

LES CAHIERS D'EUROPE 21

JEAN MONNET, THE EUROPEAN PROJECT AND US

In this article, Philippe Herzog reviews and analyses the biography of Jean Monnet written by his British assistant, Richard Mayne. He draws a comparison with the current context and sets out his own ideas and a vision to revive the European project.

Summary



The notions of “small steps” and “functionalism” attributed to Jean Monnet and the founders of the European Community are a myth. They suggested building a political Union many times, but the Member States never agreed. Today, to prevent the danger of Europe breaking up, we need to create a new vision, a new project, and work toward establishing a European Political Community.

The process of creating a Community began with an alliance between Great Britain, the United States and Free France. This was followed by an entente between France and Germany, as Europe and the world split into opposing camps. As the world order has shifted and Europe is now increasingly vulnerable to crisis and violence, designing a European strategic autonomy is vital. By renewing its commitment to strive for global peace, it must learn to build mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with every region in the world. It adopt the attributes of a public power, introduce a new form of planning and rethink its role in the Atlantic Alliance.

We forget that the founders of united Europe began by building industrial solidarity for supply in times of war and reconstruction. Reducing the Economic Community to a single market was not the original goal. Today, building socio-industrial solidarity and transforming capitalism in Europe will be central to any global human and ecological development strategy. Social Europe will make sense only if we build a new Community of labour and creativity, as redressing the deepening inequality between us will require a different and much more far-reaching approach than the excessive harmonisation of rules.

After the fall of communism, the reunification of Europe was a tremendous opportunity for progress. That opportunity has been largely wasted. To create prosperity out of European diversity, we must forge social and territorial cohesion through joint projects that bind Europe’s peoples together in a common purpose. By the same token, it is vital that we build long-term partnerships with neighbouring countries to the Union, based on association agreements. There should not be a multi-speed Europe, but a wide variety of cooperation options; neither should there be any dividing lines between dominant centres and neglected peripheries.

Jean Monnet and the Founding Fathers were not pitting a Europe of nations against a united Europe, they were trying to reconcile them. In their view, the concepts of Confederation and Federation were not incompatible. Today, we need to find new solutions to the same challenge: we cannot federate people against their will. We

must rethink democracy across Europe to encourage people to participate and come together as a society. The idea of “European sovereignty” lacks of substance and does not have the support of the public, Better is defining which common goods we want to share. The Union should be able to help people celebrate their “Europeanness” as a source of hope in their everyday lives, and embark on their own cross-border projects. Creating a European civil society and building a European government authority for cohesion will give substance to a Community that is capable of developing genuine common policies.

We cannot remain insensitive and cynical in the face of the identity crisis gripping Europe’s peoples. Instead of pitting “nationalists” against “pro-Europeans”, we need to bring nations closer together to rebuild the Union. The latter must restore its image as the model of civilisation and mutual interest that it was originally meant to be. We should all share European values, and a common and unprejudiced awareness of different national identities and histories.

The European project seems to have faded into obscurity, and for a long time I have been trying to cast it in a new light and give it a new lease of life. Reading an essay published by the Jean Monnet Foundation for Europe¹ in Lausanne gave me the idea of comparing Monnet’s work for Europe’s unity with the (virtual) project that I believe should be implemented today. The essay is based on a biography written by

Monnet’s British assistant Richard Mayne between 1966 and 1975, which had never been published. I have completed it with information given to me by the director of the Foundation², Gilles Grin, and have approached it from an analytical perspective, adding my own comments on current issues³. This article is also a way of fighting back against Philippe de Villiers’ despicable pamphlet criticising Europe’s founders.

I – The vision and the plan

Plans to build a reconciled and united Europe were forged through the experience of two world wars and the tremendous reconstruction process that followed. During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, German torpedoes crushed the British Navy and equipment, ammunition and food became scarce. As Chief of Staff to the Minister for Industry, the young Monnet convinced British and French leaders to establish a joint procurement directorate. It would take them over two years to complete; meanwhile, in 1917, the situation became disastrous, especially in France. After the war, Jean Monnet was among those who criticised – in vain – the crushing burden of reparations inflicted on Germany; this was a major factor in driving the country’s inflation rate up to catastrophic levels, and laid the groundwork for the rise of Adolf Hitler. France’s refusal to cooperate, and the way it nurtured a spirit of revenge, should not be forgotten.

