

DEMOCRATIC CRISES IN THE EU: TOWARDS “NEW FRONTIERS”

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SUMMARY

1. National democracies disrupted by a triple legitimacy crisis

- The rise in protest votes within the EU is the result of a reaction to the economic and financial crisis but also a more structural development related to Europe’s fate in globalisation (winners vs losers but also an identity crisis),
- The democratic crisis is also heightened by the decline of traditional parties which have structured national politics, by the citizen predilection for forms of participative and direct democracy and by the effects of the spectacular rise of social networks,
- The financial crisis has had a role in weakening the legitimacy of European political systems, fuelling the distrust of traditional elites, perceived as being at the root of the crisis or as incapable of dealing with it.
- This threefold destabilisation has affected many democracies in the EU, but has not, however, disputed their foundations and operation.

2. The European Union after the “Troika”: the democratic deficit, a never ending debate?

- The intervention of the Troika was marked by relationships of conditionality between States and an operation characterised by opacity: it must be acknowledged as an aside, at a democratic and political cost, which must be brought to a close.
- A reinforcement of the transparency of EU decision-making is a more classic democratic challenge, that must be tackled within the EMU, but also for trade negotiations and “comitology” procedures,
- A reduction of the EU’s “electoral deficit” would imply in particular extending the dynamic introduced by the “spitzenkandidaten” system launched in 2014, which would involve, for example, all candidates for the presidency of the Commission taking part in the European elections and the appointment of the members of the Commission by the elected President.

3. Democratic conflicts between EU citizens: how can we become more united in diversity?

- The political conflicts caused by the successive crises which have hit the EU actually reveal the existence of considerable divides between EU citizens. These divides are much more of a danger for the EU’s cohesion than yet another demonstration of its democratic deficit,
- Promoting European unity must involve highlighting how peoples of the EU can both come together, by sharing their sovereignty, and be similar, by gaining awareness of their common identity with regard to the rest of the world,
- A differentiated Europe may be a last resort to breathe life into Europeans’ “unity in diversity” in a democratic framework, while ensuring the proposal of a positive agenda on all levels/for all citizens (Eurozone, Schengen and EU).

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INTRODUCTION

The crises hitting many European democracies take root in causes that are both cyclical and structural, national and international. These causes must be analysed in detail so that informed diagnostics and recommendations may be drafted. Not all European democracies are affected in the same way, the democratisation of the European Union (EU) is making constant progress, and yet the economic and financial crisis, the advance of globalisation and the rise in new communication networks have put European political systems to the test.

Since it is based on national democracies to a great extent, the EU is also affected by the current trend of destabilisation, in addition to the challenges related to its specific nature and its operating method. A phenomenon such as the intervention of the "Troika" in Greece and in other countries has radicalised the conventional debate on the "democratic deficit" of the European construction, which has also been subject to a popular demand for increased transparency and participation. It is important to stress the difference between a popularity deficit and a democratic deficit, but also to highlight the divisions between European peoples as an element of a political crisis, rather than a democratic crisis.

1. National democracies disrupted by a triple legitimacy crisis

European, and even western, democracies have been disrupted for the last decade by the calling into question of the three foundations of their legitimacy:

- their efficiency in adopting decisions and political choices which benefit the greatest number ("output legitimacy");
- their ability to enable their citizens to make their voices heard and influence public decisions ("input legitimacy");
- and lastly the acknowledgement of public decision-makers as the representatives of the citizens they are intended to serve ("inner legitimacy").

This threefold destabilisation has affected many democracies in the EU, but has not, however, questioned their foundations and functioning.

1.1. The rise in protest votes: a reaction to the crises or a structural development?

The financial crisis that began in 2007 has been described as the most serious since the crisis of 1929. Its major economic and social repercussions have triggered intense waves of anger and resentment. However, the popular reactions expressed throughout the crisis have not had the same political outlets as those observed in the 1930s, in particular owing to the activation of sophisticated social protection mechanisms that barely existed at the time. Such reactions have generated a feeling of dissatisfaction that more or less radical protest parties have been able to harness¹. The rise of such parties has been furthered by two, more structural phenomena related to Europe's fate in globalisation.

