

COLLOQUIUM

Europe Emergency, Europe Hope

18-19 MARCH 2021

Colloquium organised by the European Affairs
Committee of the National Assembly

under the high patronage of **Richard FERRAND**,
President of the National Assembly

in partnership with the Jacques Delors Institute
and the Robert Schuman Foundation



European Affairs Committee Room
(33, rue Saint-Dominique, 3rd floor) and webinar

Thursday 18th March

9.00 am

Opening of the colloquium

- **Sabine THILLAYE**, Chairwoman of the European Affairs
Committee of the National Assembly

9.15 am

Welcome address

- **Richard FERRAND**, President of the National Assembly

9.30 am - 12.30 pm

THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE TIME OF THE COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

9.30 am - 10.50 am

FIRST ROUND TABLE

IS EUROPE GEOPOLITICALLY MARGINALISED?

Chairman

- **Pascale JOANNIN**, Managing Director of the Robert Schuman
Foundation

Debate

- **Sylvie BERMANN**, Ambassador of France, President of the Board
of Directors of the Institute for Advanced Studies in National
Defence (IHEDN)

- **Bernard GUETTA**, Member of the European Parliament

- **Daniela SCHWARZER**, Director of the German Council
on Foreign Relations (DGAP)

Great witness

- **Josep BORRELL**, Vice-President of the European Commission,
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy

11:00 am - 12:30 pm

SECOND ROUND TABLE

DOES THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE EUROPEAN MODEL BELONG TO THE PAST?

Chairman

- **Christine VERGER**, Vice-President of the Jacques Delors Institute

Debate

- **Pascal LAMY**, President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute,
former European Commissioner for Trade, former Director General
of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

- **Dominique SCHNAPPER**, director of studies at the School of
Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), honorary member of
the Constitutionnel Council

Great witness

- **Vaira VIKE-FREIBERGA**, former President of the Republic of Latvia

Thursday 18th March

2:30 pm - 6:45 pm

THE NEW CHALLENGES: REGALIAN TIME

2.30 pm – 3.50 pm FIRST ROUND TABLE

DEFENDING EUROPE? THE IMPASSES OF PACIFISM, THE LIMITS OF ATLANTICISM

President

- **Jean-Dominique GIULIANI**, President of the Robert Schuman Foundation

Debate

- **Franziska BRANTNER**, German MP
- **Arnaud DANJEAN**, Member of the European Parliament
- **Nicole GNESOTTO**, Professor at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers
- **Claude-France ARNOULD**, former Director of the European Defence Agency

4.00 pm - 5.20 pm SECOND ROUND TABLE

REJECTING DEMOGRAPHIC COLLAPSE: FAMILY POLICY AND MIGRATION POLICY

Chairman

- **Sébastien MAILLARD**, Director of the Jacques Delors Institute

Debate

- **Hervé LE BRAS**, emeritus researcher at the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED)
- **Gérard-François DUMONT**, Professor at the University of Paris-IV

Great witness

- **Dubravka ŠUJICA**, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography

5.30 pm - 6.45 pm THIRD ROUND TABLE

LEADING THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RACE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

President

- **Delphine SIMON**, journalist at France Inter

Debate

- **Cédric VILLANI**, Chairman of the Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options
- **Magali VAISSIERE**, Director of Telecommunications and Integrated Applications at the European Space Agency from 2008 to 2020

Friday 19th March

9.00 am - 1.00 pm

TOWARDS THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: AN AGENDA FOR TWO YEARS

Opening of the morning

- **Enrico LETTA**, President of the Jacques Delors Institute, former President of the Italian Council

9.15 am - 10.50 am FIRST ROUND TABLE

THINKING THE INSTITUTIONAL MODEL

President

- **Pierre VIMONT**, Ambassador of France, former Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

Debate

- **Jean-Louis BOURLANGES**, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly
- **Luuk VAN MIDDELAAR**, academic, former adviser to Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council
- **Róża THUN**, Member of the European Parliament

11.00 am - 12.35 pm SECOND ROUND TABLE

THREE INSTITUTIONAL EMERGENCIES: BUDGETARY DEMOCRACY, NEW COMPETENCES, THE PLACE OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

President

- **Pierre VIMONT**, Ambassador of France, former Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

Debate

- **Alain LAMASSOURE**, Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Robert Schuman Foundation, former Chairman of the Committee on Budgets of the European Parliament
- **Xavier PRATS**, former Director General of the European Commission for Health and Food Safety
- **Sabine THILLAYE**, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee of the National Assembly
- **Satu HASSI**, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee of the Eduskunta (Finnish Parliament)

12.45 am - 13.00 pm

Conclusions of the colloquium

- **Clément BEAUNE**, Secretary of State for European Affairs

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**OPENING OF THE COLLOQUIUM BY SABINE THILLAYE,
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

It is with great satisfaction that I declare this colloquium open.

We're in an emergency; yet, there is hope. The future and the challenges we face in an unprecedented situation demand honest assessment and innovative solutions. These are the issues at the heart of the discussions that will bring us together over the next two days. I hope that this moment will not only be an opportunity to debate Europe, but also to be a springboard for proposals.

This colloquium will be one of the main contributions of our assembly to the conference on the future of Europe. Proposed by France and organized by the European institutions, that conference should make it possible to reflect, everywhere on our continent, on what the European Union should be like in the years to come. These debates will be fundamental and we are playing our part in them. The French National Assembly should never be an enclosed place, but on the contrary participate in the construction of a European public space. Several Member States are represented, from north to south and from east to west. They are representative of all political leanings.

I sincerely thank Chair Jean-Louis Bourlanges and our partners, namely the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Jacques Delors Institute, represented by their respective presidents, Jean-Dominique Giuliani and Enrico Letta, who have worked alongside me for several months to help organize this event. I thank all the participants and speakers in the various debates.

These two days of work should make it possible to reflect together on the major issues which will determine the future of the European Union. However, we do not wish to limit ourselves to observations. We hope that the debates will lead us to find institutional solutions to the problems raised and we fully intend to promote the various ideas that will emerge.

We have identified various issues for which we have invited specialists who will provide us with their analyses and proposals.

The first round table will deal with geopolitical issues and will lead us to ask ourselves whether Europe is geopolitically marginalized. We will question the place

that Europe can and must occupy in a complex world where the two great powers of China and the United States seem to hold sway. Our relationship with Russia is also at the centre of many debates. In this context, how does Europe intend to defend its model in these geopolitical dynamics and make its voice fully heard? It will be up to this workshop to assess the legitimacy of specifically European values and the strength of the European model. The latter indeed seems to be facing the emergence of new models, including within the Union itself, with values that present themselves as being in opposition.

This afternoon, we will be dealing with sovereign issues and, first and foremost, European defence, a burning question in the current context. How can this be structured? How can we create a strategic compass common to the Member States?

Then, we will address demographic issues, which are underestimated in the public debate whilst they are essential for many European policies and for our future. Our invited speakers will analyze the European demographic dynamic and its implications, not only on the generational balance on our continent, but also on the family and migration policies that it is up to us to build collectively.

Finally, we will study the scientific and technological race which directly impacts our economies. This is another major subject in the perspective of ecological transition, which is one of the main priorities of the European Union. Nonetheless, scientific and technological competition is fierce throughout the world and will determine the innovations likely to allow us to access a more sustainable world. What position does the European Union have in this race?

Tomorrow, the questions will focus more specifically on the agenda of the conference on the future of Europe for reforming European institutions. The first round table will reflect on the desirability of rethinking the European institutional world. European institutions are in fact regularly the subject of severe criticism, deemed too technocratic, too far from the base, too undemocratic. Are these criticisms founded? Are the improvements brought about by the Lisbon Treaty sufficient or do we still need to progress and in which direction?

The second round table will focus on three institutional emergencies: budgetary democratization, the new powers that could be attributed to the European Union and the place of national parliaments in the European institutional system.

As regards European affairs, the positions adopted by our French assemblies are not binding and the Government does not negotiate with a clear mandate from Parliament, which is not the case in other Member States. Without wishing to

establish an imperative system that would be contrary to the spirit of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, it is now necessary for the French Parliament to be better informed and in a more systematic manner on the progress of the negotiations, their objectives and their results. The positions it defends should also be better taken into account by the Executive, and this is essential for the democratization of European decisions.

Clément Beaune, Secretary of State for European Affairs, will conclude our work. As the minister is on an official mission in Slovenia, he has recorded his closing speech.

Each round table will be chaired by a personality who will organize the debates and react to the speeches. Contributions will be made to the debates by the various participants, who are all recognized experts on the topics discussed. Some round tables will also have key witnesses who will bring their expertise at the end of the debate.

In addition, the audience attending this event remotely will be able to actively participate in these exchanges. Indeed, a platform has been set up to collect all the questions and remarks which will be relayed by the chair of each round table.

Do not be afraid to tackle divisive topics and engage in a frank discussion without preconceived ideas.

The acts of this colloquium will constitute a contribution by the European Affairs Committee and its two partners, the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Jacques Delors Institute, to the Conference on the future of Europe.

Thus, let us now listen to the welcoming speech recorded by the President of the National Assembly, Richard Ferrand, under whose patronage this conference is being organized.

WELCOMING STATEMENT BY RICHARD FERRAND, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to open this colloquium on the future of the European Union. Parliament represents the rallying point for all the ideas, expertise and analyses, whether they come from the political, academic or associative worlds, which will nourish the wealth of the discussions during these two days of work. I therefore welcome this initiative by the European Affairs Committee and I sincerely thank the speakers who have agreed to be with us to debate and submit their ideas for collective discussion.

I am also delighted that our Assembly is taking the opportunity to discuss the future of Europe and to identify possible solutions. At the moment when the Member States of the European Union are striving to emerge together from the crisis which is hitting us, it seems all the more essential to start now an in-depth reflection on the European project especially as of January 1, 2022, France will assume the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The programme of this colloquium will address the major challenges facing us, the geopolitical place of Europe, defence, migration policy, European values, ecological transition and the renovation of the European institutional system. The choice of these themes truly reflects the expectations of citizens although they may formulate them differently.

The pandemic has revealed an astonishing paradox. Indeed, while it is generally fashionable to criticize too much European interventionism in our daily lives, we have all expressed concerns over the last year regarding a lack of “Europe”. The European Union has never been more necessary than it is today, in our world shaken by global crises. It has demonstrated the need for its effectiveness during the difficult months that we have gone through and that we are still going through, especially in the health and economic fields.

Indeed, the “Europe of Health” did not exist before the crisis and everyone has seen to what extent it has failed in the face of health challenges. More in-depth European cooperation would open up considerable potential for the health of all: the constitution of an emergency reserve of medical equipment, greater availability of strategic drugs, etc.