In 1940, following the outbreak of the Second World War, Jean Monnet suggested to General de Gaulle and the British that they set up a comprehensive Franco-British union. His proposal was given a polite reception. However, the need to combine their efforts soon became clear: the German air force was vastly superior, and it flattened those of France and the United Kingdom. But France was under Vichy control and the British were unable to make the production effort required. Jean Monnet and Arthur Purvis, who was of Scottish ascent, drew up an inventory of equipment and supply needs and resources. The shortfall was substantial and there was no choice but to

order what was needed from America (even the Russians had to turn to America for help). The British bore the full brunt of the cost. From being the world’s creditors, they became heavily in debt. Thanks to Roosevelt’s powers of persuasion, Congress approved the “Victory Program”. This required a massive production effort and, from 1942 to 1943 alone, cost America the equivalent of twice its total budget. John Maynard Keynes was impressed: “Mr Monnet has shortened the war by a year”.

Jean Monnet was both a visionary and a man of action, who was involved in a dizzying variety of activities. He was born in 1888 and, although he was a good student, did not pass the second part of the baccalauréat (needed to graduate high school in France). His father sent him to London and then Canada as a travelling salesman, to promote and sell the family’s brand of cognac. He lived the life of an adventurer, criss-crossing three continents and meeting with large success. By the time he was 26, he was an expert in international trade. After the First World War, during which he made a name for himself by facilitating unprecedented cooperation between allies, he was appointed Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations, an international peacekeeping organisation. The League of Nations did not live up to expectations, and Monnet drew lessons from its failure. He helped rehabilitate the bank of Austria, and married an Italian artist named Sylvia in Moscow, a place chosen deliberately so that Sylvia could obtain first a divorce. He also spent two years working as a banker in China. During the Second World War he was, technically

¹ « *The Father of Europe, The life and times of Jean Monnet* », original draft by Richard Mayne, new and revised text and compilation of text by Clifford P. Hackett (2019).

² Gilles Grin published « *The Path to European Integration* » in *Les Fondateurs de l’Europe Unie*, Gérard Bossuat, ed.

³ Following my book *D’une révolution à l’autre. Mémoires*, Le Rochet (2018) and *Une passion d’Europe*, interview with Jacky Fayolle, published in the *Variances* magazine and as a special supplement to *Les Cahiers d’Europe* 21 (2019).

speaking, a British civil servant in the United States. His passport was issued directly by Churchill, and we all know what his mission was. In 1952, following the creation of the French Economic Plan, he was elected President of the ECSC, which he ran at a headlong pace. But being an administrator did not suit him. He was a person who built peacekeeping organisations, and he would continue to be the political inspiration behind the construction of Europe.

When General de Gaulle tasked him with setting up a French reconstruction plan, he needed outside help that could only come from America. He drew up an import plan but was already focusing on the ultimate goal: increase production and productivity rapidly to achieve full employment and raise living standards. Monnet adopted a methodical approach, establishing roadmaps for six key industries. Maurice Thorez, general secretary of the French Communist Party, urged workers to push up their sleeves; public investment was huge, and the social security system was created. Monnet and his close colleagues would have liked a joint plan within a Franco-British union, in which other European countries could have participated. It would have accompanied the Marshall Plan to aid Europe, which was not managed unilaterally but by an Economic Cooperation Authority. However, aware of Europe's reliance on the United States, Monnet wanted Europe to become independent while working with the Americans on an equal footing. But the United Kingdom rejected Monnet's idea of creating an institution dedicated to European cooperation and, after several unsuccessful attempts, he had to turn to Germany. In 1920, Adenauer declared that "a lasting peace between France and Germany can only be

attained through the establishment of a community of economic interests between the two countries". It was Churchill who first called for Franco-German reconciliation in 1946. Monnet and his close colleagues (Pierre Uri, Etienne Hirsch, etc.) took the idea and turned it into reality by creating a coal and steel community under the aegis of European institutions. In 1950, Robert Schuman pushed the project through the French parliament by a narrow margin. The European Coal and Steel Community was ratified and set up in 1952. In 1957, it was extended under the Euratom Treaty to include nuclear energy.

