

Towards a mighty union: how to create a democratic European superpower

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There must be a European legislature and executive as strong and as important as those that meet and act in Washington ... [A]ll schemes will fail which propose to unite Europe merely by adding together the states that compose it. The individual and not merely the state, must enter into a distinct relation to the Federation. In the Federal Legislature of Europe, as in the American Congress, there must be representation by population as well as representation by states ... The federation wanted is not merely an arrangement between governments, but a real union of peoples, so I think it can never be attained by mere diplomatic methods, or by the mere action of governments, but only by a universal popular movement.

John Robert Seeley, 1871¹

The project of European integration is on the verge of complete collapse.² Twenty years after Europe's failure to deal with ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, the common foreign and security policy of the European Union has been thrown into disarray by Germany's refusal to join the coalition to prevent Colonel Qadhafi from carrying out a massacre of his own people in eastern Libya. There is no common European position on Russian ambitions in the Caucasus, Baltic and the Ukraine, on the growth of Chinese power, or on the Iranian nuclear programme. Nearly two years into the euro crisis, 'Europe' is no closer to a solution of the sovereign debt problems on its southern periphery. The brief rattling of the bond begging bowl in China was received with the contempt it deserved. A disintegration of the eurozone, or at least a division between the 'core' northern members and the rest, is now as likely as not. Worse still, Europe is in the midst of a fundamental crisis of democracy, as the growth of 'economic governance' threatens to disenfranchise whole peoples. The Italians and Greeks are now effectively ruled by 'technocrats' and 'experts' working to instructions from Paris and Berlin. The alternative—demanding that the Germans dig deeper into their pockets to support the euro, without asking the German people and in defiance of the treaties on which the currency union was concluded—is no more satisfactory.

Whatever the future has in store, the big casualty of the past three years has been the 'gradualist' fallacy, the belief that Europe would not be forged in some

¹ J. R. Seeley, 'United States of Europe', *Macmillan's Magazine*, no. 23, 1871, pp. 443–4. I thank my student Daniel Robinson for drawing this extraordinary article to my attention.

² For an analysis of how we got there, see Niall Ferguson, 'Europas schleichende Auflösung. Warum die Währungsunion zwangsläufig zur Desintegration führt', *Der Spiegel*, 7 Nov. 2011, pp. 132–4.

brief collective furnace, but 'built' brick by brick, little by little, *peu à peu*. In fact, the historical record shows that successful unions have resulted not from gradual processes of convergence in relatively benign circumstances, but through sharp ruptures in periods of extreme crisis. They come about not through evolution but with a 'big bang'. This article will therefore argue that the European political unity which the continent so desperately needs requires a single collective act of will, not by governments and elites but by its citizens.

Unions of the past

European history has seen two types of union. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation were weak polities, partly because they were paralysed by internal divisions, and partly because of constant interference by outside powers. In Poland, neighbouring Russia, Austria and Prussia steadily undermined the sovereignty of the state, and within the Polish parliament the *liberum veto* or a single vote could block decisions and render the state helpless in the face of internal factions and external predators. Both polities were preoccupied with precedence, legality and procedure to the point of paralysis. In the Holy Roman Empire, France and Sweden were guarantor powers from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, with the right to intervene in German affairs, and in the eighteenth century Russia was also formally awarded that privilege. In both cases, the Great Powers were concerned to prevent rivals from securing a decisive voice, while at the same time ensuring that neither Poland nor Germany did not achieve sufficient internal coherence to pose a threat in its own right. The German Confederation of 1815, the successor to the Empire, was constructed on very similar lines in order to ensure that Germany did not lapse into civil war and remained strong enough to repel outside invaders, but never became so strong as to pose a threat to its neighbours. All these polities came to a sticky end: Poland was partitioned in the late eighteenth century; at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Holy Roman Empire collapsed before the onslaught of Revolutionary France and Napoleon; and later in that century the German Confederation was effectively destroyed by Bismarck in his drive to create a united Germany.

On the western periphery of Europe, however, it was a very different story. There the eighteenth century saw the development of an alternative and much more formidable form of union. In 1707 the English and Scots brought hundreds of years of military, diplomatic and economic rivalry to an end by joining forces. The aim of the Scottish Union was twofold: first, to bring to an end the longstanding rivalry between the two states, which had given England's enemies a regular opportunity to put pressure on the country's northern border; and second, to mobilize the joint resources of the two states more effectively against outside powers, rather than dissipating them through commercial and colonial competition—which had recently left Scotland with enormous debts after the failed Darien project at Panama. These considerations came to a head during the War of the Spanish Succession against Bourbon France. Whig elites on both sides

of the border agreed that whatever their differences, the containment of Louis XIV came first. So in 1707 they concluded an Act of Union in which Scotland received generous representation at Westminster and retained its legal and educational system, but gave up its separate foreign and security policy. And as the Union was made in order to prosecute the war, so the war made the Union. The common cause against popery and universal monarchy welded together the two halves more effectively than bribery, intimidation or crude commercial advantage could ever have done.³ Great Britain was born.