The first phenomenon is the increasing economic and social polarisation between the winners and losers of the opening of international trade, the "generally positive" impact of which is felt by Europeans to very different degrees according to their level of education, profession and region of origin. The same can be said for the opening up of immigration channels in European and western countries: this causes different responses which are often negative, heightened by the "refugee crisis" for citizens who are wary of a multicultural model of society.

1. On this subject, see for example Stijn Van Kessel, *Populist Parties in Europe - Agents of Discontent?* Palgrave Macmillan, 2015

The conjunction of these two phenomena fuels a kind of identity crisis, which further exacerbates the feeling of loss of control with regard to the development of the world with Europe no longer at its centre: it may foster a preference for authoritarian powers claiming to be the protectors of the old order.

Responses of rejection are stronger in countries which were particularly hit by the financial crisis, with broadly open economies, unsophisticated social protection systems, and in addition home to high levels of immigration due to their attractiveness. Based on these three reasons, is it so surprising that the United Kingdom and the USA have suffered such disruptive and striking political shocks as the victory of the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, even if both of them were obtained with a narrow margin? Is it not logical that other EU democracies were able to channel the expression of dissenting forces without exposing themselves to particularly harmful political or institutional consequences?²

In any case, it is important to make a clear distinction between two recent political developments in Europe:

- the first, which results from the rise of parties championing radical positions, winning seats in Parliament, where applicable taking part in forming the government of their country - without undermining in any way the normal functioning of democracy, and even seeking the direct intervention of the people (as was the case with the holding of a referendum in Greece by Alexis Tsipras);
- the second development is part of the shift whereby parties claim more or less directly to be a model of "illiberal democracy" (in Poland and in Hungary), specifically because they place democracy and "the people" above the principles of the rule of law - without undermining in any way the conventional election procedures, and even attempting to use them to their advantage (as was the case in Hungary with the holding of a referendum on the resettlement of refugees).³

1.2. The (r)evolution of democratic debate

The negative repercussions of the economic and financial crisis seem to have occurred alongside a more structural transformation of the conditions under which democratic debate is organised in Europe, in terms of partisan "infrastructures" and intellectual "superstructures".

The traditional parties which have structured national political life since the end of World War II are for the most part facing a historic weakened position.

This is true for social democrats and socialists, which are struggling to reform the redistribution system against a backdrop of globalisation and an ageing population. It is also true to a lesser extent for Christian democrats, facing both the secularisation of Europeans but also political forces which are more radical champions of religion in the political arena. This double weakening has been beneficial to new political parties, often taking up an anti-system position, and which have been able to do well from a decisive political line (radical left such as Syriza or far-right such as AFD) or on the basis of a catch-all approach (for example, the Five Star Movement or, in a completely different manner, En Marche).

This upheaval in partisan politics was fostered by the citizens' predilection for forms of participative and direct democracy, against the backdrop of the continued increase in level of education and degree of information.

The increasing number of rolling news channels and the spectacular rise of social networks have heightened the intensity and transparency of democratic debate, but have also caused a number of adverse effects. The segmentation of information channels therefore appears to be highly ambivalent: we are first of all informed by those with whom we form a community, whether real or virtual, in which there is an element of trust, to the detriment of broader interaction with fellow citizens. The discrediting of conventional media outlets, treated as representatives of the "system", has resulted in the spread of "alternative facts" and "fake news", sometimes disseminated as part of propaganda campaigns.⁴

2. As stated by Thomas Raines, it is the "challenge to liberalism rather than to democracy which represents the greater threat to Europe and European integration", in Thomas Raines, "The twin liberal challenge", Chatham House, October 2017.

3. On Hungary and the concept of illiberal democracy, see András L. Pap, *Democratic Decline in Hungary - Law and Society in an Illiberal Democracy*, Routledge, 2017.

