I believe more in the proliferation of grassroots initiatives and associative experiments, as was done after the Second World War with movements like "People and Culture". At Confrontations Europe, we have always aimed to build Europe from the ground up: winning the hearts of workers and the humiliated populations who vote for the National Rally, rooting awareness in localities, creating cross-border mobilities to share narratives and training.

BECOMING A FORCE FOR PEACE AND COOPERATION

C. E.: To become a force for peace and cooperation, it requires not only the will but also the means. In your book, you analyze the situation of the global economy, emphasizing the importance of a retrospective view on economic cycles in the history of capitalism, and a prospective view on long-term investments and means to create conditions for a sustainable and just recovery.

A major problem you identify is the distribution of roles between the private and public sectors, as well as in the values we attribute to capital and labor: how to change the paradigm within the EU where that of free competition continues to dominate? ▶

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► **Ph. H.:** Capitalism is an economic system that is constantly evolving, and some crises have a systemic nature that can only be addressed through profound structural transformations. This was the case after the Second World War, with the massive intervention of the state in the economy, and it remains the challenge today. However, we cannot simply replicate the solutions of the post-war boom years. States are c with social tasks and solidarity within nations, heavily indebted, and public service infrastructures have aged considerably. Meanwhile, the EU stifles cooperation and solidarity with its choice of intensified internal competition, and it does not fulfill its duty of long-term investments in the general interest. The gap between capital and labor has never been greater, with large corporations and global investors reigning supreme, to whom we have entrusted our fate. We must recreate public and social control of the economy, which will be based on complementarity between local, national, and European levels. Otherwise, the inefficiency of current management is glaring: over the past few decades, there has been a massive financial and monetary bloating in Europe (as in the United States), but human and productive underinvestment has been significant. A coordinated planning effort between states and The Union is indispensable for long-term investments in the form of cross-border public-private and associative partnerships. This requires a European budget, patient Euro-

pean financial industry, and an industrial strategy based on cooperation.

C. E.: The ECSC was pragmatically created through the coal and steel sectors to prevent war from recurring. Today, we talk about industrial sectors that hold promise for the future and the need to establish a new industrial pact aligned with the Green Deal. Do you think this message could be a vector of hope for a European political project?

Ph. H.: Precisely, the ECSC consisted of organizing industrial solidarities for essential goods in post-war reconstruction and growth. Jean Monnet was a planner, not an advocate of the common market. The common market was Germany's primary demand, an industrial powerhouse striving to become a major global exporter. Like the British, it has always hindered European industrial policy. The Green Deal relies on often inconsistent and ineffective obligations and incentives. An ecological industrial project is essential to regenerate habitat, employment, and production in the Union's territories, and to adapt them to climate change, rather than relying solely on future miracle technologies to decarbonize the economy. We must not underestimate the costs, risks, and the sacrifices it implies, but we must be willing to share them in order to reduce them and systematically value the development of skills and solidarity. This indeed involves building industrial sectors, trans-European infrastructures, and information networks. The revival of nuclear energy is, from

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this perspective, good news, a major asset for decarbonizing the economy.

C. E.: *At a time when the EU is seeking its position on the international stage, when we tend to focus on a competitive and complex geopolitical landscape that takes the form of a patchwork, you argue that the EU could play a “bridging” role in international relations: how and with what means? Do you think this role would be accepted by other major powers?*

Ph. H.: The vocation of Europe is peace, which great men of the past have wanted to be “perpetual,” let us say durable. We must not lose sight of this while multiple and interconnected war zones exist in today’s world, and there is a risk of world war. Also, the “strategic autonomy” that we desire for Europe does not simply involve defense means but a positive vision for world peace. The war in Ukraine is a test in this regard. I reject the bellicose Roman maxim “if you want peace, prepare for war.” Because without preparing for lasting peace, we will never end war. Welcoming Ukraine and several Balkan countries into the Union are a duty, as is preparing the prospect of cooperation and a security agreement with Russia as well. If, here as elsewhere, the Union is not capable of being a mediator in conflicts, other powers will take on that role. And farewell to its autonomy. Europe is caught in the grip of the confrontation between major powers, the United States and China. Locking itself into the logic of the Western bloc can only worsen its situation. It must choose non-alignment and strengthen its economy with the will to meet the immense cooperation needs of the populations of the Global South, where the world’s youth resides. It has invested truly little there, and the resentment towards the West runs deep. Reversing this trend is a truly “strategic” task.

TOWARDS a NEW ERA OF DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

C. E.: *We must implement profound structural changes in our societies, yet these changes involve transitions that weigh on the population, especially considering the social*

and economic inequalities that tend to widen. In this context, how do we define common goods and objectives at the European level?