A similar process led to the creation of the American Union in the late eighteenth century. The 13 states had emerged from the war against Britain with huge debts. That, however, was only one of the problems facing them. Having secured their independence, the former colonies suddenly found themselves pitched into a dangerous world. The withdrawal of British naval protection after the Revolution immediately exposed US merchant shipping to vicious attacks by the Barbary Corsairs operating out of North Africa. There were also numerous threats to the new republic closer to home. Spain closed the Mississippi to navigation in 1784, and maintained a menacing presence in Florida to the south. Britain held on to Canada to the north, and remained hostile. Unfortunately, the constitutional arrangements inherited from the Revolutionary War were completely unsuited to deal with the challenges of the 1780s. There was no real Executive to speak of, Congress had no power to raise taxes to pay for national projects, and all international treaties had to be ratified by each and every one of the states before they came into force. As a result, the United States lacked a proper army and navy, because the states could not agree on how they should be paid for and feared that these forces might be used to undermine their liberties. Indeed, so loose were the bonds which held the confederation together that many Americans feared the United States might fragment into its component parts, or even succumb to civil strife. This fear was particularly pronounced with regard to the all-important question of the west. Alexander Hamilton foresaw 'territorial disputes' over 'the wide field of western territory'.⁴ The choice was stark: either Americans moved closer together to create a state capable of waging war and conducting territorial expansion, or they would go to war against each other and ultimately become victims of expansion by an outside power.⁵

It was for this reason that the representatives of the 13 former colonies came together at Philadelphia in 1787 in order to agree a constitution. They were immediately confronted by the question of which model of European union they should follow. Madison and Hamilton looked at the 'federal system' of the 'Germanic empire' and found it to be 'a nerveless body, incapable of regulating its own members, insecure against external dangers, and agitated with unceasing

³ See Brendan Simms, *Three victories and a defeat: the rise and fall of the first British Empire, 1714–1783* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), pp. 51–3.

⁴ *The Federalist*, no. 7, 17 Nov. 1787, in J. R. Pole, ed., *The Federalist: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay* (2005), pp. 28–9.

⁵ See David C. Hendrickson, *Peace pact: the lost world of the American founding* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2003), p. 63.

fermentations in its own bowels'. 'Military preparations', they noted, 'must be preceded by so many tedious discussions, arising from the jealousies, pride, separate views, and clashing pretensions, of sovereign bodies, that before the Diet can settle the arrangements, the enemy are in the field.' As for Poland, they argued that it was 'equally unfit for self-government and self-defence [and] has long been at the mercy of its powerful neighbours who have lately had the mercy to disburden it of one third of its people and territories'.⁶ Of all the European precedents, the only one that found any favour among the Federalists was the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707, in which the two parties, formerly so divided, had come together to 'resist all [their] enemies'. John Jay saw this form of 'entire and perfect union', to use the words he approvingly quoted from Queen Anne's letter to the Scottish parliament of July 1706, as the way forward for the American Republic.⁷

The constitution agreed at Philadelphia in 1787–8 showed that Americans had learned from the British, German and Polish experiences. Like the Scots and English, they determined, as the preamble put it, to 'form a more perfect union'. A strong Executive was established in the shape of a presidency empowered to conduct foreign policy and conclude treaties, which were subject, however, to ratification by the two Houses of Congress—the Senate, representing the individual states, and the House of Representatives. Mindful of what had happened in Poland, an electoral college was created on the suggestion of the southern grandee Pierce Butler from South Carolina, to make domestic cabals and foreign bribery more difficult. In short, the Americans had given themselves a domestic constitution which corresponded to the external needs of the state.