France stopped national planning in the 1980s. It was a serious mistake. The nationwide drive for growth and jobs came to an end. This was in stark contrast to China and, in many respects, the American industrial system. As for the European Union, it has never established a forecasting and planning system, which could prove fatal going forward. Of course, we no longer have to pool our resources to meet wartime needs. But solidarity in production – as called for in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 – is even more necessary across Europe today if we are to meet new human, environmental and productive needs, adapt to new technologies and withstand global competition. A common industrial strategy should allow for the development of European added value creation chains connecting research, training, production and marketing. As of old, we should pool our resources and establish common objectives in key sectors of activity, but differently and on a much larger scale. This would make investments more efficient and would require extensive coordination between projects, followed by long-term cooperation between businesses, territorial communities and governments⁴.

II – The western alliance

The European Economic Community was built on the foundation of an alliance between Great Britain, the United States and post-Vichy France. In 1943, Monnet wrote "There will be no peace in Europe if the states are reconstituted on the basis of national sovereignty, with all that that entails (...) Prosperity for the States of Europe (...) will only be possible if they form a federation or a 'European entity' that makes them into a common economic unit".

The political leaders of the Resistance met in July 1944, setting aside their differing beliefs and sensitivities to declare that: "Federal union alone can ensure the preservation of liberty and civilisation on the continent of Europe, bring about economic recovery and enable the German people to play a peaceful role in European affairs". General de Gaulle also envisaged "a strategic and economic federation between France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, a federation to which Great Britain might also adhere". But for Monnet, it was up to the United Kingdom – the great architect and lynchpin of victory – to lead the way.

Despite several attempts, he failed to convince his friends. Although Churchill called for a United States of Europe in his famous speech in Zurich, he nevertheless implied that Great Britain would not be part of it. Following a suggestion he made in 1943, the Council of Europe was founded in 1949. However, it was placed under the auspices of the Human Rights Convention and a Court of Justice, and did not have legislative powers. Later, when negotiations to create the EEC began, the British did not make any commitments but wanted to take part in the "conversations". An exasperated Monnet said that agreeing only to talk rather than negotiate would show an unwillingness to create an institution based on principles, and therefore a readiness to accept a lesser substitute.

For the British, "the prize for winning" consisted in maintaining their independence, that of the great power they had been a short time ago, and in freely managing their relations with the United States, the Commonwealth and Europe. In 1956, the United Kingdom suggested creating a free trade area. Monnet

⁴ Philippe Herzog, *Une stratégie industrielle européenne fondée sur la coopération, special edition of La Revue, Confrontations Europe, supplement to no. 98, April-June 2012.*

warned against wanting to fix problems between nations without first trying to identify their common interests; on the other hand, he said, once a Community had been set up to establish the future common market, it could be integrated into a free trade area. When the Treaty of Rome created the Common Market of six nations in 1957, it quickly attracted the interest of other countries. Both Greece and Turkey wanted to join. Great Britain sought to retaliate by setting up a “group of seven” with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, thus creating a European free trade association to compete with the EEC. The Americans were reticent if not hostile, and the group would never get off the ground. In 1960, Macmillan acknowledged that “it was a mistake not to join the ECSC and Euratom”, and Edward Heath declared that the option to join the Common Market was still open. No-one knew how de Gaulle would react if the British did apply to join; until then, he had left the door open.

According to Richard Mayne, the British attitude had always been “negotiate now, join later”, while Jean Monnet’s approach was “join now, negotiate later”. In fact, the assistant and biographer argued that the British had always wanted separate roles for the United Kingdom and the Community. The editor of Richard Mayne’s manuscript wrote that neither Monnet nor Mayne himself had ever “seemed to face the problem that Britain wanted and sought only economic, not political, goals in its move toward Europe”. The United Kingdom has never accepted the commitment enshrined in the Treaty of Rome to an “ever closer union”. In a recent survey, 60% of British people said they do not feel European at all⁵. Conversely, most people on the continent feel both national and European, and do not want to leave the European Union. But it is possible to feel European and still pursue national sovereignty. Are we ourselves (the French) really clear about whether we want a political Union or not?! There are mixed feelings everywhere.