4. See Thierry De Montbréal, Dominique David, *Ramses 2018: La guerre de l'information aura-t-elle lieu ?* Institut Français des relations internationales, Dunod, September 2017

These major changes to the framework of national political debate have not called into question democratic principles – at least not to this day. It is a difficult challenge for traditional parties and political powers, encouraged to change their means of operating and communicating. The same applies to government authorities, that can choose whether or not to take on board the concerns and even the solutions voiced by parties claiming to be “anti-establishment”. In any case, it appears more correct to speak about partisan crises and information crises to describe the political situation over the last decade rather than a deep-rooted crisis affecting traditional democracies, in Europe and elsewhere.

1.3. Is there a divide between citizens and political elites?

The financial and economic crisis has also played a role in weakening the legitimacy of European political systems by fuelling the distrust of traditional elites: economic and banking elites, thought to have devised the practices which had disastrous repercussions in terms of growth and employment; and political elites, accused of failing to prevent the crisis or of having taken contested or painful decisions to tackle it.⁵

This rejection of elites was more keenly felt in countries in which a collusion between politics and finance has been perceived (for example in Spain or in Ireland). The rejection of traditional political elites was also encouraged by the development of coalition or “national unity” governments (see Table 1), made necessary by the wide spread of votes in legislative elections (for example in Greece and Italy). These multi-party governments have led voters wishing to express their desire for change and interplay to give credit to the political powers on the margins of the political chessboard (radical left and far right) or those claiming to be new arrivals (for example Podemos and Ciudadanos in Spain).

TABLE 1 ▶ A selection of “grand coalition” or national unity governments in the EU (2007-2017)

COUNTRY	PARTIS INVOLVED	PERIOD
Austria	OVP (EPP) & SPÖ (S&D)	2007-2017
Czech Republic	CCSD (S&D) & KDU-CSL (EPP) & ANO	2013-2017
Germany	CDU-CSU (EPP) & SPD (S&D)	2013-2017
Greece	ND (EPP) & PASOK (S&D)	2011-2015
Italy	Forza Italia (EPP) & Democratic Party (S&D) & alii	2011-2014
The Netherlands	VVD (ALDE) & NPVA (S&D)	2012-2017

Source: Author's own compilation

The widening of the gap between citizens and political elites was exploited by so-called “populist” leaders or movements, a term selected almost invariably in juxtaposition to “the people”, deemed an undefined entity, and its representatives deemed discredited and even illegitimate.⁶ The rise in these movements or leaders does not appear to be simply due to substantive reasons (anger aimed at “those at the top”) but is also due to formal reasons, and in particular the inclination to use a simple and emotional communication method more likely to have an impact on a greater number than the rational and legal language often preferred by traditional political elites. The ability to offer clear-cut and even simplistic political options instead of the culture of compromise and gradualism used by the elites in power has also contributed to the rise of these protest parties, even if they failed to attain power within the EU with a few recent exceptions (participation in the coalition governments in Bulgaria, Finland, Greece and Portugal).

The rise in protest parties has come in conjunction with the major traditional parties holding up quite well (such as the CDU-CSU in Germany, the People’s Party in Spain, etc.). Similarly, the prospect of a possible victory of political powers with radical positions (such as the departure of their country from the Eurozone) has led to an erosion of popular support, as was seen in France when the National Front reached the second round of the presidential election. It emerged that parties calling for a “return to order” were actually promoting a change likened to a “leap into the unknown”, in total contradiction with their political position and the aspirations of many voters.

5. On the mass-elites divide caused by the crises, see in particular Hanspeter Kriesi and S. Pappas Takis eds. *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*. Colchester: ECPR press, 2015.

6. On the anti-establishment divide as a consequence of the lack of representation of mainstream parties, see Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing Of Western Democracy*, Verso, 2013.