If we now turn to the project of European integration, we find that it bears many similarities to these historical examples. It was designed, at one level, to prevent Europeans—especially West and Central Europeans—from going to war with one another again. It was also intended to contain Germany by rendering it structurally incapable of military aggression. Finally, it was conceived as a way of mobilizing Europe's huge military and economic potential for the western cause against the Soviet threat. But while pacifying Europe, and containing Germany, required a constitutional arrangement and political culture similar to those of the old Holy Roman Empire, keeping the Russians out demanded a mighty union comparable to those created by the British and the Americans. This contradiction was starkly illustrated by the debate over the European Defence Community in the 1950s. The Korean War and the growing strain of containing the Soviet Union made it imperative that the West Europeans do more for their own defence, either collectively or individually, for example through German rearmament. In May 1950 the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed a joint administration of French and German coal and steel resources. Ostensibly a form of economic rationalization, the scheme was really a device to bring the war-making potential of Germany under multilateral control. In effect, Paris wanted to Europeanize

⁶ *The Federalist*, no. 19, 8 Dec. 1787, in Pole, ed., *The Federalist*, pp. 99–102. For the impact of the Polish partition on the constitutional convention, see Frederick W. Marks, *Independence on trial: foreign affairs and the making of the Constitution* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), pp. 3–51.

⁷ *The Federalist*, no. 5, 10 Nov. 1787, in Pole, ed., *The Federalist*, pp. 17–18.

Germany, before it Germanized Europe (again). The West German government under Konrad Adenauer supported the Schuman Plan, partly to cast off the shackles of the International Authority of the Ruhr, partly as a vehicle for the return of the country to the diplomatic top table, but also out of genuine belief in a common European destiny. In 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) came into being—the first major step towards European political unification.

The ECSC helped to defang Germany, but it was little help against Stalin. In late October 1950 the French responded to US pressure for German rearmament with a proposal for a ‘European Defence Community’ (EDC) which would lead to ‘the complete merger of men and equipment [including Germans] under a single European political and military authority’.⁸ In March 1953 the signatories to the EDC proposal concluded a draft treaty for a matching European supranational authority—the European Political Community (EPC)—to govern both the defence community and the ECSC. This was to include not only an executive council of national prime ministers, a court of justice and an economic and social council, but also a two-chamber European parliament, one chamber to be made up of deputies directly elected from the peoples of the community, and another of senators representing the ‘peoples’ of all the participating states. The parallels with the American Senate and House of Representatives are obvious. As with the United States in 1787, it seemed, where military unity had been agreed, federal political union could not be far behind. The EDC, and the political integration it spawned, was effectively a European government in waiting.⁹

But in late August 1954, the treaty was rejected by the French parliament. The European Defence Community, and with it the military integration of Europe, was now dead, and subsequent attempts to revive it under another name failed. Henceforth European integration was confined to economic, cultural and political matters, exemplified by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 which established the European Economic Community. Defence integration remained under the purview of NATO. This disjuncture proved fatal to the prospects for full political integration, although several attempts were made over the next 30 years to restart the process. Unlike the British and American unions, Europe was no longer a matter of life and death.

European integration after the Cold War

The end of the Cold War in 1989–90 created a new dynamic to European integration. On the one hand, there was no longer a Soviet threat, which greatly reduced the need to mobilize Europe against an external enemy. On the other hand, the fall of the Berlin Wall greatly increased the relative political and demographic weight of Germany. After a futile attempt to sabotage it, the French agreed to German

⁸ Quoted in Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, ‘Uneven power and the pursuit of peace: how regional power transition promotes integration’, Working Paper Series, Centre of European Studies, Harvard University, No. 150/2007, pp.1–28 (quotation, p. 21).

⁹ Thus John Gillingham, *European integration, 1950–2003: superstate or new market economy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 29–30.

unification in return for a cast-iron commitment to deeper political and economic integration. In October 1991 Paris persuaded Bonn to create a multinational corps ‘answerable to the European Union’—the ‘Eurocorps’. A few months later, the European Community summit at Maastricht established the ‘European Union’, at the heart of which was to be a currency union (culminating in the euro) and the new ‘Common Foreign and Security Policy’. In effect, the Germans traded the German mark for unification, and as Hans Tietmeyer—who later went on to head the Bundesbank—remarked at the time, ‘monetary union is not just a technical matter’ but ‘in itself, to some extent, a political union’.¹⁰ The member states also agreed ‘to support the Union’s external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity’, and ‘to inform and consult one another within the Council on any matter of foreign and security policy ... in order to ensure that their combined influence is exerted as effectively as possible by means of concerted and convergent action’.¹¹ Once agreement had been reached, member states were pledged ‘to ensure that their national policies conform to the common positions’. Decisions, however, were to be taken by qualified majority voting except where one state objected; the requirement for consensus effectively created a *liberum veto*, paralysing ‘Europe’s’ ability to act coherently on the international scene. Chancellor Kohl and the German elite accepted the loss of the Deutschmark because they regarded the unification of Germany as simply another step in the deeper integration of the continent as a whole.