Added to that, the agreement reached last summer on the budgetary plan is unprecedented. In just a few weeks, the Member States, for the first time, decided upon a common investment, therefore a common debt, and the European Union managed to define the most ambitious recovery plan in our common history. We reached an agreement linking our future with that of our neighbours in order to borrow together to fight a common crisis. This European solidarity which does us all justice has marked history and will be remembered. In this regard, I welcome the adoption by the French National Assembly in January of the bill authorizing the approval of this European decision. In this crisis, Europe has thus measured its ability to adapt and the strength of its working method. Listening to one another and making decisions based on dynamic consensus whilst preserving our core values are inspiring examples for the future.

This colloquium represents a forum for dialogue and exchange which should enable us to grasp the urgency of the common challenges that we must face and overcome, while, at the same time, identifying possible solutions. Isolation would weaken us. On all these subjects, we must act together, in a coordinated manner. Otherwise, we would act too little and too late.

It is up to us to improve our coordination in the field of research so as to strengthen this pillar of our European economic model. “Horizon Europe” is thus one of the most valuable European programmes, taking advantage of all European discoveries and allowing each researcher to find funding to innovate. The Union can still make progress in this area to set up European poles of excellence, invest in artificial intelligence, promote the free movement of researchers and support high innovation projects.

Our fellow citizens are aware that environmental challenges are not only an issue for France, but require coordinated action. Only European action will make it possible to act effectively against the threats weighing on biodiversity, the climate and atmospheric pollution. The “Green for Europe” pact, an ambitious project presented by President von der Leyen, will be the cornerstone of European policies. It will make all of our actions compatible with our climate objectives. Our future is at stake and Europe is deeply engaged in this vital area for us all.

Our fellow citizens expect Europe to protect them. There is no European project without common protection and defence. The last few years of geopolitical instability have led to a rapid awakening within the member states. This should be a comfort to us and, above all, we must continue along this path in order to create a sovereign and autonomous Europe, a Europe which makes its own choices on the international stage and which truly takes its destiny in hand.

Finally, Europe also needs to renew its institutional system. We have already made much progress in improving the democratic functioning of the Union, but we must continue in this direction, because Europe is sometimes still perceived as insufficiently democratic. It is up to us to build an ever stronger, closer and more efficient European democracy. Thus, it is necessary to reflect on the place reserved for national parliaments in the European institutional system, because parliamentarians undeniably have a European role which should be made known and strengthened.

Each of us must participate in the Conference on the Future of Europe, launched last week, in order to make concrete progress and to follow up its implementation and application. This conference offers us an exceptional opportunity to reflect, to jointly propose another common European future. The active participation of citizens in this deliberative exercise is a fundamental requirement for reclaiming the European project. The French National Assembly will be very attentive to making sure that the French presidency of the Council of the European Union is a major democratic gathering which will give substance to the proposals that have emerged.

Every citizen can also participate in these two days of the colloquium through digital platforms and I encourage those interested to make full use of these tools.

The European path is sometimes difficult, but it is also so essential. In a world plagued by multiple crises, Europe is a hope. It shows us that collective reflection gives rise to the ideas that will forge our European destiny, like those of future generations. Let us follow the German writer Thomas Mann who, in his essay entitled “This War”, already in 1939, described the European project as follows: “A fruitful system between freedom and mutual responsibility, between a culture of national character and social equality”. This working programme has not lost any of its relevance and it should enable us to chart this European path which we so badly need, which we so heartily desire.

Ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely thank you for your commitment and I wish you fruitful debates in order to help shape a part of this European building.

THE EUROPEAN UNION FACING A COPERNICIAN REVOLUTION

ROUND TABLE: IS EUROPE GEOPOLITICALLY MARGINALIZED?

Pascale Joannin, Director General of the Robert Schuman Foundation.

We begin our work with the geopolitical question, which is one of the priorities set down by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who wants to make Europe a geopolitical Europe.

I have with me Sylvie Bermann, Ambassador of France, who has served in Moscow, Beijing and London. So we are going to talk about Russia, China and the United Kingdom, which left the European Union in 2020.

Also by my side is Bernard Guetta, MEP, whom many know for his long experience as a geopolitical journalist, Daniela Schwarzer, director of the DGAP, a German think tank, in duplex from Berlin and, finally, Josep Borrell, vice-president of the Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy - he is therefore in charge of geopolitical questions at the European Commission: he is in contact from Brussels.

The European Union is not a state but a union of 27 states. Last year we celebrated the seventieth anniversary of Robert Schuman's founding declaration on May 9, 1950, and in a month's time, April 18, we will be celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the signing of the first European treaty, the Treaty of Paris. In our seventy years of existence, we have evolved, beyond the expectations of the founding fathers, on the international political stage, which at the time was centralized around the Soviet Union and the United States. Europe had to be rebuilt with yesteryears' adversaries and, in particular, with Germany. Our continent now enjoys a number of advantages. We have become a global economic power. The European Union has grown beyond what could have been expected after destruction and ruin in 1945. Our GDP is among the highest in the world, along with the United States. We are a leading trade power. In this regard, I would remind you that the Union has its own competence in this area. Various free trade agreements have been signed by the European Union and more are under negotiation. We live in a world where distances have been shortened - although unfortunately sanitary conditions prevent us all from being physically reunited today. In addition, the single currency is an important

strength for the European Union. The euro has become in twenty years the second most widely used currency at the international level behind the US dollar.

We still have some weaknesses in defence but there will be another round table devoted to defence issues this afternoon. We can discuss that subject but it will not be the central question of our debate now.

We have to face a number of challenges in a world that has become global and with actors still present like the United States. A new President has been elected across the Atlantic; he made waves this morning through his statements to his Russian counterpart. A duopoly seemed to be forming between the United States and China and one could wonder about Europe's place as the third largest player in the world. We also have to deal with our closest neighbours, such as Russia as I just mentioned or Turkey, which is not always friendly to Europe. Finally, our neighbour to the south, Africa, is a continent in its own right and is only separated from Europe by a 14-kilometer stretch of water. We are facing demographic challenges, as the trend for the European population is to decrease and that of Africa to increase sharply. I am not forgetting of course the United Kingdom, which has become our close neighbour since leaving the European Union, and which plans to assert itself on the international scene (in terms of defence, trade, etc.).

We have the means to meet these challenges and the object of today's debate is to see how.

Sylvie Bermann, Ambassador of France, Chair of the Board of Directors of the “Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale” (French Institute for Higher National Defence Studies, IHEDN). Having been stationed in Beijing and Moscow, I saw a different vision of Europe in these two capitals. You mentioned the trade power of the European Union, which was seen as an economic giant but as a political dwarf. Powers are not only geopolitical, as in the days of the Soviet Union, but they are also geo-economic. This is what makes China so powerful.

We recently had an illustration of the difference in the vision of Europe between Russia and China. For China, the European Union has been more of an ally against its traditional enemies, the Soviet Union and then the United States, to the extent that the Chinese have been ready to grant it concessions. The investment deal reached at the end of the year sparked a number of negative reactions, with some denouncing the lack of respect for human rights in China. The problem of the Uighurs is quite real in this regard, but Europeans have, despite everything, an interest in being partners with China. I was still in Beijing when we started to negotiate this agreement. In the eyes of the Europeans, the Chinese market was too closed, and they therefore wanted more reciprocity in trade exchanges. The European Chamber

of Commerce in Beijing, which was very active, had made a number of proposals which were rejected by the Chinese. Concessions were finally obtained just before the election of Joe Biden: the opening-up of markets (automobile, telecommunications, etc.), the end of compulsory technology transfers, greater transparency concerning state aid. We must therefore not consider this agreement too ideologically but consider the positive consequences for the European Union. We have two years of negotiations with China left before ratification, and the role of the European Parliament will be very important in this regard.

The American administration wanted us to wait before concluding this agreement, but the Americans have never waited for us before concluding their own agreements with China. Moreover, the demands of the European and American chambers of commerce in Beijing converged.

Our approach vis-à-vis China is no longer “naïve” in Brussels, and we have developed a strategy concerning this partner and competitor, particularly in terms of climate change, but also on the subject of cooperation with Africa, which is fundamental to us.

I think we have also lost our naivety towards the United States. Outside of France, the idea of a return to American leadership does not arouse much enthusiasm, and the European Union insists that its choices in trade matters not be dictated, as is the case of the extraterritorial sanctions in the name of the hegemony of the dollar. We must increasingly use the euro in transactions. It will certainly not be enough, but it will always be progress.

With regard to Russia, we are rather dealing with a geopolitical power modelled quite closely on the Soviet Union. Vladimir Putin is a Soviet. He considers that power is acquired through military force more than through economic weight. The Russian economy is not doing so well but is not as bad as one might think given that the country has three years of reserves.

For Moscow, the European Union is not an independent entity but is an American vassal. This is also the reason why Russia sought to humiliate Europe at the time of Josep Borrell’s visit. In my eyes, it is important to maintain relations with our big Russian neighbour, but the expulsion of three European diplomats on the very day of this visit shows total contempt for us. The President of the Republic was right in his approach in Brégançon. The handling of the Navalny affair is disastrous, which confirms the discourse of those who did not want a policy of dialogue with Russia - the contrary would be the negation of any diplomacy.

As for the United Kingdom, its departure represents an amputation for the European Union, in economic terms and also in terms of influence. In the eyes of Moscow, Beijing or Washington, Europe was led by three great powers. We have seen this through EU 3 on Iran. The UK is trying to turn Brexit into a success, a complicated process given its deliberate break with the European Union, which is being seen as a divorce and still fuels much acrimony. In its security strategy, ten lines are devoted to the European Union and all the rest relates to the Indo-Pacific region, where I somehow doubt that the United Kingdom carries much weight.

In conclusion, it is important in my eyes that the European Union be exemplary. Two members are not the perfect examples of democracy and therefore we must try to sort out our own problems before criticizing other countries.

European solidarity seemed like a good idea for vaccination, but its implementation was catastrophic, so much so that London took the opportunity to praise the merits of a return to full British sovereignty. Such talk finds an echo in certain European capitals, which tend to approve the decision of Brexit whereas until now solidarity had prevailed.

At the end of Donald Trump's term, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin were more popular in Africa than American or European leaders. We must therefore be very present in this region.

Pascale Joannin. We are in contact with Daniela Schwarzer, who heads the DGAP, a think tank attached to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Germany, in matters of diplomacy, sometimes takes more rigorous positions than France or the United Kingdom. I would like you to clarify that for us.

Daniela Schwarzer, Director of the German Council for External Relations (DGAP). Unfortunately, I was unable to travel to Paris today. I would like to share with you the fruit of my reflection on how we could make the European Union a more powerful geopolitical and geo-economic actor. This debate is all the more urgent as tensions are developing around the world.

First of all, we are witnessing a daily power struggle between the United States and China, which has tended to accelerate despite the arrival of Joe Biden. I will be brief on this point in view of Sylvie Bermann's speech.