2. The European Union after the “Troika”: the democratic deficit, a never-ending debate?

Launched after World War II on the basis of an enlightened despotism approach⁷, the European construction has since undergone a movement of constant democratisation, as the European institutions gained increasing competence and powers. This progressive democratisation was in particular marked by the rise of Members of the European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage and further heightened by the recent entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. It has, however, come up against the new political order caused by the Eurozone crisis, and which symbolised the arrival of the Troika in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus. The exceptional and costly nature of this political aside must be stressed and the main political challenges that the European institutions face must be identified in order to understand the almost-permanent “democratic crisis” afflicting the EU.

2.1. “Europe-IMF”: a political aside that must come to an end

The Eurozone crisis radicalised criticism of the EU’s democratic deficit, in particular by granting a decisive role to the pool of eminent experts commonly known as the “Troika”, made up of officials from the European Central Bank, the European Commission and representatives of the International Monetary Fund. The emergence of the “Troika” appeared to echo the denunciation of “nationless technocrats” blasted by General de Gaulle and has revived criticism of the European construction which is deemed insufficiently democratic.

This criticism originally focused on the EU’s ability to weigh in on the collective decisions made in national democracies⁸, on the basis of a relationship of conditionality similar to that established by the IMF with the countries it funds (see Table 2). Four EU Member States lost part of their sovereignty because they lost their solvency: as they could no longer obtain financing at reasonable rates on the financial markets, these four countries were obliged to resort to loans and guarantees from public creditors (EU Member States, the ECB and the IMF). When describing the resulting “creditocracy”, Mario Monti rightly referred to the creation of an exorbitant political relationship under ordinary European and international law, based on formal equality between States. Once the countries in question restored a sufficient level of credibility on the markets, they were once again able to collect the financing they required, while removing themselves from a relationship of political dependence with “Europe-IMF”⁹, which was only an aside.

TABLE 2 ► The way in which powers are exercised within the EMU

PURPOSE	TOOLS	KEYWORD	EUROPEAN ACTORS	COMPARABLE ACTORS
Bailout	ESM Memorandum of Understanding	Condition	Commission / BECB European Council	IMF
Supervision of budgetary excesses	Stability and Growth Pact TSCG	Sanction	Commission Council	UN
Monitoring economic and social policies	Europe 2020 TSCG/Euro Plus Pact	Political incentive	Commission Council	OECD
Assistance for structural reforms	Reform financial aid	Financial incentive	Commission Council	World Bank

Source: Yves Bertoncini, and Antonio Vitorino, “Reforming Europe’s governance”, Study No.105, Jacques Delors Institute, September 2014.

Criticism of the “democratic deficit” of “Europe-IMF” and the governance of the Eurozone also targeted the opacity with which crucial decisions have been taken, in particular at meetings of the “Eurogroup”, within the “Troika”, or even during Eurozone summits. The co-existence of different players within the “Troika” has made it difficult to identify who exactly made common decisions, which have often been subject to conflicting interpretations and communication – the same can even be said of the conclusions of several European Council

7. On this subject, see Yves Bertoncini, *Europe, le temps des fils fondateurs*, Essai, Michalon, 2005.

8. This criticism also concerns, to a lesser extent, the European mechanisms to monitor the budgetary, economic and social policies of Member States, via the Stability Pact and the adoption of the “Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance” (TSCG).

9. On the concept of Europe-IMF, see Yves Bertoncini, “Eurozone and democracy(ies): a misleading debate”. Policy paper No. 94, Jacques Delors Institute, July 2013.

"crisis" meetings. While the sensitive nature of the decisions to be made with regard to the reactions of the financial markets sometimes called for a degree of discretion on the part of the decision-makers, this discretion has proved to be very counterproductive from the European citizens' perspective. Similarly, the shortcomings of the parliamentary control conducted on a European level has revealed democratic imperfections with regard to the often-strict parliamentary control conducted in many national democracies (for example in Germany). Once again, if the Europe-IMF aside has now ended to a great extent, it will leave quite a profound impact¹⁰ since the criticism voiced about this new political order directly echoes the recurring criticism of the EU.