This project of containing Germany succeeded only too well, at first. The new state showed few signs of domestic radicalization, strategic adventurism or hegemonic ambitions in Europe.¹² There was a brief eruption of popular xenophobia against immigrants after unification; but it soon petered out, and in general German democracy proved resilient.¹³ Moreover, the sheer economic cost of unification—much higher than forecast—absorbed much of the country’s attention during the early 1990s.¹⁴ German politicians showed no interest in acquiring nuclear weapons, and the elite remained sincerely committed to working through the multilateral structures of the NATO alliance and the European Community. Their claim to membership of the UN Security Council was not advanced with any vigour after it was blocked by the Italians.¹⁵ A Christian Democrat plan for a more

¹⁰ Quoted in speech by Jose-Manuel Gonzalez Paramo, Member of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank, ‘The sovereign debt crisis and the future of European integration’, Oxford University European Affairs Society, Oxford, 24 Nov. 2011.

¹¹ Maastricht Treaty, Title V. ‘Provisions on a common foreign and security policy’, Article J.

¹² See Manfred Görtemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004); Christian Hacke, *Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von Konrad Adenauer bis Gerhard Schröder*, 2nd edn (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 2004); Eckart Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit. Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart* (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2009).

¹³ For the refusal of Germany to conform to the ‘academic scare stories’, see Jan-Werner Mueller, ‘The old questions and the German Revolution’, *Contemporary European history* 7: 2, 1998, pp. 271–84.

¹⁴ On the structural weakness of German federalism and the economy after 1990, see Helmut Wiesenthal, ‘German unification and “Model Germany”: an adventure in institutional conservatism’, *West European Politics* 26: 4, 2003, pp. 37–58.

¹⁵ See Christopher Hill, ‘The European dimension of the debate on UN Security Council membership’, *International Spectator* 40: 4, October–December 2005, pp. 31–2.

integrated 'core' Europe in 1994 was not pressed when it met with little enthusiasm from the European partners. Hopes that the new Germany would contribute more effectively to the management of global problems were disappointed, however. The whole country, as one historian put it, was 'afraid of power', and indeed of military conflict.¹⁶ The prevailing view was: 'war—that is something we leave to the Americans'.¹⁷ Indeed, for Germany's allies the main concern after unification was to be not the country's aggression but its strategic reticence.

The shortcomings of the new Europe and the new Germany soon became visible in the Gulf and Balkan crises of the early 1990s. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait found the new Germany unable to contribute to the international coalition against him, and Europe unable to speak with one voice. More seriously, the collapse of Yugoslavia shortly afterwards threw Europe into complete disarray for more than three years.¹⁸ Instead of waging a war of European unity against Serb ethnic cleansing, the powers fell out among themselves. France was determined to prevent the extension of German influence southwards. At the end of 1991 the Germans pushed the Community into recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, a move which helped to bring the war in Croatia to an end, and had no real bearing on subsequent events in Bosnia,¹⁹ but fuelled French fears that Bonn harboured secret ambitions in the region. Germany proved constitutionally and militarily incapable, as well as politically unwilling, to break ranks with its European partners to stop the ethnic cleansing. Anglo-French attempts to mediate a peace settlement failed.²⁰ Instead of being 'the hour of Europe', as the Luxembourgian Foreign Minister proclaimed, the Yugoslav wars became an object lesson in European failure which culminated in the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995.²¹ In the end, Europe had to be rescued by a US-led NATO intervention. Four years later, the Europeans did provide effective diplomatic leadership in response to President Milosevic of Serbia's attempt to ethnically cleanse Kosovo, but even then they were shocked by the extent of their military dependence on the United States, which provided most of the resources for the successful air campaign.²²

Cumulatively, the impact of the Balkan crises on European integration was immense. Chris Patten spoke of them 'as the lowest point in Europe's post-war history, exposing the gap between our pretensions as Europeans and our ability to act decisively together'.²³ The first EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs later described the area as 'the birthplace of EU foreign policy'.²⁴ Determined

¹⁶ Gregor Schöllgen, *Angst vor der Macht* (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1993).

¹⁷ The phrase is taken from a RAND study in the summer of 1990: Ronald D. Asmus, *German strategy and opinion after the wall, 1990–1993* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), p. 61.

¹⁸ See James Gow, *Triumph of the lack of will: international diplomacy and the Yugoslav war* (London: Hurst, 1997).

¹⁹ See Richard Caplan, 'The European Community's recognition of new states in Yugoslavia: the strategic implications', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 21: 3, 1998, pp. 24–45.

