

“TURBULENT AND MIGHTY CONTINENT WHAT FUTURE FOR EUROPE?” (ANTHONY GIDDENS)

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In his last book *Turbulent and mighty continent. What future for Europe?*, Anthony Giddens provides a far-reaching analysis of the state of the union and its future challenges. According to him, democracy and leadership deficit is the structural problem of the EU and should lead to take a leap forward towards a federalist solution and a rethink of the European project as a *community of fate*.

Anthony Giddens¹ titles his book² drawing from Churchill's words from a speech made in the aftermath of World War II portraying Europe as one “turbulent and mighty continent” and giving his vision of a ‘United States of Europe’. So far, Anthony Giddens tell us that there is no United States of Europe but that “Europe is no longer mighty but has again become turbulent as conflicts and divisions spring across the continent”.

Throughout his book Anthony Giddens provides a far-reaching analysis of the state of the union and its future challenges. The survival of the euro is at the top of the list but it is certainly not the only relevant one for the recovery. The structural problem of the EU, its democracy and leadership deficit, obliges to take a leap forward towards a federalist solution and a rethink of the European project as a *community of fate*.

1. Conflict and interdependence: a community of fate

The author unravels the consequences of a single currency without a sovereign power: “The euro was introduced in some part to create political integration within the EU. Yet it has helped the very crisis that is turning the citizens away from the European project as a whole.” Citizens’ support for the EU is fading away, north-south and euro area/EU cleavages are rising, the UK is looking away from the EU and anti-German feelings are increasingly widespread across Europe. So far there is no sense of belonging, he says, no emotional roots that bring its inhabitants together “The prospect of military conflict between the major nations of Europe fortunately seems remote [...] Yet it is right to agonize about specters that lurk in wait should the EU start to disintegrate”.

However, for Giddens “there are two processes going on, intertwined with one another, division and conflict, yes of course, but also integration”. In the past years there has been the emergence of a trans-European political space. Citizens and political leaders became aware of their political interdependence. “Driven precisely by the depth of the current crisis, the EU has become experienced as a *community of fate* in ways it was never before”. Giddens makes clear that the path of further integration is the only way the Union can effectively deal with the problems it faces today.

2. Legitimacy, leadership and democratic institutions

Democracy and effective leadership are lacking and the author lays out three aspects that account for the evolution and struggle of the Union and are found in the space of absence of democratic leadership.

- The Europe of the Monnet method – named EU1 – where a ponderous decision-making between the Commission, the Council and the Parliament adds layers of bureaucracy, multiplied across all member states.
- EU2 takes over when rapid and consequential decisions have to be taken, and cannot be handled within the formal institutions – that’s where the power lies, in decisions essentially taken behind the scenes by key states leaders – amongst them “the informal president of Europe, Angela Merkel”.
- Sometimes in the lack of EU2 there is what the author calls “Paper Europe” that consists in a host of future plans, roadmaps and so forth that often remain just aspirations as there are no effective means for their implementation.

The EU is in danger of slipping into a leisurely EU1 way of proceeding when the problems to be resolved

are still urgent. "The central difficulty in Europe is not German dominance as such, but the incapacities of EU1, both in terms of lack of democratic involvement and terms of the absence of effective leadership".

The author recommends the EU to initiate bottom-up reforms such as "the direct election of a European president as the best strategy to combine leadership with popular legitimacy". The mechanisms of government should best be reordered and reformed taking into account transparency in a sort of monitoring democracy of citizens on their leaders engaging more accountability and structural changes. The EU should facilitate the development of trans-European media organisations and sources, make English the official language of the EU, and help NGOs reconnecting to their grassroots. The author emphasizes that "turning the union into a *community of fate* in a positive sense means building solidarity and feelings of belonging to the EU as a whole region rather than only to its constituent nations or regions".

3. Strategies for growth

Anthony Giddens addresses economic/industrial strategy and a range of propositions the EU should endeavour from the local to the transnational level for a smart growth. Progress in the banking and fiscal union - therefore German acceptance of mutuality - is of vital importance for unlocking credit for investment and renewing growth. Nonetheless the author refers to Greece as the "finger in the dyke" of the euro area and considers that "A return to growth in Greece is of far more than merely emblematic importance. If Greece returns even to a semblance of prosperity it will be a turning point of major importance for Europe as a whole." "An EU supported investment plan for Greece should be geared to upping performance in the public and private sectors through target-professional advice and help - a more extensive version of what is happening now". It should also aim at tax evasion and could seek to ensure that offshore accounts are properly traced.

The sociologist is a fierce supporter of a reindustrialisation of Europe and digital technology opportunities. Although growth will come from the service industry, the line between manufacturing and service industries may progressively blur. Computer through 3D printing could fabricate directly goods and we may observe a return to hand-made production and

SME rivalling large factories (with obvious net gains in terms of carbon reduction). Digital technologies have shown to increase productivity more than any single other type of investment a firm can make. He, therefore, stresses the importance of "the creation of a digital single market [that] could make decisive contribution to sustained economic recovery" and help the wider single market become more successful.

For Anthony Giddens reindustrialising Europe would also mean to "bring the jobs back" like the US reshoring (the opposite of offshoring) the manufacturing industry and its revival of "Made in the United States" that profit from high productivity, low price energy, and China's steep wage. It is also vital to "bring the money back" to recover resources that are urgently needed for domestic spending and investments. The author stresses that taking action against tax havens and tax avoidance more generally, is far more feasible today than it was some years ago. There is stronger political will in crisis circumstances and in the era of internet, when secrecy is far harder to maintain in the face of organised scrutiny.