2.2. A classic challenge: how to reinforce the transparency of EU decision-making?

The creation of a "Euro summit" in 2008, at the height of the financial crisis, helped to make use of faces familiar to European citizens at a time when key decisions were being made. This identification of the main decision-makers was useful in the succession of summits presented as "last-chance" meetings: although these summits often gave rise to the voicing of fierce disagreements, they did highlight the natural antagonism between representatives of different parties and citizens.

This need for visibility should now result in the creation of a permanent president of the "Eurogroup", who is not playing a bit part, hastened to return to his/her national capital once the meetings are over: this president should be the constant embodiment of the Eurozone's management, not only for other decision-makers, but also for citizens and their European and national representatives. Entrusting the role of permanent president of the Eurogroup to the Commissioner responsible for economic affairs and finance, based on the existing model of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, would make the governance of the Eurozone simpler and more readily identifiable. The President of the Eurogroup must also act under the supervision of the Members of the European Parliament in a Eurozone sub-committee - that could easily act as a "Eurozone parliament", which could be recognised by citizens in the relevant Member States¹¹. Together with the integration of the European Stability Mechanism within the community system, all these adjustments would improve the democratic clarity of Eurozone governance (see Table 3) and allow the EU to find a successful way out of the "crisis" in its strictest sense, i.e. a temporary phenomenon.

TABLE 3 ► A clearer institutional architecture for the Eurozone

THE "GOVERNMENT" OF THE EUROZONE	
Presidential level	Regular Eurozone summits with a permanent president and contribution of the President of the Commission
Ministerial level	Eurogroup with a full-time President and contribution of the Commission
THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION OF THE EUROZONE	
European Parliament	Eurozone sub-committee (open to all Members of the European Parliament, up to 60 members)
National parliaments – European level	Interparliamentary conference of the EMU (open to representatives of the 25 national parliaments that have ratified the TSCG, up to 150). Participation of Members of the European Parliament (up to 30 MEPs).
National parliaments – national level	Reinforcement of ex-ante and ex-post monitoring of their government when debating and voting on issues related to the Eurozone

Source: Yves Bertoncini, and Antonio Vitorino, "Reforming Europe's governance", Study No.105, Jacques Delors Institute, September 2014.

There is scope to step up the transparency of the EU's decisions well beyond the management of the Eurozone. The Treaty of Lisbon sought to satisfy this requirement by stating the open court principle for Council debates when meeting in "legislative formation". Results must then be produced to make more visible the documents

10. The Europe-IMF aside will be brought to a full close in the summer of 2018, when Greece will return fully to the financial markets (even though some ex-post monitoring mechanisms may remain in place, as is the case with Cyprus, Ireland and Portugal).

11. For further information about the democratisation of the Eurozone and the EU, see Yves Bertoncini & Antonio Vitorino, Reforming Europe's governance, Studies & Reports No. 105, Jacques Delors Institute, September 2014.

stating each country's voting outcome during the adoption of Council decision, and also when these decisions are not adopted due to an unattained required majority.

Increased transparency on a European level is also required for non-legislative decisions:

- Firstly, for international trade negotiations, which have an impact on collective interests and preferences that are so important that they can no longer be conducted exclusively via diplomacy. Even though negotiators should not show their hand to their international partners, considerable progress must be made in this area: this is what Jean-Claude Juncker meant when he announced his intention to make public the trade negotiation mandates proposed by the Commission, while inviting the Council to do the same when these mandates are adopted.
- Secondly, for the directives and regulations adopted by the committees which meet under the presidency of the Commission, and which are in greater numbers than the legislative texts adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. As demonstrated by the controversy surrounding the abolition of roaming fees or the authorisation of glyphosates, it is politically inconsistent not to apply the same transparency and supervision requirements to these comitology decisions, on the grounds that they concern less sensitive subjects on an infra-legislative level.

It is also in terms of the progress achieved regarding the transparency of trade negotiations and comitology proceedings that the EU can show that it has learnt from the Eurozone crisis, as well as from the development of public debate on Europe.

