

The European Union as an Unaccomplished Form of Statehood at the International Level

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If decisions that are taken at international level must be effective and democratic, new forms of democratic government should be established above nation-states. The basic assumption underlying the European integration process is that the only way to build peace between countries divided by national hatred is making them so closely integrated that war would become inconceivable. Even though European unification is not yet accomplished, the peculiar way followed by Europe shows how important is the political and institutional aspect of the construction of an international economic order supported by democratic consent. The EU is the most intensively regulated region of the world. Its political institutions impose restraints on what sovereign states may do in their relations with each other, and in this it shows the way to what the UN could become in the future: namely, the guardian of international law and the framework of a process of constitutionalisation of international relations.

The European integration process weakens national governments and compels them to cooperate in order to solve together the problems they are unable to cope with separately. It creates a European civil society side by side with national civil societies, and establishes European institutions that represent a decision-making mechanism which progressively depletes national institutions. The commercial and competition policies are exclusive EU competences as well as the monetary policy for the states which have adopted the euro. In these areas the EU behaves more or less like a federal union and can act as a model and driving force in shaping a new global economic order. Moreover, the European Commission, to assure free competition in the European market, is endowed with an anti-trust authority. Lastly, the negotiations for the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax among ten Eurozone member states are underway and a Carbon Tax is within the range of the possible outcomes of the efforts to increase the EU's own resources. The EU is not and will never be a state in the traditional meaning of the word. It will rather be a Federation of states. The nascent European Federation is facing the task of promoting mutual toleration and solidarity among nations. The vitality of the European unification experience springs from the attempt to reconcile unity on the one hand with the Old Continent's diversity of peoples on the other.

The EU is the largest global economy, larger than the US and China, and the first world's trade power. Consequently, it has a vital interest in keeping the world market open and strengthening the institutions that further this aim. This is the reason that has driven the EU, against the resistance of the United States, to promote the formation of the WTO, which springs from the need to apply new rules to global competition and to enforce them universally.

A full-fledged European federal union will be able to profoundly influence trends in world politics, in the first place by conditioning US foreign policy and driving it to a closer co-operation with Russia in a way that does not exclude China. More generally, it will eventually play a pivotal role between East and West, and North and South, because it has a vital interest, unlike the United States, in developing positive relations of cooperation with the neighbouring areas of the ex-communist world, the Mediterranean and Africa. The first task is to complete European unification toward East and South. At the same time it is necessary to strengthen the international institutions (OSCE, Lomé Convention and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) binding Europe to its neighbouring continents.

The institutional innovations that characterise its structure foreshadow a new kind of foreign policy, a policy of unification, that does away with the use of power. Through aggregation forms, more or less tight depending on necessity, according to the model of concentric circles, the European Union created institutions that developed economic ties with the whole world. Adhesion is the specific instrument of unification policy. Association and co-operation are the instruments necessary to prepare unification.

If we consider that a single currency is the background condition that prevents international speculation, that the public action of an anti-trust authority represents a remedy for competition distortions within markets brought about by monopoly or oligopoly, that the power to raise taxes represents the condition to provide public goods to society, we can conclude that this is what we need at world level to regulate globalization.

Since the EU represents the most advanced, albeit unfinished, experiment in democratisation of an international organisation, it can become the leading region of international democracy. It is worth recollecting that the European Parliament endorsed the creation of a UN Parliamentary Assembly. At the same time, it should be noted that the regression of European unification had a negative impact on the democratisation process of the other regional organisations. I mention two examples: the postponement to 2020 of the date – originally set for 2011 – for direct election of the MERCOSUR Parliament (Parlasur) and the announcement by the governments of the Andean Community of their intention to eliminate the directly elected common Parliament (Parlandino).

The EU cannot continue to define itself as the first supranational democracy in history if it is unable to answer the concerns of its citizens, first of all a work for jobless people, sustainable development, integration of migrants, fighting terrorism, a foreign and security policy in order to pave the way towards an EU independent security system. A partial but effective reply to all these issues can only come from policies promoted within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty, e.g. a New Deal for the European economy, a development plan for Africa and the Middle East financed by a financial transaction tax and a carbon tax, cooperative relations with Russia and a

permanent structured cooperation in the field of security and defence that would enable the EU to become a global actor. It is not only unreasonable, but practically impossible to address the problem of a constitutional reform of the EU without a change in the policies that would enable to regain citizens' trust.

Therefore, only if the EU resumes the march toward federal union, will it regain the role of driving force of international democracy? In fact, it is reasonable to assume that the European Parliament will be more inclined than any other state or international organisation to promote the international democracy experiment in the other regions of the world and at world level (WTO and UN democratisation). It will show to the world how a regional grouping of states can live in peace, under a democratic parliament and government.