²⁰ Brendan Simms, *Unfinest hour: Britain and the destruction of Bosnia* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

²¹ Josip Glaurdic, *The hour of Europe: Western powers and the breakup of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

²² For a contemporary analysis of this episode, see Peter Riddell, 'Europe must learn to defend itself: military muscle would give the EU more diplomatic clout', *The Times*, 28 June 1999, p. 20.

²³ Chris Patten, 'No more roses', *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 June 2007, p. 13.

²⁴ Catherine Ashton, speech to European Parliament, 3 March 2010.

never to be found wanting on their own continent again, European leaders made strenuous efforts to give themselves the necessary political cohesion and military muscle. To do this, they had to address what Christopher Hill described as the ‘capability–expectations gap’: the fact that Europeans wanted to be able to sort out problems on their doorstep but lacked the means to do so.²⁵ For this reason, the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 sought to address the central weaknesses of the Union: the problem of achieving unanimity in the Council of Ministers and the lack of continuity resulting from the rotating presidency. A new High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy was created. In December 1998 the British and French prime ministers met at St Malo, where Tony Blair declared that the Union ‘should develop the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military force’. This paved the way for the creation of a European Security and Defence Policy.

There were many, however, who believed that the continent had pioneered a new form of ‘civilian’ power, transcending traditional geopolitics, and should therefore not attempt to turn itself into a superpower on American lines.²⁶ On their reading, European integration was primarily a solution to war, and especially to German militarism; it therefore made no sense to endow the Union with military capabilities. Instead, Europeans should play to their economic, political and cultural strengths in the areas of conflict prevention, postwar reconstruction and the diffusion of their values through peaceful enlargement.²⁷ Europe should, in other words, be a ‘normative power’, rather than an attempt to ape the traditional Great Powers it sought to transcend.²⁸ This interpretation particularly appealed to the Germans, because it released them from the obligation to deploy troops in support of European interests. They wanted Europe to become, or remain, something more resembling the old Holy Roman Empire: a legal order rather than a Great Power.

Europe after 9/11

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on America of 11 September 2001 there was a general consensus that European security required military engagement in failed states such as Afghanistan from which terrorist attacks might be mounted. Some hoped that the new danger would induce the nation-states to pool their sovereignty for the sake of common security. The German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer made this connection when he remarked in December 2001 that

²⁵ See Christopher Hill, ‘The capability–expectations gap, or conceptualizing Europe’s international role’, in Simon Bulmer and Andrew Scott, eds, *Economic and political integration in Europe: internal dynamics and global context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 104 and 116–17.

²⁶ See James Rogers, ‘From “civilian power” to “global power”’: explicating the European Union’s “Grand Strategy” through the articulation of discourse theory’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 47: 4, 2009, pp. 831–62. For the original concept, see Hanns W. Maull, ‘Germany and Japan: the new civilian powers’, *Foreign Affairs* 69: 5, Winter 1990–91, pp. 91–106.

²⁷ Thus Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, ‘Why a common security and defence policy is bad for Europe’, *Survival* 45: 4, 2003, pp. 193–206.

²⁸ See Ian Manners, ‘Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 13: 2, 2006, pp. 182–99.

‘Europe has only grown because of crisis and pressure, and not because of papers, and not out of conviction’.²⁹ Fischer argued, against the background of the attacks on New York and Washington, that ‘the weight of the major European states is, pure and simple, no longer sufficient’. The Union needed ‘a common foreign and security policy’, he continued, but the ‘European Union as currently constructed is not designed to be able to take such decisions’.

European leaders now made some efforts to address the problem. At the very end of 2001 representatives of the EU member states convened at Laeken to agree a ‘European [military] Capabilities Action Plan’. In February 2002 the Brussels convention on the future of Europe was opened, its brief to draft a constitution for Europe; its chairman, the former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, announced to the putative founders that if they did the right thing there would be ‘statues of [them] on horseback in the villages [they] came from’. For the first time since the mid-1950s, Europe seemed on the verge of turning itself into a mighty union on North American lines.

The Treaty for the Constitution of Europe agreed by governments in October 2004 proposed a quantitative and qualitative shift in the powers to be transferred from national to Union level. The number of areas subject to qualified majority voting, which diluted national sovereignty, nearly doubled, especially in Justice and Home Affairs. More powers were given to the European Parliament, in the hope of increasing democratic legitimacy.³⁰ It was in defence and foreign policy, however, that the greatest innovations were envisaged: two new offices of Foreign Minister and President of the Union. Nor were these to be the last steps. The preamble reaffirmed the commitment to ‘an ever closer union’. Another article announced that the Union was entitled to raise whatever funds it deemed ‘necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies’. In other words, it could oblige European populations to mobilize the financial resources required to defend the Union from outside attack. This was a power which it needed in order to deliver on its commitment to a common foreign and security policy, but there was no denying that it amounted to the abdication of the military sovereignty of the member states, and the potential to create a new polity presenting a single face to the world beyond its borders.