At the same time, we are witnessing systemic competition, which is not just taking place between continents and states, but within European countries themselves. Authoritarian systems use new technologies to increase their power

internally but also to extend their sphere of influence abroad. Our European societies must be resilient in this regard.

I also note that the technological revolution is particularly rapid, and that it brings challenges of competitiveness for Europeans. How can we increase our level of autonomy in the field of defence but also in terms of technology? We see that we will not achieve this goal alone and that we must work with our allies, especially the United States. We need to have a very clear view of the risk China, and Russia pose to us.

We must be aware of the urgency of the crises emerging in our own surroundings, whether in the south or the east. If Europe does not play a stabilizing role in these regions, it will have to cope with large-scale migratory movements. Relations between Germany and Africa in particular are not very developed. Europe must be more present in these regions. We have points of convergence between France and Germany, but our vision sometimes differs as to the urgency of the situation and the political response to be provided. It is therefore important to analyze the situation together and find an agreement on the course to be taken. The European Union is an important theatre for dialogue in this regard. The High Representative has an important role to play in ensuring that priorities for action are defined by mutual agreement. There is still some way to go at this level.

We are facing threats from Russia or China, but we are also increasingly feeling threats internally.

We will also have to identify sources of funding for the implementation of priority actions, in the field of defence but also in that of economic policy, which includes foreign trade policy but also internal industrial policy.

The work to increase the weight of the European Union begins on the inside. We must rely on the consolidation of the Eurozone as well as the internal market. Without embodying the end of globalization, European autonomy will play an important role.

In conclusion, European leaders have a clear vision of international challenges and simultaneously perceive the need to consolidate the European Union so that the latter can fully play its role on the international stage. How can we reform multilateralism in the context of global systemic competition?

Pascale Joannin. A roundtable this afternoon will explore issues related to technology. Europe clearly missed the first digital revolution, but we have the means to seize future opportunities.

So I understood from your speech, Daniela, that it is important to strengthen the European Union internally before being able to consolidate its image abroad. Bernard Guetta, how can we answer this question?

Bernard Guetta, MEP. I would first like to come back to the central question of our roundtable: are we marginalized or not? The vast majority of European citizens feel we are indeed, which is quite logical, as there was a time when the sun never set over the empire of Charles V and France and Great Britain were the first two world powers. There was a time - fortunately past - when European conflicts spread globally (including twice in the 20th century). Empires are no longer European today and European conflict, which has greatly reduced, is no longer a cause of global conflict. This is the reality and in many cases we can only rejoice.

This is to be welcomed, especially as it is wrong to think that we count less than before on the international stage. The European Union remains the world's second economic power, although China may soon be able to take that place away from it. In any event, the European Union will remain for many years to come among the world's top three economic powers.

The European market is so vital that European industrial standards tend to impose themselves well beyond our borders. Europe is setting the pace - and we can congratulate ourselves on this - in the fight against global warming. As Vice-Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, I can say that the European Union remains the indispensable beacon of the struggle for freedoms that shines in the night of all the victims of dictatorial regimes. When Parliament takes up a question of human rights violations - and I am grateful to it for doing so often - its opinion is immediately heard. The ambassadors of the countries concerned literally besiege our offices, demonstrating the importance of European opinion in the world.

We are subject to a form of marginalization but reality denies this impression of marginalization and imposes a new importance on European countries on the surface of the globe.

The phenomenon is all the more striking as there is an increasingly marked desire for political existence within the European Union. When I arrived in the European Parliament two years ago I was struck to see that the taboos on European defence and on industrial policy had largely fallen. I am not claiming that we would all agree on European defence, nor on the industrial policies to be pursued. These issues will be the subject of phenomenal debates, but they will be because the taboos have been broken and these subjects can finally be tackled.

However, the European Union could become - my friend Hubert Védrine is right to be worried about this - a huge Swiss confederation. This is a possibility, yes. It would be a danger in my eyes - a vision that is not shared by all. I think we can counter this threat because international issues will require us to play an active role in easing international tensions, with chaotic situations in the south and various dangers in the east, and in a context of the withdrawal of our American ally.

To exist on the international scene, three priorities are imperative to us. First, we must - finally - bring our economic, social and fiscal systems closer, moving from the rule of unanimity to the rule of majority - however qualified it may be. This objective is absolutely a priority in order to continue to exist in the industrial sector. It is an urgent and an absolute necessity.

The second need is to assert a common industrial policy. I will not venture to outline it, or even to suggest avenues today, because my speech would then become far too long and because other round tables will be interested in these questions.

Finally, as a member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, I believe that we will have to conclude stability and cooperation agreements on the model of the Helsinki agreement vis-à-vis the Russian Federation, the other great pillar of the European continent. Achieving such agreements does not at all mean that we will ignore the current Russian political regime. When we signed the Helsinki Accords, we absolutely did not approve of the Communist regime of the day, nor would we endorse the regime of Vladimir Putin or anyone who succeeded him and continued his policy by signing a new agreement. A balance with Russia must be found in order to remove the spectre of war hanging over the continent because of the conflicts between its two main pillars. Together, these two pillars could become an absolutely essential player on the international scene, and the image of Charles V's empire would become topical again. We would be pushing the limits of our area of influence far beyond the borders of the Roman Empire which established its hold over the entire *Mare Nostrum* (Mediterranean Sea). We have already done this in the north, it is partly the case in the east as well, and it remains to be done in the south - and that is still a priority. I have in mind much more extensive cooperation agreements than currently between Europe and Africa, which is unfortunately easier said than done.

Pascale Joannin. We will hear from the High Representative for Foreign Affairs. How do you think Europe can defend its interests and extend its influence on the international scene? And thank you so much for expressing yourself in French!

Josep Borrell, Vice-President of the European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. I will do

my best, because French is unfortunately spoken less and less in Brussels... Thank you for inviting me to this round table. I have listened with great interest to the statements of other speakers and I would like to respond to them during my remarks. Unfortunately, I will not be able to participate in the entire round table. The speakers showed, by the quality of their analysis, that they have an excellent grasp of geopolitics.

Foreign policy is still an exclusive prerogative of the Member States. The common European foreign policy is therefore the result of the individual policy of each state, and there are still important differences. The role of national parliaments is important in this regard, and I am delighted to participate in an event organized by one of them. I know that the European vision cannot be achieved without the commitment of the citizens of all countries. France also plays a very important role in the field of common foreign and security policy. It sits on the United Nations Security Council, has nuclear weapons, and its ability to operate outside our borders is perhaps unparalleled now that the UK has left. French citizens are equally aware that the reverse is also true, and that France can only continue to exercise an important influence in the world through a truly common European foreign and security policy. France, like Germany, is too small a country to play a significant role in the world. Moreover, for France, the construction of Europe has played the role of increasing its power.

I must unfortunately leave you for a matter closely linked to the debate which concerns us, a naval operation carried out at European level and in which the French Navy is actively participating. The purpose of this operation is to enforce the embargo on arms deliveries to Libya. Dealing with the Libyan crisis has not been an outright success, and the European Union has been the victim of its internal divisions, the French vision notably opposing the Italian. The situation is even more complex now that Turkish and Russian interests are represented in Libya and even predominate. Charles V probably wouldn't have appreciated that Libya become an outpost for the Russians and Turks right across from Sicily and Italy, and neither do we. Operation Irini aims to intervene in a coordinated manner off the Libyan coast. Libya is a good example of the political marginalization of Europe on its own doorstep, a situation that we owe to our internal divisions. We are not marginalized everywhere in the world but in certain geographical areas we are indeed, and the risk of generalization exists. If that happens, we will be responsible for it because we will not have been able to coordinate.

The centre of gravity of the world economy is shifting to Asia. China's spectacular development has changed the world. We have no other historical examples of countries which, in forty years, have experienced such rapid

development, lifting 600 million people out of poverty. China was considered a poor and backward country and now it is at the cutting edge of technology. It is therefore in the Indo-Pacific zone that the future of the economic world will be played out.

We have lost the first place at the world level and we are on the verge of losing the second. We are now using American technology with Zoom, and when we use European technologies, sometimes there is no way to reach an agreement. We must be careful not to miss the train of the next technological revolutions. The Chinese understood this very well, they did not grasp the revolution of the steam engine, and they found themselves marginalized and humiliated for almost two centuries. They do not want to relive such an experience, quite the contrary, and it is our turn to wake up because we are not as innovative as before.

The development of economic relations with China will not be accompanied by changes in the Chinese economic system. Those who thought so, especially when China joined the WTO, were certainly disappointed. On the contrary, China has gained confidence, and it feels increasingly strong because of its economic weight. It is becoming a geopolitical superpower, which the Americans have understood well as they seek to expand their area of influence around the Pacific Ocean. The Iron Curtain is no longer a problem for them; the line of conflict is now in this new area. Europe is no longer perceived by the Americans as a solution to their problems, and the coming to power of Joe Biden will not change anything, even if naturally the climate of relations with Europe and China will change. Europe will therefore not have a honeymoon period with the United States, and it will be a question of defending its interests where they do not converge. I am a strong supporter of the China deal, although it is the subject of much criticism.

Some will denounce the fact that this agreement was concluded to protect the industrial interests of certain countries. That may be true, but doing a deal with China without having to get American backing is positive for me.

The United States has been withdrawing from Europe since the Obama administration, which did not grant us much attention. This disengagement will continue naturally, and we will need to be able to deal with the new rise in power of the descendants of the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Charles V, moreover, in his time fought the Turks on numerous occasions. Russia and Turkey are using their imperial past to justify increasingly active interventions in our vicinity, while increasingly opposing the multilateral rules of the game and European values, which advocate democracy and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. This is what constrains our relations with these countries. When you visit Moscow or Ankara, you run into “trouble” if you bring up these topics. They reply

to us that we have no lessons to give them. We cannot force the Chinese, the Russians or the Turks to change their point of view.

These new empires are ready to use military force if necessary. They sometimes call on paramilitary organizations, but even if army uniforms from these countries are not present on the battlefield, their presence is no less obvious. How many paramilitaries or mercenaries in the pay of the Russians or the Turks are present in Libya? Europe is not capable of deploying similar means. These countries also excel in the ideological fight to change opinion in the targeted countries, which they combine with cyber attacks. We cannot and do not want to resort to these methods. We still rely on our own armed forces, we have not integrated modern forms of warfare (influence of minds and digital attacks) and we cannot impose our rules on those who choose not to abide by them. Thus we risk seeing the Syrian scenario reoccurring, where the Turks and the Russians settled the conflict by an agreement between them without European participation. We spent years in Europe repeating that no military solution was possible in Syria, but there was, even if it was a form of solution that we wanted to refuse. The “solution” was found by Russia and Turkey, who decided to intervene militarily. I come from a country, Spain, which has been brutalized by a civil war, and the one in Syria has been much more intense. As soon as Barack Obama ruled out any military intervention in Syria, all other European countries retreated. It shows that we are not able to act together as a single power.