America’s leaders at the time made the receipt of Marshall aid conditional on achieving European unity in which any one country could not impose its will unilaterally. But the determination to contain the rise of communism in Europe was accompanied by strong pressure to integrate Germany into the European Economic Community. Subsequently, in January 1962, President Kennedy suggested “an open partnership between the United States and Europe”, and declared “Ich bin ein Berliner”. He had in mind a trade treaty between the United States and an EEC including the United Kingdom. Jean Monnet was not opposed to a partnership of course, but he was not fooled. In a

private note written in 1965, he said “The USSR and America are united against European integration and the tide of history”. He understood that Europe must pool its material resources to be able to play a historic role. But, as Gilles Grin points out, he was even more visionary in that “having experienced the wider world at a very young age, he was also aware of the emergence of major integrated groupings, leaving Europe no other choice but to unite”. And, as Monnet himself said, such a union would contribute to world civilisation (which Schuman had already written in his 1950 declaration). The “Action Committee for the United States of Europe” (founded by Monnet in 1955) would continue to promote the idea of a united Europe along these lines.

Today, alliances are a completely different matter for Europe⁶. The world created by Mr Trump and Mr Xi is here to stay. Now, Europe relies heavily on the economic and military power of the United States, while public and private powers are feeding on free trade and violence is growing in step with their rivalries. The European Union must therefore reconsider its position in the Atlantic Alliance to ensure our collective security⁷. Furthermore, it must gain strategic independence if it is to become a global player with a new vision for worldwide peace and development. It must therefore adopt the attributes of a public power to bring its actions into line with its purpose, by forging ties of mutual interest with major regions worldwide, with a view not only to free trade but also co-development. International solidarity must be reconsidered with the aim of developing global public goods.

Today, the need for an outward-looking Europe that is confident in its ability to change the world is in stark contrast with the prevailing demand for a “Europe that protects”. Before we even start to talk about strategic autonomy, we must obviously address the deep divisions within Europe by exploring further what we hope to achieve together. We must start by identifying the European territory where strong and lasting solidarity will be built with the Union’s closest neighbours. If the United Kingdom leaves, we should invite it to become an associated state⁸. As such, it would be involved in decision making in areas that require synergy (collective security, for example). The Union must also stop adopting a Cold War attitude toward Russia, which is also part of Europe. It should offer Russia long-term cooperation as an associated state. Fear stokes division, which brings Jean Monnet’s warning to mind: “if Europe has to be built on fear, it is better not to build it at all”. Without hope, a community of destiny would be well and truly lost!

⁵ See « *Brexit and British Politics* », Geoffrey Evans, Anand Menon (2017).

⁶ Philippe Herzog, *L’alliance des Européens en devenir*, *Inflexions* magazine published by the French Army (2019).

⁷ *Vers une armée européenne ? Entretiens de la Défense Européenne*, La Sorbonne (16 May 2019). See *La Revue* published by *Confrontations Europe*.

⁸ In my book *D’une Révolution à l’autre. Mémoires*, I put forward a theory for debate: once the European Union has managed to bring its members together (i.e. forge truly strong ties between them), we could invite our friends and neighbours to join a large Confederation of European and Associated States, which would increase our ability to be strategically independent.

III – Entente on the continent

Let us return to Jean Monnet and his extensive experience of national sovereignty problems and their resilience. He experienced the disappointing failure of the League of Nations and understood the limitations of large international organisations in the event of conflict. He criticised de Gaulle for focusing exclusively on cooperation between nation states and, effectively, this cooperation has never been strong enough to resolve actual problems. In the aftermath of the Second World War, there was a need for binding arbitration between the victors and the vanquished, and hence for a common institution capable of enforcing and giving effect to the arbitration agreement. Hence, the Commission, that unique institution, was created. Nonetheless, the pragmatic Monnet was also in favour of setting up a European Council of Heads of State. It was established in 1974 by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt. But the principle of unanimity remained in place, contrary to the wishes of Jean Monnet. Monnet also said that a European government would have to be created, without specifying in advance what form it should take.