4. Risks and opportunities : climate change, migration and social Europe

The author conjectures that we are now living in a society of high risk and high opportunity, partly because of our new global interdependence and partly due to an accelerated level of scientific and technical knowledge. The complicated and unpredictable way opportunities and risks are intertwined together is fold in three different selected chapters: the welfare system, climate change and multiculturalism.

Firstly, Anthony Giddens addresses the issue of whether the European social model can survive, and how it should adapt to a period of serious retrenchment. Having generally underestimated its connection with economic prosperity the welfare state should now evolve into a more interventionist social investment state, dealing with wealth creation and evolving from negative to positive welfare state by promoting education and skills prosperity, active life choice, social and economic participation. Pointing at employability he defends the idea of "flexisecurity". The classical welfare state minimizes risk by providing security in health and work, yet Giddens considers that "security may quite often be secured more by an active embrace of risk rather than any attempt to reduce it, especially in a rapidly changing world".

Hence, he underscores the importance of labour market flexibility, coupled with education and life-long learning programs and a move towards a common standard welfare across the EU that could have positive effects on the creation of a pan-European wide labour market. Many new digital and robotic technologies might also be on the verge of transformation to a cost efficient welfare system in sectors such as schools, health system and prisons.

Anthony Giddens makes the case for the European climate change policy. "The EU aims to be the world leader in climate change policy, yet the two endeavours in which the Union has placed its faith, the European trading scheme (ETS) and the UN process, thus far has failed". The ETS, that constituted the European flagship cap-and-trade mechanism for greenhouse gas reduction, "face the same dilemma of the euro: either the ETS needs to be strengthened in a very substantial way or it should be shut down". Testing its hypothesis of high risk and opportunity society Giddens examines the flaws of the precautionary principle, and the way it hampers the development of innovative technologies, finally recommending it to be replaced with a costs and benefits risk-assessment. He then moves on to underscoring the importance for the EU to keep research as a top priority (a breakthrough in energy storage could be transformative for renewable energies). Curiously he defines himself "a reluctant supporter of nuclear energy". He also accounts for shale gas as a possible game changer, that reduces coal usage and - notwithstanding lock-in risks - could be indispensable for a transition period.

The author reminding us the importance of immigration as a growth-driving policy for Europe assesses the scope of values, identities and cultures in the EU. Multiculturalism, as the author recalls, describes the integration of alien cultural groups within a society and "was created before globalisation had reached the level it has attained today and [which] is now receiving a massive further boost through the universalising of the internet". When "super-diversity reigns" and technological advance increases connectivity of emigrants many individuals no longer feel themselves to have single identities. Therefore the author suggests a switch from multiculturalism to interculturalism a wording that better grasps the intersecting dynamics of cultures rather than cultures as cohesive and distinct. Interculturalism is the cultural dimension of the high risk high opportunity

society. It seeks not simply to integrate minorities but to provide a vision for the society.

Conclusion: towards which federal Europe?

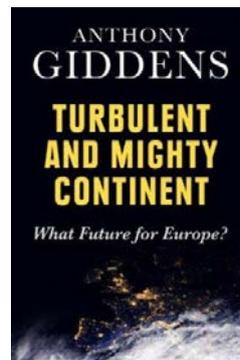
All previously above mentioned analysis converges into what appears to the author to be the most urgent exigency for the European Union: a step towards a federal Europe. A EU1 Europe is not compatible with a world that is speeding up constantly and EU2 leadership with Germany in pole position is inherently fragile and cannot survive indefinitely. It stresses that "It is in Germany's interest to escape the strait-jacket of leadership of Europe through EU2" and it is EU2 that should help make a step forward towards federalism. According to Giddens, the aim would be to simultaneously create greater democratic participation and to enhance a sort of EU3 with more leadership and political legitimacy.

However as the authors points out, some do agree on more political integration without agreeing on what form it should assume: "federal Europe is a fairly vacuous term until flesh is put on the bones". In the author's understanding the EU will have to give up some of the EU's conceits. As he explains "the EU is not a pioneering form of governance, the vanguard of a new model of transnational cooperation that others can learn and copy from". "The EU should drop its *flight from power*, including military power." He advocates that a federal model is not compatible with the idea that its distinctiveness lies in its form nor does the EU stand in any kind of privileged position with regard to world peace.

The political integration needed, if the euro is to survive and develop further, cannot stop at the boundaries of the economy; "welfare policy, profiting from cultural diversity, energy and foreign policy are largely concentrated in the hands of members states". A federal solution, backed by greater legitimacy and leadership capacity on an EU level is therefore the only feasible way forward.

However in its concluding remarks the author quite surprisingly envisages the possibility of a way backward by reviewing the different scenarios of a euro breakdown. He estimates that an uncontrolled collapse of the euro would be disastrous whereas the exit of one or two small states could be handled without significantly damaging the whole edifice.

Nonetheless in the last sentences of the book Anthony Giddens makes his position clear: "Yet a more integrated Union could become a power of world standing. It is an outcome which pro-Europeans at this point should actively struggle to achieve. There is a chance for the EU not only to advance but to correct some of its historic limitations and contradictions. Therefore I say unto you: let Europe arise! – across a gulf of some seventy years Churchill's words can still inspire".



1. Anthony Giddens is former Director of the London School of Economics, Life Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and Member of the House of Lords, UK.
2. Anthony Giddens, *Turbulent and mighty continent. What future for Europe?*, Polity Press, 2013.

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