We experienced a similar episode with the war in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Our passivity was criticized, but what could we have done? The Russians had already deployed three thousand troops there to ensure the ceasefire and once again an agreement was reached in which Turkey was involved but the European Union was not. However, France was part of the Minsk group which had ended the conflict the first time around.

Are these worrying developments the mark of an inescapable destiny for Europe? No, as long as we take charge of our own future. If we do not act, we will be *de facto* marginalized.

We are still a global economic player, and we have global normative power because we are still at the head of technological development in certain areas, but European entrepreneurs who invest in Russia will tell you that Chinese standards tend to prevail in that country. A standards war is likely to lead to a trade war. What is happening in Russia could happen in other markets.

Our might will depend on our military might, which is too weak and too divided, and on our economic, commercial and monetary might. Everyone is calling

for the general use of the euro, but we still need to provide ourselves with the means. We do not have an exchange rate policy that suits all European countries.

We need to develop our strategic autonomy, beginning in the economic field, and this is the subject of a new commercial strategy that we are in the process of implementing.

However, I can tell you that the terms “autonomy” and “strategy” are subject to many divisions within the European Union.

We want to relaunch transatlantic relations and an ambitious timetable was unveiled in December. The first exchanges are rather encouraging, the United States having reinstated the Paris agreement and being associated with the Covax project. I hope it will join the nuclear pact with Iran. This alone will greatly help calm the climate, reducing the Iranian nuclear threat. I will also cite the agreement aimed at appeasing the conflict between Airbus and Boeing, which will have consequences for other European economic sectors (starting with Spanish agriculture).

We are well aware that a simple return to the past is not possible, and that Europe will have to make efforts to maintain its capacity to intervene in its own area. France’s action must be commended in this field, and it deserves to be supported, but all the 27 Member States that I am meant to coordinate do not share my vision.

It is not a question of detaching ourselves from the United States but, on the contrary, of strengthening our alliance, in a context where the Americans no longer want to finance the defence of Europe. On this point, I am not completely in disagreement with Donald Trump, even if his style of expression was sometimes excessive. We Europeans were used to living under the American protective umbrella and some do not want to give it up, and are therefore opposed to other options. Why in their eyes should we acquire strategic autonomy? History has led some Member States to reason in this way.

We need to work with other democracies around the world who share our values. We must found a new multilateralism which is based on fundamental human rights. The latter have not always been at the centre of our geopolitical goals, as evidenced by our past concerning slavery.

If we do not display our power, we will not be able to counter authoritarian regimes, nor impose our standards in a crucial technological battle - if public opinion does not perceive it as such, policy makers do.

We will also have to fight against the ecological crisis, with climatic shift and the collapse of biodiversity. Health must become a global public asset. We were supposed to guarantee universal access to the vaccine, but the reality is quite different. It reminds me of the mask shortage episode. We are in a weak position vis-à-vis countries, such as China or Russia, which are able to supply vaccines to other less developed countries.

Finally, when it comes to Africa, I think its economic development will be just as much an episode as it was for China and Asia more broadly over the past century. How will our relations evolve with Southeast Asia and Latin America? As we endlessly debate with these countries, the Chinese are occupying a huge position in Latin America. The Chileans have made it very clear that if we are not present, the Chinese will take control of their economy.

Although Europe is still the centre of the world map, the geopolitical centre of the world has moved to Asia. We have gradually lost our influence without realizing it, and yet it was we who transferred our productive activities to Asia, causing a global geopolitical shift.

We essentially built the European Union to put an end to intra-European conflicts, but not with a view to representation on the international stage. At the time of the foundation of Europe, globalization did not exist and world geopolitics was centred on the Cold War. The European Union must now become a fully-fledged geopolitical entity in order to continue to exist vis-à-vis the rest of the world. This should begin with a common foreign policy, which has not occurred because the history of each country is different. I am well placed to see that our position is weakening compared to Turkey or China, but in order to be able to react, we have to reach a common analysis, which is not easy, knowing that a Pole will have a different vision of Russia compared to people from other Member States.

We are held back by the fact that foreign policy is the prerogative of the Member States and that decisions must be taken unanimously. It would be infinitely easier if we could use a qualified majority! But that will not happen tomorrow because, in order to abandon the principle of unanimity, we must arrive at a... unanimous decision! We are very far from this.

However, we have made significant progress in terms of cooperation in the fight against Covid. We must build around the Team Europe model with the Member States and the various institutions.

We will have to stand together in the face of Russian provocation. Even if this issue is not yet on the agenda, we have nonetheless managed to initiate the debate.

It will take some time before we can arrive at a common foreign and defence policy. We need to start by sharing the basic concepts. Unfortunately, time is a scarce and a limited resource and we will not be able to ask the world train to stay at the station so that we can board it. If we delay in developing this common policy and translating it through effective measures, it is possible that the marginalization of Europe will become a reality. It is therefore important that colloquia such as this one exist in order to be able to share these kinds of ideas without too much rhetorical or fake talk. We are capable of overcoming our weaknesses, but to do so, we must also be aware of them. The problem is that there is not yet a pan-European culture and that differences in perceptions of the world persist between countries.

I apologize once again for not being able to participate in your full roundtable.

Pascale Joannin. We wish you a safe journey and success in your mission. Over 200 people have signed up and I would like to relay some of their questions.

First of all, an Internet user wonders about the coexistence of national embassies and a European Union embassy. Could we not have a single diplomatic representative of the European Union in each country?

Another Internet user comes back to the policy concerning the United States: could Joe Biden's coming to power shatter the united front that had formed in the face of the very partisan positions of Donald Trump?

Sylvie Bermann. Since there is no common foreign policy for all the Member States, the European Embassy in a given country is not able to represent each of the Member States. Its role is based on coordination between Member States within the framework of European prerogatives (in the economic and commercial fields, independently of any bilateral relations that may exist). I doubt that this unification of diplomatic networks will ever become a reality.

Bernard Guetta. I don't believe that a team in Washington that realizes the importance of an alliance with Europe is a cause for worry. On the contrary, this is excellent news from all points of view. There are of course a few voices in some European capitals which express the desire for a return to the American umbrella – a free umbrella! I don't think these differences of opinion really weigh on the relationship. Joe Biden has, to my knowledge, three French speakers on his team,

two of whom are practically French. We have not seen such a Europhile President take office in Washington for a very long time. I don't even remember such a deeply Europhile team. If we are not able to take this opportunity, we will have badly missed a real chance.

Having said that, I'm afraid we may have done so a little. I have heard many voices speak out against the idea of waiting for US approval to sign an agreement with China. But it is not a question of that, but rather about formulating a European position on relations with China and defending it in Washington. We had an opportunity to assert our existence in regards to our American ally. It is by displaying this kind of common position that the European Union can impose a redefinition of the Atlantic Alliance on an equal footing. I do not want NATO to weaken at all, but on the contrary to strengthen it, which can only happen through the affirmation of the European pillar. Otherwise, the Americans will not follow.

We have a lot to deal with: the fear of some of a return to a form of subservience and the hope of others for such subservience.

Pascale Joannin. A question from an Internet user concerns the more active participation of citizens, civil societies and national parliaments in European decision-making processes so that these decisions are better accepted by citizens. How would you answer this question?

Daniela Schwarzer. Foreign policy and European policy are widely debated in the Bundestag. Every time she attends a European Council meeting, Chancellor Angela Merkel receives a mandate from the Bundestag to represent a certain number of positions. National parliaments can effectively be a link between governments, which are the guarantors of national interests, and citizens. The positions expressed by parliamentarians are often echoed in the national media and, increasingly, on social networks - for example on relations with China and Russia.

However, it seems important to me that the national parliaments forge closer relations with each other through formal coordination networks at a European level and through bilateral relations. These give rise to frequent exchanges between the Bundestag and the French National Assembly. I am thinking in particular of the discussions within the framework of the Treaty of Aachen/Aix-la-Chapelle.

The conference on the future of Europe is due to start this year. This exercise is very important. We must ensure that the opinions of citizens are properly conveyed and in particular their proposals.

These exchanges are all the more crucial as external actors seek for their part to sow discord between European states. We cannot completely prevent them from acting, but we can strive to counteract their influence by involving national parliaments and citizens more broadly in our decisions. As an actor in civil society, the think tank that I represent aims to create fora to bring geopolitical debates to the heart of civil society. These questions are crucial for our States but also of course for the European Union.

Pascale Joannin. We will indeed have the opportunity to conclude our debates with Sabine Thillaye, who is the Chair of the European Affairs Committee. We are aware of the opportunity offered by the Conference on the Future of Europe and you are right to stress that the role of Europe in election campaigns is important. Some positions are quite surprising, to the point that it will no doubt be necessary to distinguish between announcements and real conviction. We are almost at the end of our round table. I would like you to take turns concluding.

Bernard Guetta. A conclusion can only be subjective. I have the impression that we are witnessing an acceleration of history within the European institutions, in Parliament as well as in the Commission and in the Council. Completely taboo subjects yesterday, such as defence or industrial policy, are no longer so. The idea of European sovereignty and a common voice on the international scene seemed totally fanciful only three years ago and now this idea is gaining ground. Unlike the High Representative, I do not think that this idea is strongly contested any longer, nor that it appears so prohibitive to some Member States that they would reject it. We are therefore preparing to enter a stormy period such as we have rarely seen in the history of European construction. We are sure to lock horns in heated debates, but this will be a good sign to me. I concluded a speech in Parliament, in that same spirit, with the invocation: “Arise, welcome thunderstorms!” – that is a quote, don’t worry! We will debate intensely when it comes to defining a common industrial policy or even fiscal, social and economic policies decided by qualified majority and no longer unanimously. It seems to me that we are dealing with a qualitative change underway within the European Union. Obviously, we have no guarantee of success, but the qualitative change is real, and it is as important an element as the Treaty of Rome and the introduction of the single currency.

Pascale Joannin. I hope we have a good captain to take the helm in these rough seas. Cape Finistère, which Josep Borrell knows well, is also known to be a stormy area ... How does Daniela want to react to these comments?

Daniela Schwarzer. I wish to salute the progress that has been made. We succeeded in arriving at a common policy towards China, which was concluded with

an investment agreement and which enabled debates in national parliaments to begin. We do not agree on all points between the governments of each country, but the progress is real. We are adopting a more realistic posture towards China and above all, we are providing Europe with protection against Chinese intervention in the European Union. Coming back to what Josep Borrell said, our goal now is to extend this strategy to the entire surrounding region.

As foreign policy is the exclusive prerogative of the Member States, it is difficult for the European institutions to represent all the countries. The latter are struggling to draw up an agreement that satisfies each and every national government, and this represents a daunting task.