The antagonism between Monnet and de Gaulle should not be over-estimated. In 1969, after the General's resignation, Richard Mayne asked Monnet: Did de Gaulle help or hinder the process of European unity? Monnet was silent for a long while. Then he replied: "I think both. He developed the notion of the Community without Great Britain. But he also developed the notion of the Community and, at the same time, and in contradiction, the notion of France with her hands free". As we have seen, de Gaulle and Monnet worked together several times, and Monnet was open to the idea of a Confederation. De Gaulle obviously wanted France to have a free rein to rebuild and modernise, and, as the British biographer pointed out, as soon as a solution to the Algerian issue was in sight, he accepted the creation of the EC... although he was uncomfortable with and hostile to the key role entrusted to the Commission.

So, besides the relationship with the United Kingdom, the main disagreement between de Gaulle and Monnet had to do with the exercise of joint political decision-making powers. In 1962, Monnet defended and explained the way the Community worked: "After trial and error, this method has developed into a regular interchange between a European body responsible for solutions to common problems [the Commission], and the governments of members which put the national points of view. This is a completely new approach. It does not create a central government. But it does result in Community decisions taken within the Council of Ministers because [...] [it] makes possible, without risk, to give up the unanimity rule". But the approach did not

withstand the test of experience. Monnet considered giving the people a say, but that never happened.

In a nation state, a legitimate and effective government must embody the people's will and channel the strength of a community. That is the meaning of "sovereignty", as referred to in classical modernity. But it is being undermined by outside forces like globalisation, which have intruded on the state's authority over its own territory. Within nation states, people are feeling increasingly restricted by the confines of "representative" democracy, which compels them to delegate their powers to others. They are speaking out via social media and shaking up their leaders. Many aspire to be involved in decision making. If they cannot do that at the European level too, the EU will never be democratic in their view. And even if the European Parliament's powers were consolidated, it would only ever have delegated authority. We must build grassroots participation in each country and, at the same time, make sure that people experience what it means to be European both in their everyday lives and through common projects. Otherwise, the current divisions will get deeper and we can say goodbye to solidarity. Governance by rule making and meetings at the Council of Europe Summit does not reflect the need for participation and solidarity. We carry out surveys to identify what the grassroots want: "would you like more ecology, protection, a European army...? We'll compile a hotchpotch catalogue of programmes... And the Union will deliver solutions on your behalf". This has gone on for far too long. Unless we rethink democracy in Europe, there will be no political Community. Creating a European civil society that encourages project initiators and organises their access to institutions should be an absolute priority.

At the same time, we could make progress on the issue of the Union's governance. In his book *Se reposer ou être libre*, Michel Barnier suggests that the President of the Union be elected by a congress of members of the European and national parliaments. This reflects the political culture in France: a survey conducted in May 2019 revealed that two thirds of French people think the EU President should be elected by direct universal suffrage. They need not only a living embodiment of power, but also the power to choose it and dismiss it if necessary. As for me, since I am interested in Switzerland's experience, I propose a government made up of a small number of ministers, who would be members of the Commission and the European Council at the same time. Selected from a pan-european campaign in parallel with the European legislative elections, it would be tasked where promoting common policies in the key areas or sectors that both Monnet and de Gaulle used

⁹ The irony is that, when we talk about a European Army today, some experts argue that, given the diversity of equipment and cultures across Europe, it would still have to be under American command. They point out the sheer scale of the task of developing Europe-wide strategic and operational autonomy.

¹⁰ *Repenser la construction européenne*, Les Echos (7 March 1994).

to talk about. The public would be involved in choosing the “sectors” and developing the common policies. The latter could be put in place through close cooperation programmes if we were to scrap the unanimity rule within the European Council and if, at the same time, we reformed the single market and created a real budget. Bearing in mind that there is no single European people at present, but that there are many European

peoples who wish to retain their national identity, the prospect of a political community – which I am trying hard to restore – calls for a sort of historic compromise between a Europe of nations and a federal Europe; or rather, we could move beyond these two conflicting options, since the people would be able to forge solidarity themselves and take part in collective decision making. It is a work of civilisation.