2.3. An endless debate: the European Union's electoral deficit

The incursion of the Troika further fuelled criticism of the importance of non-elected bodies on a European level. Responsibility must be taken in part for this situation, since it is logical that the members of an institution such as the European Central Bank are not elected: it is precisely to remove the management of money as a public commodity from political pressures that central bankers are appointed and act independently, across the globe.

However, a reinforcement of the electoral foundations of European institutions would be welcome, in particular extending the dynamic introduced by the *spitzenkandidaten* (top candidates) system launched in 2014 on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon, which would suppose in particular:

- The nomination of candidates for the Presidency of the Commission put forward by European political parties on the basis of a primary election which is as open as possible: competition between several candidates¹² and election by party members, or even European citizens¹³,
- The participation in European elections of all candidates for the Presidency of the European Commission¹⁴, or even of all candidates for a European Commissioner position¹⁵,
- The appointment of members of the Commission by the President elected on the basis of the outcome of the European elections¹⁶, once again to reinforce the link between their appointment and the popular vote;
- The establishment of a voting method close to the citizens, on the basis of constituencies that are as regionalised as possible — the additional option of transnational lists to be used to add a pool of pan-European office holders¹⁷.

All or part of these political and institutional reforms could help to reduce the EU's electoral deficit, which will remain structural due to size effects: the members of a European Parliament limited to 751 seats cannot by nature enjoy such intense and close relations with their fellow citizens (roughly 500 million) as national MPs. These reforms do confirm, however, the EU's constant progress to reach a democratic horizon that is still to be conquered.

12. In 2014, Martin Schulz did not have any competition when he was nominated as the candidate for the European social democrats.

13. The European Greens were the only party in 2014 to use a primary election open to European citizens, and not simply the delegates appointed by the national political parties.

14. In 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker was not a candidate in the European elections, although he was nominated by the EPP to be its candidate for the presidency of the Commission.

15. On the basis of the system in force in countries such as the United Kingdom or Germany, where there is a requirement to be an elected national MP to be appointed Minister.

16. The members of the Commission are currently appointed by the Council of Ministers, and de facto by the Heads of State and Government.

17. In the short term, these transnational lists could be created in the spring of 2019 thanks to the reallocation of the 73 British seats made possible by Brexit.

3. Democratic conflicts between EU citizens: how can we become more united in diversity?

The political conflicts caused by the successive crises that have hit the EU over the last decade have sometimes been described as the demonstration of a divide between "Brussels" and European citizens. They actually reveal considerable divides between EU citizens which can only be overcome by highlighting what unites them, or failing this, by promoting a European construction of variable geometry.

3.1. A striking political divide: not Brussels against the citizens but citizens against citizens

The recent intensification of criticism against "Brussels despotism" has occurred alongside an unprecedented heightening of public debate caused by the Eurozone crisis and the refugee crisis, across the EU. The contrast is striking between the denunciation of a "Europe" which is said to be cut off from its citizens and the incredible number of parliamentary votes and national elections which have placed European decisions at the forefront. The debates resulting from the recent crises have in fact played a part rarely seen before in the democratic way in which decisions are made at EU level ("input legitimacy").

The EU has admittedly become much less popular with its citizens during the Eurozone crisis, and subsequently during the refugee crisis. The EU's image, the trust placed in it and the direction it is taking have been assessed to be in sharp decline among citizens in most EU Member States¹⁸. This drop in popularity, which was curbed over the last period from 2015 to 2017, was all the more striking as it was fuelled by criticism from diametrically opposed positions: criticism of the financial assistance granted to some Eurozone countries voiced in creditor countries such as Germany, Finland and Slovakia, alongside criticism of austerity expressed in countries such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal in return for EU and IMF financial assistance. The same dynamic of diametrically opposed criticism was revived when the refugee crisis hit, with public opinion denouncing the lack of control in some border countries (Greece, Italy, etc.), the lack of solidarity between European countries (Germany, Sweden, etc.), or on the contrary the solidarity organised by the EU (Poland, Hungary, etc.).