Trade policy, vis-à-vis China, the United States and other countries, is essential. We need to think about geopolitical and geo-economic issues in a much more integrated way. The inconsistency of European positions is likely to weaken Europe's role concerning the United States and other actors such as China or Russia.

Perhaps one day it will be relevant to redefine our founding treaties, but for the time being it is important to develop political coordination.

Pascale Joannin. This subject will be discussed in a roundtable tomorrow. It will be about setting the conditions for Europe to function better.

Madam Ambassador, I would like you to react to the elements of hope that would allow Europe to assert itself rather than marginalize itself to remain among the big three world competitors.

Sylvie Bermann. I was very interested in the words of Josep Borrell, which embody a realistic vision. When he describes relations with China and Russia and the adoption of Chinese standards in Russia, it points to the idea that a rapprochement can arise from the existence of a common enemy. Donald Trump started the movement somewhat, leading to a weakening of Europe.

The Russians also discovered with the Turks that peace treaties were made with their enemies and not with their friends. The European Union too often tends to take its own desires for realities, and to think that it can change the world by simple speeches or by actions whose results are not necessarily positive - as in Libya. In my opinion, we must demonstrate both resolution and realism. The European Union has been described as being made up of herbivores living in a world of carnivores; it seems to me that we must adopt a more carnivorous and proactive approach in order to exist on the international scene. We need to achieve critical mass.

Pascale Joannin. I note messages of hope in your speeches, namely that Europe appears to be endowed with the assets enabling it to assert its place on the world stage, and that its success depends fundamentally upon itself. There are still three years left in the current term of Parliament, for the Commission to propose directives and for Parliament to adopt them. National parliaments are showing us that the European dimension is a reality.

I also believe that we can meet this challenge and that Europe is not yet completely marginalized.

The second round table, devoted to the universality of European values, will start after a short break. Thank you everyone.

**ROUND TABLE:
DOES THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE EUROPEAN MODEL
BELONG TO THE PAST?**

Christine Verger, Vice-President of the Jacques Delors Institute. Good morning everyone. The subject of our round table is broad, and related to that of the round table which has just ended, in which Josep Borrell in particular participated.

Our debates will aim to discuss the existence of a European model and its propensity to impose itself on a universal level, even though the period when Europe ruled the world is over. This question is at the heart of current and future relations between Europe and the rest of the world, as we have just seen during the first round table.

We will focus on two themes in turn: European universalism in an age of anthropological diversity and the legitimacy of European values as the basis of the Union.

After a ten-minute introduction from each of our speakers, I will facilitate a cross-exchange between them, then, we will answer questions asked by Internet users, who are very numerous.

I am therefore pleased to welcome three prestigious guests. I will begin with Pascal Lamy, President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute, former European Commissioner for Trade, former Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), who still exercises various functions including that of President of the Forum for Peace. Pascal Lamy has also begun reflecting on the anthropological dimension of the European Union. He started from the initial thinking of the founding fathers, who believed that political integration would flow from economic integration. He investigated the reasons for this failure through the study of European values, the vision of Europe in different countries, and the life experience of European citizens. He also proposed the creation of a chair of anthropology at the University of Louvain, an idea which hopes to “spawn offspring” in Europe. This will be the subject of the first part of our roundtable.

I warmly thank Dominique Schnapper, Director of Studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (The School for Higher Studies in Social Sciences - EHESS) and honorary member of the French Constitutional Council, for her participation. She will speak on the theme: “The legitimacy of European values,

the basis of the Union”. She is a renowned sociologist and political scientist. She is a member of the “Conseil des sages de la Laïcité” - the Council of Elders of Secularism and has written many works. She was also, among other things, President of the French Society of Sociology. In particular, she participated in the writing of a collective work a few years ago on the theme that concerns us: Six ways of being European. She will no doubt talk to us about that.

Finally, we will hear, as a key speaker, Vaira Vike-Freibega, who was the first President of the Republic of Latvia between 1999 and 2007. I had the great privilege of meeting her when I was part of the team of Josep Borrell when he was President of the European Parliament, during an official visit to Latvia in 2006. I was greatly impressed at the time by the strength of your testimony and your experience. You were obliged to live outside your country for a long time because of the political situation in the region. Your family fled during the Soviet occupation in 1945. You lived successively in Germany, Morocco and Canada. You were a professor of psychology at the University of Montreal for a substantial period, which is why you speak French so well. You have written numerous books and articles, including analyzing the texts of Latvian folk songs. Under your presidency, Latvia became a member of the European Union, joined the Schengen agreements and implemented all efforts related to integration into the Euro area.

Pascal Lamy, President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute, former European Commissioner for Trade, former Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Good morning to everyone. My speech is summed up by the idea that European universalism does not belong so much to the past as to the future, on condition of course that Europeans agree to come together more. The universalism of the European model is what makes its identity and paradoxically, this identity is blurred, as I have been able to realize through the different functions that I have exercised. The vision of European identity is clearer for non-Europeans than for Europeans.

Non-Europeans see European identity as a subtle balance between political sustainability (democracy), economic sustainability (the market), social sustainability (the welfare state), and environmental sustainability (the place of ecology). A good description can be found in the Delors White Paper of March 1994, which lists the progress to be made within the European Union. Democracy is thus perceived as the only sustainable model for aggregating individual interests as long as it guarantees respect for individual freedoms.

The paradox I referred to was nicely expressed by Julia Kristeva’s phrase: “Europe is the only place in the world where identity is not a cult but a quest”. I think

many of our problems stem from this, and in particular the democratic deficit that continues to haunt us. As Christine Verger explained, the founding fathers believed that economic integration would lead to political union, which did not work. Economic integration is not a sufficient condition for political integration. Our economic space is European, but our political space is only - too much from my point of view – partially European. We are dealing with a fundamental concept. This democratic deficit is not a *Kratos* deficit but a *Deimos* deficit: it lies in a lack of awareness of a European identity. Europeans are indeed educated according to their particularities and not according to their likenesses to their neighbours. Our cultural heritage, made up of songs and stories, dates back in particular to the period of the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, and results in the symbolic construction of a national identity within Europe in contrast to one's neighbours. Moreover, when Europeans are asked about their differences with their neighbours, these are felt to be all the more important the closer the peoples are, and vice versa. This is therefore proof that we are dealing with a symbolic construction that must be highlighted and deciphered.

Calling on the social sciences, through the schemas of mental construction and the structuring of society and symbolic spaces, a field studied by anthropology, I undertook to attempt to draw avenues that could help Europeans overcome their differences and to discover their similarities. The first experiences in this area seem to show that this process is feasible. As you indicated, a chair was recently created at UCL in Louvain (directed by Olivier Servais and Julie Hermesse) and a second offshoot was born last year thanks to Philippe Descola, one of the great French anthropologists, and Frédéric Worms, number two of the *École normale supérieure*. I hope that other similar chairs will be devoted, in the near future, to contemporary European political anthropology in order to bring to light this essential symbolic material.

This approach to European identity from the “north face” of anthropology, and not from the “south face” of the economy, leads, from my point of view, to a certain universalism, not because we possess its intellectual property or because of some sort of superiority, but quite simply because economic, social, political and environmental sustainability corresponds - I speak as President of the Paris Peace Forum - to answers to the challenges of the contemporary world. Many of our problems are explained by the incomplete governance of globalization. The resulting pattern of convergence and governance, which exists at the national level and, partially, at the European level, is not really present at the global level except in a vague form, and this is due to the absence of a sense of belonging. We need a model of contemporary humanism with which all the inhabitants of the planet can identify, regardless of their local identity, so as to lay the foundations for a symbolic

community that can relate to others. If we were to create such a model on a universal scale I think we must it would closely resemble the European mix. So it is a kind of Gramscian enterprise in that it would be an enterprise based on ideological promotion. If we want to promote it in the future world, where Sino-American rivalry will be predominant for at least fifty years, then we absolutely need to unite more.

Christine Verger. Thank you for this rich and truly innovative intervention resulting from your experience as a “practitioner”. I now invite Dominique Schnapper to speak on the subject of the legitimacy of European values as the basis of the Union.

Dominique Schnapper, Director of Studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (The School for Higher Studies in Social Sciences - EHESS), honorary member of the French Constitutional Council. I listened with great pleasure to Pascal Lamy because his intervention echoes old criticisms that I have formulated regarding the “constitutional patriotism” set down by Jürgen Habermas. The latter dissociated the patriotism that could be associated with the rule of law from the idea of a cultural and historical belonging to a nation. For him, constitutional patriotism would no longer be linked to a historic national identity, but would be replaced by adherence to the rule of law. This Habermasian theory was in fact taken up in the process of European construction. However, I have always been sceptical, because it seems to me difficult to imagine the construction of an identity on such an abstract idea as adherence to the rule of law. Peoples cannot be organized only around the idea of the rule of law and above all historic democratic nations are based both on civic values (idea of the rule of law) and on customs and traditions as well as on ways of thinking shared within the community (relationships to nature, history, collective institutions and to other people, in a word – “culture” as anthropologists would have it).

You referred to the book I co-wrote with Henri Mendras on the “Six manières d’être européen” (“Six Ways of Being European”). All European nations refer to the rule of law and implement democracy, but the conception and practice of democracy differs from country to country. To build a political Europe, which is not limited to a legal entity adopting common rules, this diversity must be taken into account. I am delighted that Pascal Lamy, who actively participated in European construction, today largely agrees with this point of view.

The universalism of the European model has its origins in the project of the founding fathers. The process was born out of a desire for peace and reconciliation after the horrors of the last world conflict, during which civilians were not spared, and after the underlying ideological wars. The construction of Europe also

corresponded to the will to resist a Soviet offensive. General de Gaulle had pointed out that the Red Army was stationed just two stages from the Tour de France.

The victory of democracies in 1945 seemed to impose representative democracy as the universal model of the best possible governance. The “powers of evil” embodied by Nazism had been defeated and democracy was presented as a form of resistance in the face of the totalitarian drift of the communist model. This model was intended to become universal, just like human rights - the universal declaration dates back to the same time, in 1948. It embodied material success, military victory and human values. The whole world claimed to have a democratic spirit in those days, even if this notion was sometimes quite loosely interpreted by some countries.

The fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to confirm the prevalence of this European model at the global level. At the time, we did not think that a more humane and efficient mode of governance was possible.

Thirty years later, the defenders of the universalism of the European democratic model are not so numerous. It is indeed contested even within democratic nations and it faces fierce attacks from outside. In present-day Europe, the former communist countries have been integrated in a problematic way when it comes to respect for the rule of law. I am referring to Poland or Hungary, where, when the Constitutional Council takes a decision that displeases the Government, the process of appointing judges is changed in order to obtain a new, more favourable decision. Even within the six founding countries, democracy is weakened. It is relativised by a large amount of the population and the defenders of the democratic model are rather on the defensive. It is no longer on the theory of the republic or democracy that one can build a career today in European universities. Democratic criticism is perfectly legitimate, but it is important, for our future, that it may itself be criticized.