All the while, however, three explosive charges built into the European project were ticking away at its centre. First, the European Union had created a monetary union, and was attempting to establish a common foreign and security policy, without first creating a parallel single federal political authority, so that it suffered from a major ‘democratic deficit’.³¹ Unlike the United States, the European Union was being established by governments, not by the people, or even by the peoples.³²

²⁹ Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer during the European policy debate in the German Bundestag, 12 Dec. 2001.

³⁰ See Andreas von Gehlen, ‘Two steps to European party democracy’, *European View*, Vol. 3, Spring 2006, pp. 161–70.

³¹ See Giandomenico Majone, ‘Europe’s “democratic deficit”: a question of standards’, *European law Journal* 4: 0, 1998, pp. 5–28.

³² Thus Thomas C. Fischer, ‘An American looks at the European Union’, *European Law Journal* 12: 0, 2006, pp. 226–78, esp. p. 227.

In late May 2005 French voters rejected the constitutional treaty, and the Dutch electorate followed suit shortly afterwards. The 'democratic deficit' underlying the whole integration project could not have been more starkly exposed. When asked, European publics saw no compelling economic or strategic reason to give up their sovereignty, and the 'European' ideal as such did not have sufficient traction to provide the missing dynamic.³³ 'We who lead Europe', the holder of the presidency, the Luxembourgian Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, conceded sadly, 'have lost the power to make Europeans proud of themselves.'³⁴ In the short term, the French and Dutch votes simply drove the framers of the constitution to repackage their proposals and try again. At the very end of that year, the Union agreed to a slightly revised constitution at Lisbon. The deeper issue, however, remained unresolved. How was the great power being amassed in the Union to be made accountable to the peoples it was supposed to serve? Conversely, how could these populations be brought to participate in the great union project, thereby setting free the even greater energies which still lay dormant at the heart of the continent?

The second explosive charge was the changing geopolitical orientation of Germany. In the 1990s the Germans had been strong supporters of the eastward enlargement of NATO and the EU in order to create a buffer between themselves and Russia in the east. By the middle of the following decade this aim had been achieved with the accession of most of the states of the former Eastern Bloc to both organizations. 'It's a historic moment,' the German Foreign Minister remarked of the accession of the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia: 'It will be the first time in modern history that Germany will be at the centre of Europe without direct threats to our border and without us threatening anybody.'³⁵ For Fischer, this achievement was the first step towards a deeper and greater Union;³⁶ but for many Germans 'Europe' had now served its purpose and, rather than extending the battlements further south and east, they preferred to raise the drawbridge and rest secure in their fortress. At the same time, the German people, who had not been given the opportunity to vote on a constitutional treaty which diluted their sovereignty, were becoming restless about a process of political integration which rode roughshod over their democratic rights. The respected Constitutional Court determined as regards the Lisbon Treaty that Germany could not engage in further integration without the consent of the people expressed through the Bundestag. At the same time, in a series of regional elections, the German people also began to revolt at the idea of a 'transfer union' by which they subsidized the poorer and often chronically mismanaged states of the Union without being able to insist on their reform.

Europe was thus singularly ill prepared for the crises which came thick and fast at the end of the decade. In June 2008 the Irish people rejected the Lisbon

³³ Glyn Morgan, *The idea of a European superstate: public justification and European integration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³⁴ Quoted in William Pfaff, 'What left of the Union?', *New York Review of Books*, 14 July 2005, p. 26.

³⁵ Quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, 4 March 2004.

³⁶ Joschka Fischer, *Die Rückkehr der Geschichte* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch Verlag, 2005).

Treaty in a referendum, threatening to derail the whole ratification process. A few months later, the Russians invaded Georgia. Europe was still reeling when the western financial system suddenly collapsed in September 2008. The crisis began on Wall Street with the failure of the investment bank Lehman Brothers, engulfed the whole of the United States, and crossed the Atlantic. European banks began to go under across the continent, especially in Britain, Ireland and Spain, and even in Germany. In the wake of the financial crisis came a sharp general economic downturn, as the United States and many European countries tipped into recession. Housing markets, retail and many other sectors went into sharp decline. It was the euro debt crisis, however, exploding in Ireland, Portugal and especially Greece, which really shook the Union to its foundations. The government in Athens had concealed its true economic data in order to enter the common currency, and availed itself of the resulting low interest rates to run up huge sovereign and private debts. Here the danger was not simply that Greece might default and be forced to reintroduce the drachma, but that the subsequent 'contagion' would drag Portugal, Spain and even Italy into the abyss, effectively destroying the eurozone. Then, in the spring and summer of 2011, Europe was rocked by the outbreak of a revolt against the tyrannical rule of Colonel Muammar Qadhafi in Libya, followed by an international humanitarian intervention, his defeat and ultimately his lynching.