This twofold criticism is naturally harmful to the European construction, but above all it reveals "horizontal" divides between European citizens, much more than a "vertical" divide between the EU and its citizens. Such horizontal divides have made the adoption of decisions more complex for national and European authorities; and were sometimes accompanied by the prevalence of hackneyed stereotypes (Greeks = lazy; Germans = Nazis, etc.), stereotypes which are often conveyed by the political elites as much as by the citizens. They have resulted in the adoption of decisions based on compromises deemed to be unsatisfactory by all. Yet these divides have reflected or continue to reflect the heterogeneous nature of the interests and perceptions of citizens of EU Member States, "united in diversity": these are much more of a danger to the EU's cohesion than yet another demonstration of its democratic deficit.

3.2. An imperative necessity: "united in adversity"

The divisions (centre/periphery, north/south, east/west, etc.) between national democracies exacerbated by the recent crises call for more emphasis on unity among Europeans. Promoting this unity has less to do with exalting the existence of an unidentifiable European people, and more to do with highlighting how peoples of the EU can both come together and be similar - which is easier to do if the outlook is global¹⁹, as the French president Emmanuel Macron did in his addresses in Athens and at the Sorbonne.

First of all, it is possible to state the reasons why Europeans are called upon to share their sovereignty in order to defend their interests and values more effectively in a world in which Europe is no longer at the centre

18. See for example Daniel Debomy, "EU no, euro yes? European public opinions facing the crisis (2007-2012)", Policy Paper No. 90, Jacques Delors Institute, March 2013.

19. Some more "inward looking" motives should naturally be promoted as well, such as the importance of the solidarity principle and the need to reduce economic and social asymmetries in order to increase unity within Europe.

and accounts for barely 6% of the total population. The advantages of shared sovereignty can then be promoted as a response to challenges as varied as climate change, energy dependency, financial deregulation, the fight against terrorism, the emergence of continental superpowers, uncontrolled migrant flows, etc. “Strength through unity” or the EU as a protection from threats may be a useful mantra to stitch together the cohesion between European citizens against a backdrop which is both unstable and adverse.

In addition to these operational prospects, it is just as important to invest in Identity Politics, stressing how similar Europeans are compared to the rest of the world. This does not simply involve highlighting our shared past and heritage, but also the principles on which the European model is based, separate from Asian or American models. We are, for example, European because we share democracy, the rule of law, gender equality, the protection of minorities, and the rejection of the death penalty, principles which are rarely applied with such intensity elsewhere in the world. We are also European because we are connected by a development model capable of generating around one quarter of the global wealth, based on a “social market economy” which strives to reconcile efficiency and cohesion like no other region of the world, while attempting to limit its CO₂ emissions. We are European because our long history of war has taught us to prefer the pacific settlement of disputes, without sending uniformed soldiers to die in neighbouring countries or young people to blow themselves up in public spaces²⁰. Without a doubt, Russian aggressiveness, the uniqueness of the Chinese model and the inability of Donald Trump to embody the values of the western world create favourable conditions for the promotion of such a European identity by the EU’s political and intellectual elites.

3.3. A hypothetical imperative: a differentiated Europe as a last resort?

Breathing life into Europeans’ “unity in diversity” in a democratic framework must be an impetus for the reinforcement of their involvement in public debate on the EU’s decisions, in particular around European Parliament elections or initiatives such as the “Conventions” held in the first half of 2018. While such public consultations could result in the continued striking divisions between the EU and the inability of national political leaders to overcome them, the promotion of differentiated integration may appear to be the last resort for today’s Europe.

This differentiated integration is naturally already a political reality, in particular through the existence of the Schengen Area including 22 of the 28 EU Member States and the Eurozone bringing together 19 Member States. This must not, however, be promoted further without proposing several positive agendas involving all EU Member States, to ensure that some are not left with the impression of being side-lined. Above all, it is important to avoid using the concept of a “multi-speed Europe”, especially as it is necessary to make quicker progress on several levels (Eurozone, Schengen and EU).