All this leads to an internal disintegration of democracies. In addition, the world situation has radically changed. The victory of democracies in 1945 now seems a long way off, and the dominant powers are no longer democracies, despite the dreams of the British Prime Minister. The Chinese government is attacking them more and more strongly, and the country is tilting more and more towards a tyrannical communist model. As for Putin’s Russia, it harbours radical resentment of the dissolution of the Soviet Empire and fosters more and more anti-democratic practices. I am also thinking of the radical rhetoric of the autocrats (Erdogan in Turkey, Bolsonaro in Brazil - more distant and therefore less directly dangerous). Finally, of course, the democratic model is strongly contested by Arab-Muslim extremists. The model of European universalism would be seen by its detractors as the means to maintain European hegemony on a global scale.

Yet no better idea seems to have been proposed. As Pascal Lamy thinks, building a common culture could lead to real political will. I would like to share Bernard Guetta's optimism on this matter. We must also understand that the European model will not spread by itself through the virtues it embodies, and therefore that it is up to the Europeans who support it to defend it and to continue to uphold its values. The universal dimension of the model seems to me to be based not on the practices of democracy - linked to particular national histories - but on the values of respect for the rule of law. This is a personal conviction but I hope some of you share it.

If we want our European model not to belong to the past but to the future, we must therefore believe in this future and be able to distinguish the universal dimension of the democratic form and the formal plurality of democracies in different cultures. The young generation will have to bring this project forward into the future.

Christine Verger. You have strongly underlined that the universalism of the European democratic model prevailed until the fall of the Berlin Wall and that the situation then changed considerably, within the European Union and around the world. This is the perfect transition to give the floor to the former President of the Republic of Latvia. We would like to hear from your experience, you who have lived outside the European Union and then integrated it.

Vaira Vike-Freiburga, former President of the Republic of Latvia. Is the universality of the European model a thing of the past? To answer this question, my first thought is that the European model is not limited to a series of technocratic, bureaucratic and political transformations. The great advantage of this model is its dynamism and its ability to be changed. In this sense, I would say that European values predate the declaration of the founding fathers, important though that is. We have to look at them from a historical perspective and here again we are not dealing with a concrete object like a parcel that has been nicely packaged and generously sent to the rest of the world as Europe's contribution to universal well-being. On the contrary, the great value of the European model is its ability to change over the centuries, despite the periods of stagnation, terror and authoritarianism that have been observed. We are in March 2021 and eight hundred years ago, the last Cathars perished at the stake in Montségur for having wanted to preserve their freedom of conscience. On February 17, 1600, Giordano Bruno experienced the same punishment on the Campo dei Fiori in Rome. The Italy of the time was, however, considered a great centre of cultural influence, giving birth to the Renaissance over the rest of the continent.

Do European values refer to the religious tolerance of the Roman Empire or to the current European Union? Under ancient Rome, from a certain date, citizens enjoyed freedom of belief on condition of worshipping the personality of the emperor. Are we referring to the Europe of the Inquisition, or the Europe of Democritus and Lucretius through the precept “*De rerum natura*”? Lucretius’ manuscript caused a scandal at the time of its reappearance in Florence in the fourteenth century.

The pillars of European values can be summed up quite simply. The first principle is that of freedom of thought and conscience. This was very hard to gain and I also think that as elsewhere in the world, certain sectors of society are not yet ready to accept these values. Freedom of conscience implies freedom of thought and therefore any citizen who identifies with the thought of Democritus or Lucretius must be able to adopt the Epicurean way of life without having to scrupulously apply the Bible or the Koran, or any other holy writing or divine revelation presented as such by human beings.

But all this is insufficient if we do not define the notion of the state of being human. The rule of law had been established under ancient Rome, and we consider that the Roman legislative model was an example for centuries to come, but we sometimes forget that Rome practiced slavery and offered circus games to its population. Rome paid no attention to the lives of its slaves and prisoners of war. The recognition of human life is too often forgotten but it comes out through paroxysmal waves of protest such as when we see a man of colour die of suffocation on the mere suspicion of a crime, or when we receive daily testimonies from women, hanged, stoned or tortured simply because of an institutionalized or religious misogyny or simply by a certain inertia of the accepted social customs, including within societies which claim to be democratic, independent and egalitarian.

The greatest task for the Europe of tomorrow will be to restore faith in the idea that governance representative of a democracy, and that governance itself, is necessary for the stability of society. Europe’s tasks also include the capacity to govern itself and to respond to collective crises, I am thinking of the current situation with vaccination, which is a resounding failure for the European Union in its capacity to respond in a coherent, coordinated and reasoned manner to a problem, by adopting a communication strategy that is not contradictory from one country to another or over time. Europe, rich as it is, has been hit very hard by both infections and deaths. It has a lot to do to convince its citizens that we are on the right track and that we will meet the challenges of the future.

I am over 80 years old and as the former president of my country I still receive calls daily from citizens expressing their dismay to me. They no longer know

who to believe and need encouraging words. I think this is not the time for parochial quarrels but for responding to the immediate concerns of the population, who are struggling with lockdown and the threat the pandemic poses to their lives. The stress within the population seems to me to have reached a level which is dangerous for the stability of any democracy.

Christine Verger. Thank you for putting our theme back into perspective by referring to historical notions. Thank you for underlining the permanent cohabitation between respect for values and the horrors with which the collective memory is imbued.

I invite Dominique Schnapper to react to this speech. Do you think that the values that you have described, which are still contested by some, could be diffused in the contemporary world by the simple will of those who believe in them?

Dominique Schnapper. First of all, I share the view that the former Soviet bloc is not homogeneous, and therefore we cannot equate Hungary with the Baltic States or with Poland. In fact, I only mentioned Poland and Hungary in my speech and not the Baltic countries, whose history is specific given their proximity to Russia.

It is also true that the founding of Europe does not go back only to the declaration of Schuman and Monnet. You have pointed out that European history has been punctuated by wars with continual breaches of the values embodied by the European project, and that even today violations of these principles exist in countries which claim to be democratic. We cannot build the European model from its history but from a European idea as opposed to the shortcomings that have been mentioned.

Will the evocation of these values be enough to trigger a change in human societies in the hoped-for direction? All we can say is that it offers direction, a suggestion of what might enable the world to move more into line with the ideas that Europe is trying to promote. Unfortunately, human history is such that I cannot display total optimism. Courage and will may not be enough to enforce these principles at home and then in the rest of the world. This is a necessary condition, but not necessarily sufficient. It is not fanciful to hope that we will at least partially move towards this ideal.

Christine Verger. Perhaps Pascal Lamy wishes to react to the other speeches. Furthermore, have you already learned any lessons from the research you have undertaken at the University of Louvain? Is it possible to transcend the differences built between peoples in order to improve their mutual understanding, which would allow us to distance ourselves from our terrible past?

Pascal Lamy. First of all, I agree with Dominique Schnapper that the avenue suggested by Habermas seems mistaken. The constitutional patriotism thesis can be seen as an extension of the doctrine of ordoliberalism, which is not particularly surprising from a German author. Ordoliberalism is based on the idea that when the economy is regulated correctly, the world functions properly.

I will answer Christine Verger's question with an example. Depending on the country, the characters linked to Christmas are different: Father Christmas, *le Père Fouettard*, *la Befana*, etc. All of these figures appear between December 24 - which is presented as the date of Christ's birth in the Catholic religion - and January 5 - which more or less corresponds to the Epiphany. We are dealing with different personalities, with different characters: the *Père Fouettard* is mean whilst Santa Claus is benevolent, the *Krampus* attacks young girls in the street at night, *la Befana* makes fun of everything, etc. Their only common denominator is that they appear at the same time which corresponds approximately to the winter solstice, the time of the year when the nights are the longest and coldest and where our ancestors needed to tell each other stories around the fire during the long evenings to reassure themselves about the resumption of the cycle of the seasons after this rather difficult period.

This is an example where one can identify a common characteristic based on cultural differences from one country to another.

I would like to react to Vaira Vike-Freiberga's speech about the painful ordeal that Covid-19 represents for citizens shaken in their confidence in our European model. We cannot claim that its effectiveness has been demonstrated through the response to the crisis, even if the spirit of solidarity is a little more noticeable at the level of vaccines. We were dealing with a democratic deficit with a governance without membership and Covid-19 gave the opposite impression: the problem is no longer at the level of *Deimos* but of *Kratos*, given that we are all threatened by this dreadful virus and that the European Union did not have the necessary governance framework to allow it to deal with this crisis. While the problem that I highlighted earlier could complicate the construction of the European space, the current crisis gives a form of legitimacy to the declaration of the founding fathers when they considered that having an adequate governance framework could help resolve such issues. I think we will be able to learn from this crisis. Competences at a European level in the field of health were until now very marginal. Moreover, one of the virtues of the European model is its ability to evolve based on real experiences.

Christine Verger. More than 200 people are listening to us now. I encourage them to ask their questions. Madam President, can we still speak of a European democratic model when certain countries of the Union are led by rather autocratic governments which do not respect the principles of the rule of law? What is your vision for the future as a Latvian?

Vaira Vike-Freiberga. Europe is a mosaic of cultures, languages and traditions, as shown by the example of Father Christmas, whose image was altered during the days of the Soviet Union.

Governance models are more different than one might think. In the case of Hungary, we are dealing with a government that enjoys a constitutional majority, controlling two-thirds of parliament after the elections - which appear to have gone smoothly. This government has been democratically placed in power when it itself does not seem to fully embody democratic values. In the 1930s, we saw opposition on the political spectrum between the far right movements and the Communists. Spain and Portugal maintained governments that can be compared to dictatorships even after they joined the European Union. This did not prevent them from becoming democratic countries.

What should we say about constitutional monarchies - quite numerous in Europe - where the head of state is not elected by the people but inherits his/her position and the associated privileges? The inequality at birth between the royal family and the rest of the population and even the existence of more or less pronounced privileges for the aristocracy do not seem to embody absolute democratic egalitarianism.

I totally agree with the idea that Europe is an ongoing project. Like scientific theories, we are dealing with a system that can be “refined”, both through basic ideas and practical applications. This openness is the most valuable specificity that we must preserve.

Christine Verger. I will now give the floor to another speaker, Jean-Louis Bourlanges.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly. First of all, let me remind you that *la Befana*, a witch who is well known to Italian children, is a woman.

Pascal Lamy takes up the point I wanted to emphasize about Habermas. Dominique Schnapper has rightly said that the rule of law is not enough to form a political community. Pascal alluded to the institutional pact, namely the idea that

people with a common vision of the rule of law are also close enough to be able to conclude a pact on action. The striking example is the United Kingdom, which shares our conception of the rule of law but which refuses to integrate a common policy. Habermas cannot ignore that a European pact presupposes the existence of an ideological, historical, cultural, political and even religious substratum, which can justify the idea of concluding such a pact with the citizens. We should not restrict ourselves to a limited interpretation of Habermas's message. The two dimensions of the constitutional pact must be considered, even if Pascal Lamy expressed this idea more explicitly than Habermas.