These events exposed fatal flaws in the project of European integration. Most obviously, they demonstrated the impossibility of running a common currency without full political unification, or at least a close economic and fiscal coordination amounting to pooled sovereignty in these areas. They proved once again that Europe was unable to agree a common position on domestic and world affairs. Above all, they cast serious doubt on the original hope that political integration would both contain Germany and harness its energies to the democratic cause. In contrast to most European states, the Federal Republic continued to perform well throughout the crisis, with strong exports, especially in manufacturing, and a hefty balance of payments surplus. Germany, which had struggled to integrate the east after unification, was once again the industrial and economic powerhouse of Europe, with a huge concomitant boost to its 'geo-economic power'.³⁷ Far from trying to take control of Europe, however, or even using its increased influence in Europe to provide coherent internal and external leadership, the Germans began to retreat strategically.

The new European security architecture, with the secure borders it provided for Berlin, was constructed in such a way as to enable Germany to absent itself from the task of ensuring the defence of the increasingly remote—to Germans—southern and eastern periphery. In 2008 Germany was at the fore in blocking NATO accession talks for Ukraine and Georgia and in frustrating more concerted action against Russian attacks on Georgia later that year. In 2011 Germany—alone among the major European powers—refused to intervene to prevent a massacre in eastern Libya. And if the economic medicine prescribed by Chancellor Merkel is

³⁷ See Hans Kundnani, 'Germany as a geo-economic power', *Washington Quarterly* 34: 3, 2011, pp. 31–45.

rejected by the ailing southern and western states of the Union, Germany has no intention of physically ramming it down their throats; instead, a ‘central secession’ of Germany from the eurozone is far more likely. The problem, in effect, is not that Germany has tried to dominate Europe geopolitically but that it is so lacking in assertiveness itself, and so unwilling to countenance it in others, as to disable the Union at its very core.

Towards a closer and more perfect union

The last 18 months have been extremely painful for supporters of European political integration. We have to admit that the Eurosceptics were right in at least one respect. As currently configured, the euro is indeed (in William Hague’s words) a ‘burning building with no exits’,³⁸ in which the peripheral nations are locked into a debt serfdom which they cannot sustain, while the ‘core’ countries—especially Germany—face the unpleasant choice of either allowing the existing Union to implode or flinging their hard-earned taxes into a potentially bottomless pit. This is why the governments of France and Germany are now trying to establish an ‘economic government’ for Europe, with a common treasury and other instruments of a more or less undisguised Franco-German economic tutelage. Berlin, in particular, is fast becoming the new Brussels.³⁹ What Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy fail to understand, however, is that this solution will never work without the direct democratic participation of the citizens of Europe—both those who will be lending the money and those who will be receiving it in return for the necessary far-reaching ‘structural’ changes to their economies and societies.⁴⁰ Moreover, without a viable ‘internal settlement’ in Europe, the continent will never be able to meet the new global challenges in partnership with the United States and the other great democracies.

We have before us a grim prospect: the collapse of the eurozone, and a sudden uncoordinated debt default, followed by huge economic dislocation across the Union.⁴¹ This will lead to a surge in popular xenophobia and national tensions, signs of which we can already see in the revival of anti-German feeling on the western and southern periphery. In the east, territorial disputes may erupt once again. Given the resulting acrimony and finger-pointing, it cannot be assumed that Europe will be able to reform as a simple free-trading confederation. The whole political rationale of the Union will be in doubt, and the ordering principle of the last decades will be called into question; all bets will be off. This will leave Europe rudderless at a time of reduced American commitment to the continent and massive challenges from outside, including Russian territorial revisionism, Chinese economic growth and the Iranian nuclear bomb programme, to name

³⁸ See John Forsyth, ‘Hague: the euro is a burning building with no exit’, *The Spectator*, 29 Sept. 2011.

³⁹ See Ulrike Guerot and Olaf Boehnke, ‘Germany in Europe: the euro matters in foreign policy’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 28 Oct. 2011.

⁴⁰ For a critique, see Jürgen Habermas, ‘Rettet die Würde der Demokratie’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 Nov. 2011.