IV – Civilisation, culture and the European project

In 1955, Monnet argued that a political Union was urgently needed to address new global challenges and, in particular, to prevent a nuclear war. But efforts to directly establish this political Union at the same time as a defence community had recently failed. The economic area was only just starting to take shape with the creation of the ECSC and the reopening of external trade. The development of a common market became inevitable, driven by a political consensus in Germany and pressure from America. The EEC project was a huge undertaking, and Jean Monnet and his Committee for the United States of Europe worked tirelessly to make it a success. Since the Treaty of Rome, the market economy had prevailed, but Jean Monnet’s proposal to create joint European transport and energy plans were rejected (except the plan for the nuclear energy industry). The prospect of an industrial Union became even more remote. Jean Monnet then turned his attention to getting the United Kingdom into the EC. In vain. When it did happen in 1973, he thought the British would be “caught up in the Union’s momentum”. But no. Moreover, his two British assistants, Mayne and Duchêne, disagreed, probably because they knew their fellow citizens did not really feel European. Duchêne resigned his duties in 1962 and Mayne followed suit in 1966, when Jean Monnet’s influence was on the wane.

But the idea of a single currency – which Monnet first mentioned in a memo in 1952 – re-emerged. It was put forward by economist Robert Triffin and, with the support of Raymond Barre, Pierre Werner drew up a plan for monetary union by 1980. Jacques Delors successfully revived interest in such a union, as extreme monetary volatility was dividing Europe and threatening the common market. But the Treaty of Maastricht left Delors with a bitter taste in his mouth. His hopes for a common economic policy based on cooperation were dead in the water; the investment plan he had proposed to the Member States to develop infrastructure and employment was not even discussed. The Treaty was ratified with difficulty in 1992, giving rise to burgeoning public opposition.

European leaders underestimated the consequences of creating interdependence within a single market where competition reigns unchecked by industrial solidarity, particularly competition between workers. How can we fail to recall the warnings made by Maurice

Allais in 1994: “the dogma of free trade (...) raises the prospect of a substantial relative decrease in the wages of lower-skilled workers but, as minimum wages make that impossible, we will have increasingly widespread unemployment (...) Genuine liberalism is only possible within a clearly defined and truly democratic political framework, where political authority is embodied in an executive answerable to the European Parliament”. The social question has now sprung up and people are questioning what the Union is doing. The tragedy is that the response to this question has been left to the discretion of the individual nation states, and completely separated from the economic question. In the European Union, the economic community is reduced to being a single market. There is little industrial solidarity and no common economic policy. Since the 90s, I have been criticising the lack of solidarity and the unfinished and unbalanced nature of the single market. There is still no pan-European employment and training market, however the principle of free movement of capital is in force. It is used by large investors within an open market area, which is financialising the economy by refusing state intervention (except where indirectly provided). Things are changing, but slowly. Financial supervision has been put in place. A banking Union, tax Union and investment plan are beginning to set up, although technocratically and without a real budget. And an industrial policy is once more on the table. But there is no consensus in this respect, either in Germany, France or elsewhere. We have still not understood that states cannot continue to individually “control” production and land use. Due to the globalisation of production, the components for each individual product or service are designed, manufactured and traded in several countries at the same time. What is more, these processes rely on digital technologies that capture their significance and impacts. This will continue to be divisive until strong industrial solidarity and infrastructure are put in place to establish a common goods approach.

It is therefore not surprising if Europe’s most important “social” question is addressed solely from the perspective of protecting workers – particularly western workers – and their rights, and if people in France feel the need to protect themselves from “intruders” from the East. Deadly denial. The endless discussions

about the social dimension of programmes and rules should not conceal this fundamental construction flaw: we have not built a common labour community in Europe. Not to protect ourselves in our respective countries, but to work together to raise living standards and reinvent full employment. An intra-European labour division and a European labour community are, from my perspective, prerequisites for mutual friendship and recognition, without which there cannot be a political Union. Likewise, we are trying to address the ecological imperative by developing a set of standard rules. How can we fail to see the need for a political economy of ecology based on solidarity in different sectors, including training, agriculture, transport, housing, energy and production?

Neglecting socio-industrial relations, through which workers from different countries could meet, talk and learn to share the contemporary challenges brought about by the globalisation of production, is a very serious error. In today's global economy, the human and productive solidarity that used to exist within nation states, across national territories, is broken. We must therefore try to replicate it at the European level through a mutuality-based approach. As it is, the development of value creation chains has been left in the hands of major powers, and European added value, which would require public choices, does not yet exist. Our market community is not an economic community!