Christine Verger. Pascal Lamy, would you like to comment on this?

Pascal Lamy. I approve of what has just been said. Besides, as regards *la Befana*, I did not quote an article because, from the images, it is sometimes difficult to identify a male or female figure. Italians do refer to *la Befana* as a woman, whilst the Austrian *Krampus* is masculine, and it can be noted that when it comes to being frightening, the characters are more often masculine.

Christine Verger. Xavier, an Internet user, asks you to distinguish the European model from the American model. After all, the United States and Europe share a common experience of democracy and the rule of law. Why would we consider our values to be different?

Pascal Lamy. The European model is defined as a particular combination of economic, social, environmental and political sustainability. Likeness to the American model only seems important in terms of political sustainability, at least in relation to the Chinese. We do not agree with the American social model, which considers that all citizens are born with a capacity to succeed and that their failure is therefore attributable to themselves and that as a consequence, they are only eligible for the bare minimum of the social protection model. Economically, we do not consider that growth should be stimulated as much as possible when possible, even if it means leading to periods of deep recession. Finally, in terms of the environment, the European model is more virtuous. We have started a process of decarbonizing our economies in Europe to participate in the fight against climate change and the Americans are lagging behind, mainly for ideological questions and because of their representation of the world.

If I had to make a comparison with China, I would come to the conclusion that our model is still closer to the American model, and it is moreover for this reason that we are going to have to invent a posture to change our European model in a world where Chinese and American models will dominate.

Dominique Schnapper. I would add to what has just been said that between the United States and European countries we are dealing with two interpretations of the democratic model. Since the end of the war, Europe has mainly been a social democracy, that is to say a system of liberal economy with a strong redistribution of wealth, which seemed to us to be a relevant response to the Soviet model. The United States, which has a different history, is far from the social democratic model but it shares the notion of the rule of law and related values.

Christine Verger. What is your opinion on this, Vike Freiberga, you who have lived on both continents?

Vaira Vike-Freiberga. Interactions between the United States and Europe have been numerous throughout history: General Lafayette participated in the American War of Independence, whilst Benjamin Franklin was a guest at the Paris salons. The fathers of the American Constitution were inspired by ideas developed in Europe, and we could find reverse examples of the influence of American ideals at the time of the abolition of slavery.

While the administration of the past four years can hardly be considered to have been fully representative of the United States, it was the vision of much of the population.

A big difference is that Europeans tend to look to their leaders to find a solution to all their problems while Americans do not expect providential help from their government but are more ready to intervene at the level of individual initiatives. Recently, some have even been ready to come into conflict with the federal government, as the episode of the attack on Capitol Hill showed. Some extremists see any government as evil and have developed a downright paranoid attitude towards their leaders.

Regarding social security, I would like to point out a very strange paradox. The majority of Americans are against what they see as socialism, but they are extremely active and generous when it comes to individual charitable donations. Europeans, on the contrary, while often electing social democratic or socialist governments, show much less “generosity of the heart” when it comes to individual charities. Let me cite an example. I served for six years on the International Criminal Court, on the Committee for the Support for Victims. We were always short of funds to organize medical care (such as prostheses or cosmetic surgery for the disabled, operations to correct the obstetric fistulas of women who had been raped, etc.) for victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity in three Central African countries. The contributions of the signatory countries of the Treaty of Rome were optional and at the discretion of each government but it was always the same ones

who contributed and those who did not or gave little. I naively suggested - probably from my experience in Canada, a country quite similar to the United States without being identical - that we could organize fundraisers during charity dinners, during which guests could witness a speech by a well-known and admired personality. This practice is common in the United States. Institutionalized charity, in fact, is highly developed in the US and garners considerable sums of money that cover different societal needs, but the choice of recipients is up to individuals and interest groups instead of governments. When I submitted my suggestion, I was told that the French and Germans, among others, would absolutely not be interested in organized dinners to raise funds for victims of crime because they consider that they are paying enough taxes and that this kind of initiative is therefore the responsibility of their government. I don't think Europeans are very aware of this nuance when it comes to their own attitudes.

Christine Verger. Thank you very much for this very interesting example. Rachida, an Internet user, brings up the notion of work on collective history. Work is being done on this subject within the Council of Europe, it seems to me, on how to teach history in European high schools and middle schools. In your opinion, could studying the history of European countries contribute to a better knowledge, especially by young people, of European identity?

Pascal Lamy. This question is important. It seems clear that the way Europeans learn about history is inherited from a time when it was all about emphasizing differences. European history is not really taught. Alain Lamassoure is looking at this issue in the Council of Europe. We should indeed, from time to time, place national history - which occupies a large part of the curriculum - in the context of that of the rest of the continent. I recently read a book written by a French journalist, who tried to describe a history of Europe, where we discover, for example, that Francis I could have inherited the throne of the Holy Roman Empire if he had bribed the right prince rather than choosing the wrong one. This book also explains that a certain woman reached the throne in England because the British family controlled many French territories. Of course, it is not a question of denying national identity, which is created among other things by folk tales and songs, but of giving an additional place to our common history with our European neighbours.

Christine Verger. How is history taught in Latvia?

Vaira Vike-Freiberga. This question was the subject of in-depth reflection when we regained our independence after the putsch of August 1991. The obligatory history books during the Soviet occupation were pure propaganda, and presented such a distorted view of our own history and of history in general, that they were not

usable. It was not for nothing that the Communist Party had banned many books of all kinds. Auto-da-fes had taken place in Stalinist times, later works deemed ideologically pernicious were locked in a “special holdings” library and could only be viewed with specific permission (for which it was dangerous to ask). Soviet policy consisted in erasing the past of each people and its national identity in order to better indoctrinate it with Leninism-Stalinism and submit it to “Russification”. An aggressive filtering was carried out of all works of literature, history, history of art, social sciences. Even medicine was no exception. Not only was there an index of works that could earn you 25 years in Siberia, but it was strictly forbidden to even mention the names of authors who were blacklisted, taken away in mass deportations or who had gone into exile.

When we regained our independence, the first step was to republish in Latvia all the rich literature published in the western countries by the political exiles during the previous 50 years, together with the classics of the periods before the war. Textbooks practically all had to be rewritten and brought up to date, especially history books.

A free and objective historiography had to be recreated, the history faculties in universities opened up to international trends. Under the wing of the President of the Republic, an international commission of historians was created which organized meetings, symposia, conferences and received research funds for studies relating to the two periods of foreign occupation - Nazi and Soviet. In the eight years of my presidency alone, they published over twenty collective works, available in Latvian, English and Russian, in addition to works signed by individual authors.

Christine Verger. Vincent, an Internet user, asks you: “Why do we have so much difficulty selling our model within each of our countries? Can we still speak of a European dream? Is it important to talk about it?”

Dominique Schnapper. Most models of national patriotism have been constructed for the purpose of defence against other countries. I’m thinking, for example, of Portugal versus Spain or Norway versus Sweden. Europe is a construction centred upon itself which is not defined through an identity against others. Awareness of European identity is felt outside Europe, in environments where Europeans feel relatively foreign to their host country and closer to each other. It is difficult to build a European identity on this basis.

Pascal Lamy insisted on the democratic deficit (*Deimos*) but the difficulty is combined with that of *Kratos* in the case of European construction because democratic power is weak since it fuels continuous and legitimate criticism. It is weakening in nations where its history is long. Including in France, we see a

weakening of power. The difficulty of building a European identity therefore also stems from the weakening of the idea of representation and central power at the heart of democracies that risk becoming more and more critical of themselves. This essential quality of self-criticism therefore risks becoming self-destructive when it becomes excessive.

Vaira Vike-Freiberga. I would see identity as an onion, that is to say that each individual would, more or less, associate with communities that are intertwined within each other, in relation to their family, their social origin, their nationality, etc. The Erasmus program strikes me as a vivid example of how immersing oneself in another country on the same continent for a year can bring about a change of attitude. The students who have taken part in this programme are overwhelmingly convinced of the validity of a European project. They understand its *raison d'être* and its value because they have had an enriching experience in a European country other than the one where they grew up.

I remember as a young child, when I was invited to a classmate's family, the habits were slightly different from my own family. It was a big surprise to me to discover that cutlery could be placed differently on the table, for example. Travel broadens the minds of the youth and it is unfortunate that young people cannot benefit from these experiences because of the current pandemic. Fortunately, we can still communicate electronically. For me, forming friendships is the best response to antagonism and suspicion.

Pascal Lamy. The anecdote you quoted from your childhood is very interesting. You noticed that the table was laid differently in this other family, but for all that you did not feel completely foreign to this young person who had invited you to her home.

Let us start from the observation that we are experiencing a membership deficit in Europe. If we manage to build a political level that can harmoniously overlap with regional and national levels, we can try to understand our differences. Once understood, these differences lose their importance. If we know why the Spaniards go to football matches with their family while the Italians go to the stadium with their friends and not the other way around, or why the supermarket shelves are arranged differently in the north or in the south of Europe, or why Germans celebrate their birthdays so pompously from the age of sixty, then it seems to me that European consciousness will progress. We must be interested in history but also in the contemporary life in which we live.

I will end my speech with an example: on Arte, a Franco-German TV channel, a programme aims to analyze cultural differences between Germany and

France. This type of approach facilitates openness and helps counterbalance the cult of differences.

Christine Verger. Thank you very much to all three for this fascinating round table. I will pick up on an interview with Pascal Lamy recently published in the press: “According to tradition, history and philosophy, the model of the way of life in Europe is better for Europe and for nature. It’s just a matter of whether we have the three ingredients for global influence of weight, ambition and savoir-faire.”

NEW CHALLENGES: THE SOVEREIGN STATE

ROUND TABLE: DEFENDING EUROPE? THE FAILURES OF PACIFISM, THE LIMITS OF ATLANTISM

Jean-Dominique Giuliani, President of the Robert Schuman Foundation. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the Chair of the European Affairs Committee and the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly for giving us the opportunity to speak in this forum seat of the French national representation.

After the trauma of the twentieth century, pacifism appeared to Europe as a kind of liberation; after the dangers of the cold war, Atlanticism emerged as a guarantee of security. Today in the new international balance of power, is pacifism still possible for Europe? Would it not constitute a dead end which would rather lead Europe to decline, or even to downgrading or, worse, to enslavement? Is Atlanticism still enough to guarantee the security of Europe? Donald Trump's presidency has revealed to European opinion that states always ultimately prioritize their national interests and it is not sure that the United States, our allies, our friends in the camp of freedom, would be ready to endanger their territory and their population to guarantee the security of Europe. A doubt has arisen and the mere fact of posing the question shows the limits of Atlanticism.