⁴¹ See Niall Ferguson, ‘It’s 2021 and we’ve bid Europe farewell’, *Sunday Times*, 27 Nov. 2011.

but the most serious. In short, while Europe is not confronting a single external enemy comparable to that which drove England and Scotland together, it does confront a multitude of perils very like those which persuaded Americans to unite in the late eighteenth century: an escalating sovereign debt problem, deep internal divisions between the member states, and a range of external competitors ready to move into the power vacuum.

It is time, therefore, to return to first principles and to establish a closer and more perfect union in the way that the Americans did after the War of Independence. Europe needs to elect delegates to send to a new constitutional convention, which would supersede all existing arrangements, including the German Basic Law. The dire state of the eurozone and the tasks facing Europe in the coming decades require the immediate creation of a complete fiscal and military union of the continent. This will involve the creation of a Union parliament with legislative powers; the federalizing of all state debt, after a suitable 'haircut' through the issue of Union bonds to be backed by the entire tax revenue of the common currency zone; the supervised dissolution of insolvent private sector financial institutions; and the creation of a single European army, with the monopoly of external force projection.⁴² This is the only structure that will enable Europeans to mobilize in pursuit of their collective destiny rather than against each other, and that will integrate Germany economically and militarily, without disenfranchising either the Germans or any other population of the Union.

The constitutional arrangements should broadly follow the American model. The president of the Union should be elected every six years at fixed dates, and would nominate a cabinet to be approved by the Union parliament. This should have two chambers, a House of Representatives elected by the population, and a Senate made up of four delegates from each of the constituent states (some of the larger existing nation-states, such as Germany and France, may wish to dissolve themselves into more manageable units for that purpose). In other words, Ireland, Germany and France would each have four senators; or Ireland, Castile, Lorraine and Bavaria could each have four senators. All members of the new Union would automatically apply for NATO membership. All Union military units would attain full interoperability with NATO. The official language of the Union would be English, which would be exclusively used for Union business and would be the sole language of command.

This mighty Union should cooperate closely with the other great federal democracies, such as Canada, the United States and Australia. It should enter into reciprocal trade relations with all liberal democracies that desire them. In the event of Great Britain declining to join the new Union as a full member, the closest possible economic, political and military links should be maintained with London. After all, the UK already makes a sufficiently large contribution to democracy promotion and international security. It is more important for Europe to acquire the strengths which Britain has developed over the past centuries, through union

⁴² For a proposal on these lines, see Declan Ganley, 'Europe must form a fully federal union or it will fall apart completely', *Sunday Independent*, 13 Nov. 2011.

and constitutional government, than to insist on the UK joining Europe in this endeavour, unless it wills this of its own accord. What we urgently need now is not a European Britain, but a British Europe.

None of the national governments will initiate this process, because it would turn them into state administrations below the sovereign Union parliament. The same goes for the existing political groupings in the national parliaments, which are replicated in the current European Parliament. Indeed, the leadership of the largest party in the largest state of the Union, the German Christian Democratic Union, has recently restated its belief that Europe should be a confederation of states, rather than a federal state with a strong central executive responsible to a pan-European electorate.⁴³ Nor should one look to the rent-seeking local elites on the European periphery in Ireland, Spain and Greece who have feathered their nests through the exercise of their 'intermediate powers' between Brussels and the member states; they stand to lose most by any federal solution which bypasses them and their clientelist systems. Finally, there are no serving political leaders either capable of or interested in tackling this project. It is likely, in any case, that the established elites will be so discredited by approaching catastrophe that they would be a liability.

The task of achieving this new Union must therefore fall to a new pan-European party which aims to gain a majority in the European Parliament in the 2014 election or, in the event of that institution ceasing to function, to win majorities in the respective national legislatures (or both). Once a majority in Brussels has been secured, and in the event of the national governments refusing to accept the democratically expressed will of the electorate for a new federal Union, the party would use its power to reject the new commission put forward by the member states until its objectives were met. The party would work with any existing grouping in the Parliament willing to support the transformation of Europe into a democratic federal union. It should welcome the establishment of other democratic pan-European parties as the first step towards the creation of a pan-European party landscape. The new party should be called the 'Party of Democratic Union' to accentuate the key twin themes of democracy and union, and should avoid the appellation 'European', now sadly toxic. The party language at Union level should be English. It would be a constitutional party in that it would abide by the democratically expressed will of the citizens of Europe, but it would be revolutionary in that it would aim at the overthrow of existing forms of national sovereignty.

⁴³ See 'Antrag des Bundesvorstandes an den 24. Parteitag der CDU Deutschlands am 14./15. November 2011 in Leipzig'.