V – Sovereignty and democracy

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tive elections, it would be tasked with promoting common policies in the key areas or sectors that both Monnet and de Gaulle used to talk about. The public would be involved in choosing the "sectors" and developing the common policies. The latter could be put in place through close cooperation programmes if we were to scrap the unanimity rule within the European Council and if, at the same time, we reformed the single market and created a real budget. Bearing in mind that there is no single European people at present, but that there are many European peoples who wish to retain their national identity, the prospect of a political community – which I am trying hard to restore – calls for a sort of historic compromise between a Europe of nations and a federal Europe; or rather, we could move beyond these two conflicting options, since the people would be able to forge solidarity themselves and take part in collective decision making. It is a work of civilisation.

VI – Civilisation, culture and the European project

At the first meeting of the members of the Community Assemblies and the Council of Europe in 1953, Jean Monnet declared: "for a long time, I have been struck by something the Swiss philosopher Amiel said: "Each man's experience starts again from the beginning. Only institutions grow wiser; they accumulate collective experience and owing to this experience and this wisdom, men subject to the same rules will not see their own nature changing but their behaviour gradually transformed". In a declaration made in 1964, the Action Committee for the United States of Europe wrote "within our nations, we have created institutions that enable citizens of the same country to debate their problems and find solutions that then become common law, while other institutions ensure its implementation. We no longer allow the notions of force, superiority and dominance to govern relations between citizens. To establish the same conditions between the countries of Europe, there is no other way than to apply the same method. Thus Europeans, while remaining profoundly attached to their respective countries, will all have a sense of belonging to the same community... which is the very definition of the civilisation process. The only alternative path is to return to the nationalism and the spirit of superiority that led the world to disaster". In the summer of 1966, Jean Monnet wrote a brief note to himself, outlining his point of view on civilisation:

"Liberty means civilisation.
Civilisation means rules and institutions;
It is a privilege to be born in our civilisation.
Are we to limit these privileges behind national borders,
Or are we to extend the privileges to others?
We must maintain our civilisation
which is so much ahead of the rest of the world [!]
and organise it toward peace".

Thus, Jean Monnet's endeavour to advance civilisation

through the development of economic and political institutions was very well thought out. The idea that he wanted to build Europe "in small steps" is a myth. Jean Monnet had a long-term vision and he was a federalist.

Bearing in mind that a civilisation is also a culture, a set of beliefs and mindsets shared by societies over a long period of time, I have explored the relationship between Jean Monnet and the European culture. According to Jack Lang, Jean Monnet said "if I had to start again, I would start with culture". According to Gilles Grin, there is no record of Jean Monnet ever having made such a comment. It was not his style and he never regarded culture as a means of achieving European construction. How familiar was he with the great intellectuals who paved the way for the concept of a European federation? How did he interact with the humanist thinkers of his time, and with other community creators such as Robert Schuman? It would be useful to find out because, while Europe has always been a political project, it has always been inspired by intellectual pioneers and based implicitly on a common consciousness and a community of thought as well as action.

In this article, I have looked back at how the European project took shape after the war, how it ran out of steam from the late 60s to the early 80s, and how Delors tried to revive it but finally failed. Today, the project has been left to languish, stifled by indifference and cultural loss. It has been replaced by empty declarations and programmes that claim to define the European interest but are in fact concocted in various ways by national parties. The very notion of a project has lost all currency. Of course, the European Union, as it was originally constructed, is still very resilient. It is still standing but its foundations are not solid enough to cope with the challenges of today's world.

From the outset, European construction has been a matter for the elite, driven by a sense of duty and

pragmatic interest. But in 1992, the people reacted. The rebels were branded populists, while many others were indifferent or disappointed: this conflict will continue until we engage in a pan-European process to redefine and establish the common interest. We can of course talk about consolidating the European Union, but who is listening? Working together to ensure a successful ecological transition is of course commendable, but how is it possible without a political economy and a level of public awareness commensurate with the challenges? The only way to restore hope is to develop a new, more responsible form of humanism, which is genuinely shared and incorporated into a common community of values, labour and creativity.