Ph. H.: Common goods include diversity - Europeans have plenty of it - we must turn it into wealth; it is humanity to be reconciled; it is the harmony of our relationship with nature to rediscover. Concretely, this requires the Union to assume co-responsibility with the states to restore public goods and build transnational ones in all areas, starting with education and healthcare, energy, and food...

C. E.: *And do you think democratic time is compatible with the urgency of action?*

Ph. H.: A true political project indeed requires a period that is stable and long enough. Today, the sense of acceleration mainly reflects doubts about our capabilities. The Union is not inactive, but changes must be carefully evaluated. Thus, it has acquired borrowing capacity but lacks a budget. It increases its military spending through national channels (German, Polish...), but for what purpose? Interesting regulations are emerging for the digital realm, but achieving European mastery for data processing and sharing remains a fiction. It may be said that the glass is half full, but it would ignore that to see further, there is a major bottleneck: the technological governance of the Union. By the way, switching to qualified majority voting would not be a panacea. I advocate for the multiplication of permanent structured cooperations among willing states in the industrial domains of public goods. And the creation of a political authority with governmental functions. Because neither the Commission nor the European Council, always ready to pat themselves on the back, can self-reform and become the “masters of the clock.”

C. E.: *You revisit the history of European construction throughout your work, and what is striking is the notion of solidarity. Does it still have meaning, and could it be reconsidered to once again become the foundation of the European political project?*

Ph. H.: Yes, solidarity should be reconsidered. Neither Germany nor France has a culture of it, and each one practically hinders it, except for its own interest. As for community law, it acts as judge and arbiter in the absence of a political will for common policies. Solidarity implies ►

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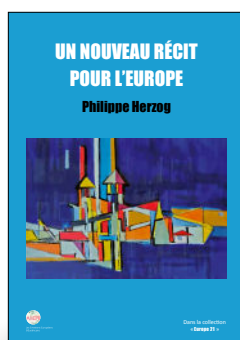
- fraternity in our commitments. We can then go beyond technocratic governance and build a partnership and multi-national democracy.

C. E.: One last question, as the founder of *Confrontations Europe*, you address in this book the reasons for the creation of this think tank (notably to ensure that different viewpoints and conflicts are expressed in a viable and constructive manner). Do you think that think tanks have their rightful place at the European level to assert this key role as mediators establishing bridges between seemingly irreconcilable points of view? Do you identify other key actors who facilitate the weaving of these links between different stakeholders at the European level?

Ph. H.: Most think tanks play the role of experts to institutions, but they are not mediators between them and citizens. *Confrontations Europe* was founded as a movement of civil society bringing together public and private actors, companies, and communities to become a collective actor in European construction. It involves citizens through dialogue, critically evaluating institutional policies, and opens up a perspective for future restructuring. I thank Michel Derdevet and his team for the sustainability of this association. Yes, we want to be a bridge between different viewpoints, and we work towards a European sense of community.

C. E.: If you were to formulate a wish for European citizens during the next term of Parliament, what would it be?

Ph. H.: I wish for them to be more engaged through a revitalization of associative movements. More demanding of their elected representatives, they must call on them to transcend their partisan interests to serve the common good. The next Parliament should not turn into a brawl, and to stem extremism, there should be a constructive pact among all those who want to cooperate for the renewal of the Union. The Parliament should not only produce directives but also contribute to re-thinking the idea of federation. ■



PHILIPPE HERZOG

A New Narrative for Europe

*(Published by ASCPE, Collection "Europe 21" 64 pages).
February 2024.*

For decades, Philippe Herzog has been driven by the desire to make European culture a political issue. Nourished by multiple research and experiences, he has devoted several essays to this cause. The one we publish today enriches the previous ones by presenting a vision for the future and original proposals on the eve of the 2024 European elections. "There is no longer a project for political union, and the debate on this subject is at a standstill," he writes. He calls on Europeans to regenerate it. Acquiring and sharing a historical consciousness is paramount. However, Europeans are unfamiliar with each other, and the teaching of European history is dwindling. The choice is between resignation and reeducation. The will to participate in making history with ideals of perpetual and universal peace would rejuvenate Europe in today's world. Deeply reconciling European nations and the Union is essential, requiring us to transform our democracies into partnership and multi-national ones. Utopia? Always in search of transcendence, Philippe Herzog concludes, "When Europe is at risk of sinking, isn't realism about joining audacity with imagination?"

An esteemed economist, politician, and essayist, Philippe Herzog, a graduate of École Polytechnique and a university professor, co-invented the first French economic forecasting model. After a long tenure as a leader of the French Communist Party, he founded Confrontations Europe with Michel Rocard in 1992. A Member of the European Parliament from 1989 to 2004, then advisor to the European Commission, he was appointed an honorary member of the Jean Monnet Foundation (in Paris and Lausanne). As the co-founder of the Open World Film Circle, Crossed Looks with his partner Claude Fischer Herzog, he works on a policy of global civilization.

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