Differentiated integration could also be perceived as legitimate in the event of heterogeneous national desires or capacities. It can easily be presented as a tool aimed at serving the interests of EU citizens and Member States, while ensuring full compliance with their wishes and sovereignty. A national abstention may be legitimate in the EU today, in which many Member States or citizens are reacting negatively to what they perceive to be “restrictions” coming from Brussels. Differentiation may also result from heterogeneous national capacities, which must be assessed on the basis of criteria that are fully acknowledged to be legitimate (for example as regards entry in the Eurozone and the Schengen Area).

Differentiated integration must be based on legitimate procedures and mechanisms. Its implementation within the EU is the best option in terms of legitimacy (see Table 4), as it requires the involvement of well identified community institutions, on the basis of several options (enhanced cooperation, permanent structured cooperation, etc.). Differentiated integration outside of the EU could continue to develop, particularly in the field of external relations and defence (Eurocorps, Athena, etc.) and for research and development (CERN, Eureka, etc.). Formal and informal coordination and communication mechanisms must be developed between participating and non-participating countries under all circumstances.

20. On this subject, see “Yes, we are European!”, Jacques Delors, Enrico Letta, Pascal Lamy, Yves Bertoincini & alii, Tribune, Jacques Delors Institute, December 2016.

It is under these conditions that differentiated integration could prove to be a good way of combining Europe's democratic unity in diversity, rather than as a means to aggravate intra-European political fragmentation, from which external countries such as Russia, China, the USA and soon the United Kingdom may stand to gain, a development which would ultimately endanger the proper functioning and even the long-term continuation of the EU.

TABLE 4 ► Main EU mechanisms of "internal" differentiated integration

EU MECHANISMS	EXAMPLES
Opting out	Euro, defence, citizenship, asylum, Charter of fundamental rights, etc.
Enhanced cooperation (at least 9 out of 28 countries)	Divorce law, financial transaction tax, EU patent, etc.
Permanent structured cooperation	Defence (not used yet)
Constructive abstention (1/3 MS and 1/3 of the EU population)	Common Foreign and Security Policy
Intergovernmental agreement finally/to be integrated in the EU framework	Schengen agreement; Fiscal Compact (to be integrated by the end of 2017)

Source : Yves Bertoncini, "Differentiated Integration in the EU: A Variable Geometry Legitimacy", Jacques Delors Institute, March 2017

CONCLUSION

The new democratic order created by the external and internal crises experienced by EU Member States is even more unsettling as it is also a result of a more structural transformation of the technological and cultural backdrop against which political debate is held. This new order must be understood in detail in order to properly distinguish that which is part of national democratic confrontation, within EU Member States and between EU citizens, from what is actually an infringement of the foundations of national and European democracies. Political developments as wide-ranging as the rise to power of Syriza in Greece, the Brexit outcome in the United Kingdom and the advance of radical parties can naturally be subject to more or less negative assessments, but they are the expression of democratic choices rather than any questioning of national or European democratic life.

Once this distinction is made, several types of recommendations may be put forward based on the brief observations discussed in this Policy Paper. These recommendations can be organised into three categories.

First of all, to stabilise national democracies:

- Promote a controlled openness to trade and migration, together with mechanisms to cover the costs incurred due to this openness,
- Ensure that political, economic and financial elites act in an exemplary manner,
- Avoid leaving the monopoly of targeting emotions, hearts and souls to so-called "populist" parties.

Then, to democratise the EU's operations:

- Put a permanent end to the Troika aside,
- Draw all the political conclusions of the application of the "*spitzenkandidaten*" system for the European elections in the spring of 2019,
- Increase transparency for EU decisions on Eurozone governance, trade negotiations and comitology procedures.

Lastly, for a more effective organisation of democratic unity in diversity within the EU:

- Promote the joint exercise of sovereignty to tackle common challenges such as climate change, energy dependency, terrorist threats, etc.,
- Highlight the elements of a common European identity in relation to the rest of the world (rule of law, respect of minorities, economic and social model, etc.),
- Promote a Europe of variable geometry as a last resort.

The "new frontiers" of democracy in Europe could be outlined in such a manner, for a democracy that remains a constant requirement and a promise.

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