In 2015, Herman Van Rompuy¹², former President of the European Council and a European through and through, asked: “Are we going to build Europe around a set of values, or around a narrative?” He replied: “Around a set of values, as there is no common narrative to be heard”. This is debatable, and Edgar Morin’s¹³ comment is very useful in this respect: “our values reflect our needs, and utopia embodies our values”. When, as is currently the case, our needs are not clearly defined and co-developed, our values become fetishes and the political utopia needed to put them into action is lacking. Together, we must revive the values and the narrative, in other words the project. And it all starts with raising awareness. The narrative and the project are trapped in a vertical system created by thinkers and leaders. We need to develop a horizontal system founded on participation and solidarity.

One of the thorniest issues is that of the Union’s enlargement, or rather its geographic expansion. Jean Monnet argued that Europe must be open to all countries: “There is no Eastern Europe, no Western Europe, there are nations that accept the same principles and the same rules in their relationships, whether they are in the East or the West”. When asked about this, Monnet added that both Russia and Spain could be part of Europe if they were not dictatorships.

We are very far from understanding the full implications of the fall of communism and the division of the world into blocks. The historical significance of the European reunification process that began in the 2000s has never been understood. Most leaders and intellectuals have completely ignored it. And enlargement has been used as a scapegoat for people who developed intra-Union competition grow, without considering the contribution of solidarity. How can we fail to see that we are losing sight of the very purpose of the European project: to create wealth from the diversity and heterogeneity of Europe’s peoples, while building a close unity ? We are

asking jurists to do the work of politicians, who should be trying to connect with Europeans and bring them closer together through common policies. This is all the more urgent because socio-demographic inequality, intra-European mobility and migration into the European Union are causing deep divisions. When countries on the periphery of the European Union lose 10, 15, 20% or more of their working population, the demographic panic described by Ivan Krastev¹⁴ triggers a phenomenon of identitarian closure. Such phenomena are condemned in wealthier western countries, such as Germany, which welcomes migration to make up for its ageing population without, however, engaging in any form of reciprocity. Rebuilding social and territorial cohesion by creating positive mobility means facilitating travel for educational and professional purposes, within a properly regulated European labour market combined with an industrial division of labour. Harmonising minimum wages is not a solution instead.

Allow me to digress a little here to talk about a book by Amin Maalouf¹⁵. He hits the nail on the head when he says there is a “perverse obsession with homogeneity”. He talks about ethnic and religious homogeneity in his native Middle East. But what he says could also apply to Europe, where homogenisation through rules and legislation is becoming a substitute for the courage and determination needed to develop common policies. From a social perspective, the equality so dear to the French has not paved the way for greater social justice in the form of inclusion of excluded groups and restoration of the social ladder. We would also have a “downward ladder” if we wish to share the privileges of wealth and nobility described by Bourdieu. This is not unrelated to Margaret Thatcher’s claim that there is no such thing as society; in fact, our societies are breaking up. At the same time, the authority of political leaders is becoming increasingly fragile, and so-called representative democracy is in crisis.

Today, building civilisation across three dimensions – economic, political and cultural – is a global challenge, and the possibility of a global society is being contemplated. In these circumstances, the cultural dimension of the European project, based on awareness and identification, will rely on the creation of an ethics of responsibility and solidarity, a set of European values, the construction of common memories, and the invention of a cross-border popular dialogue. In a world that is wreaking havoc with mental perceptions and human relationships, it is time for Europe to finally decide what it wants to be.

Philippe Herzog, Paris, 24 June 2019

¹² In a collective book coordinated by Luuk van Middelaar and Philippe Van Parijs, called “After the storm” (2015). See also *Quand l’Europe improvise* by Luuk van Middelaar, Gallimard (2017).

¹³ In his book *Autocritique*, Seuil (1959).

¹⁴ *Le destin de l’Europe. Un sentiment de déjà vu, Premier parallèle* (2017).

¹⁵ *Le naufrage des civilisations*, Grasset (2019).

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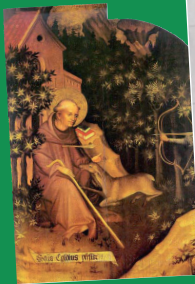


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