In addition, threats to Europe are no longer confined to its borders and its continent, but are appearing all over the world, in Asia, the Indo-Pacific, Oceania and in Africa.

Europeans have long lived the dream of carefree security that followed the Second World War. A consensus has gradually arisen on the need to wake up. This is why, from now on, we talk about strategic autonomy in Europe, including in the official texts of the European Union.

Defending Europe also involves looking far in the future in order to defend our interests and our values, and there are many challenges - the Chinese challenge, the challenge of the Atlantic relationship - in a context that requires us to change times and often change paradigm. The need is more urgent than ever to define lines

of strategy for the European Union, which it is trying to do, but sometimes with difficulty, as the differences and nuances are numerous between the Member States. This is not a question of reaching a European compromise, but of making precise choices in the fields of defence and security. Is the sum of the forces of the Europeans possible in this context?

Europe is undergoing the evolution of the transatlantic relationship, Brexit, the rise of emerging countries such as China, as well as the activity of revisionist powers on its borders such as Russia. In contrast, Europe is building a permanent structured cooperation in the field of defence, the European intervention initiative – a French initiative - the European defence fund, the European strategic compass exercise. The European Union has initiated a number of military and civilian missions around the world, and in particular at its borders.

Franziska Brantner is a German Member of Parliament and she was also a Member of the European Parliament. She is the spokesperson for her political party, the Greens, on security issues.

Madam, what do you think of the French feeling that Germany has not yet taken the strategic measures that the French are proud to have anticipated?

Franziska Brantner, German MP. I would like to address the issue of European strategic sovereignty in a somewhat broader framework than that of defence. Indeed, we note that security is also defined in the fields of health, the digital economy, etc. Strategic sovereignty is essential for Europe to define common objectives and have the means to achieve them.

Europe will not be sovereign without autonomy in the health sector. I believe that Europe has made a mistake over the past year by not taking inspiration from the United States. The United States is an essential part of every production process for the medical products needed to fight the pandemic. Europe has waited until now to bring together all the European producers, but it did this a year late. The political will was lacking. Over and above research, it is important for Europe to strengthen itself in coordinating and financing the output of the products we need to fight the pandemic. It can no longer just import the products on which our lives depend. It must diversify the producing countries and refocus them in Europe.

Next, I would like to address the digital issue. A recent report documents the influence of the Russian government in the US elections. In Germany, the national elections will be held in September and we are planning for massive cyber attacks on the elections and on public debate. Ferocious attacks on the Bundestag have already started. It seems essential to me to guarantee the security of the

networks at a European level. In Germany, the Greens are fighting for the deployment of 5G to be entrusted to European players, such as Ericsson and Nokia, and not to Huawei. Unfortunately, this is not the vision of the ruling government majority. I believe it is making a strategic mistake by not strengthening the European players and by imposing on us a Chinese player which is by law obliged to transmit all of our data to the Chinese Communist Party. We have been conducting this debate in Germany for many years and I hope we will succeed.

Strategic sovereignty requires a strengthening of the euro and of our economic and financial autonomy. The issue of economic sanctions against the European Union is all the more effective as Europe does not have a sufficiently strong currency on the international stage. The fiscal capacity implemented during the crisis should be sustained.

In environmental matters, it is important to create a partnership with the Americans so as to identify a trade zone for the climate, extended to other countries. Energy is a key point of our security. In Germany, we are fighting against the Nord Stream 2 project because we believe it goes against the interests of Europeans. This is a prestigious project led by President Putin and his team that goes against climate protection.

When it comes to our military defence, we want the European defence market to be much more integrated. It is no longer a question of sticking to the objective of a budget of 2% of the national GDP for each NATO country individually, but of identifying European objectives and the capabilities we need to achieve them and, then setting out a common funding which can exceed, be equal to or be less than 2% of the budget of the nations. Cooperation with the Americans is of course essential in this context.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Thank you, Madam, for giving us a broad vision which allows us to open up our discussion.

Arnaud Danjean is a Member of the European Parliament. He chaired the Defence sub-committee of the European Parliament, of which he is now vice chair. In 2017, he presided over the French remit to write a strategic review which already represented an interesting break in strategic thinking.

Arnaud Danjean, what do you think of this concept of strategic autonomy which has entered the discussions and texts of the European Union?

Arnaud Danjean, MEP. Three years ago, I wrote an article on this concept of strategic autonomy in the document that the Schumann Foundation

publishes annually on the State of the Union. We were then in a very positive period of European defence development. This article was entitled “Europe: The Strategic Awakening?”, and indeed we were very careful to place a question mark. This article listed the indisputable progress in awareness and strategic awakening in the face of the challenges that were up-coming. However, we stressed that this progress was not only still fragile, but also reversible. Indeed, this European strategic awakening seemed in many ways to be more the product of “specific” political events, such as the election of Donald Trump or Brexit, than very in-depth considerations on the strategic environment of the European Union. Three years later, unfortunately, we are close to reversibility.

Your introduction had a rather positive and upbeat tone. For my part, I am a little more pessimistic because the dynamic for several months - in fact, since the election of Joe Biden - paradoxically seems to me to be much less positive than what we have been experiencing at the specifically European level for several years. The election of Joe Biden was seen, quite rightly, as a relief by the overwhelming majority of Europeans. It raised hopes of returning to the comfort of an idealized transatlantic relationship.

In addition, there was the pandemic, the economic and social crisis, which will probably last for several more years, and considerable funding problems. Consequently, for some Europeans, relinquishing defence obligations to the United States is a practical reflex. It has been that way for fifty years and there is no reason why it should not work anymore. Most European capitals therefore tend to be much more cautious about strictly European investments in security and defence. This weakens the concept of strategic autonomy for several reasons.

First of all, passionate debates began on both sides of the Rhine, as of this autumn, on the very expression of strategic autonomy. This concept was included, unanimously by the Member States, in texts of the Council and the European Parliament and, today, we must fight for it to remain there. At the last European Council, this expression was thrown out. Most of my colleagues no longer want to hear about it on the pretext that it is obvious and that it is better to provide content than to dwell on words. Therefore, if we are already afraid of the expression itself, a vague debate on the content will not permit us to reinstate the substance and the meaning of strategic autonomy.

For many European Member States, the concept of strategic autonomy is no longer as robust a prospect as it was in the past. In fact, the instruments which accompanied this concept – the European Defence Fund, permanent structured cooperation (PSC), a coordinated review of capability programs - are also suffering

from a certain slowdown. Some French representatives who sit in European bodies consider that the situation is progressing in spite of everything, but at a “European pace”, thus at a bureaucratic and complex pace. To my mind, I feel that nothing is progressing.

We had hoped that a minimum budget of thirteen billion Euros, or about two billion Euros per year, would be allocated to the European Defence Fund. This budget seems huge, but it will quickly be spent on very innovative defence programmes and capabilities. The budget has been reduced to eight billion Euros, that is to say a little more than one billion per year which we fear will be stretched over the twenty-seven Member States and that it thus will not fulfil its function of the promoter and accelerator of strategic programmes linked to glaring capacity deficits in Europe.

The permanent structured cooperation covers forty-two projects. This is not consistent and we are trying to return to a more robust programme. I fear that this inclusive permanent structured cooperation is ineffective. Some projects are useful, but none can make up for the delays that we are seeing in segments which would have made it possible to regain a little autonomy and sovereignty and no longer depend on other powers.

European Union operations, which have long been the engine of European defence policy, have reached a halt. In the current European context, I doubt that we are able to organize operations such as those we have carried out in the past, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 for example. Today, the Political and Security Committee, which brings together twenty-six member states, only authorizes training and drilling missions which, on the one hand, do not fully meet the needs of the local armies that we claim to train and exercise and on the other hand, are more and more short-circuited by other actors devoid of legal, moral, political and institutional scruples, namely the Russians, the Turks, the Chinese, who offer much more complete services and who are better equipped, especially for African armies, which therefore have no interest in turning to Europeans. It would therefore be necessary to review our model, but with little probability whatsoever of achieving more robust measures. Thus, I am worried about what, in the past, represented the strength and the capacity of the common security and defence policy.

Finally, it is clear that European security policy and foreign policy are not up to the challenges. The current debate in Brussels is whether to vote by qualified majority on defence, security and foreign policy matters rather than unanimously. This is because we cannot achieve unanimity on most of the major challenges, such as on the definition of relations with Russia, China or Turkey. When the latter

provokes members of the European Union in the Eastern Mediterranean, half of the members of the European Union do not react or even want the Union to be “a mediator”!

For a majority of Member States, the European Union should see itself in the international environment as a mediator. I believe that this notion of mediation is, in fact, a renunciation. We do not want to engage in power relationships in a world where, nonetheless, power relationships have become the basic law as regional and global powers assert themselves unashamedly around us and against us. These powers present us explicitly as enemies because our model of society does not suit them and that, according to them, we should not claim to defend our values around the world. When confronted by such countries, we answer that we want to be mediators. Taking such a position implies a temptation to renounce the fact that Europe should be an actor.

This development is dangerous and the US election amplified it, comforted by the arrival in Washington of teams we know well, who know and reassure Europeans. It is possible that we are witnessing an irony of history, because we cannot exclude that this American administration is urging Europeans to take responsibility over themselves. Indeed, the Biden administration will be monopolized by what is happening in the Indo-Pacific, around China, and it is quite possible that it will ask Europe in its whole to step up. In the end, that would still be the best thing that could happen to Europeans.

My remarks are a little gloomy in relation to other optimistic speeches, but I do not believe that there is cause for rejoicing at the current developments. Progress is reversible and if we are not careful, we French, to refuse the “mantra” and really start working on our dedication to our European partners, we will be very isolated.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Thank you for this contribution which, through its pessimism and realism, brings a new atmosphere to our debate.

Claude-France Arnould is currently adviser to the President of IFRI (the French Institute on International Relations) on European Affairs. She was the executive director of the European Defence Agency. She was also a high-ranking French diplomat, not only as an ambassador, but also within the French administration, at the General Secretariat of National Defence, at the Quai d’Orsay. She is therefore an expert in our relations and those of the European Union with America and NATO.

Claude-France Arnould, at the heart of the system, you saw how the relationship between NATO and the European Union could contribute either to a

kind of renunciation or else to progress. What is your assessment? Looking ahead, what lessons would you like to share with us?

Claude-France Arnould, former executive director of the European Defense Agency. It is difficult to speak convincingly and realistically after the terrifying, and unfortunately very fair, indictment delivered by Arnaud Danjean.

When it comes to renunciation, I think one of the difficulties we face is in the division of roles between NATO and the European Union. The “hard core”, i.e. homeland defence and such like, the “top end” would be reserved for NATO. The soft method, which can indeed go as far as mediation, would fall upon the European Union. I would like to give you two examples.

The former concerns the relationship between humanitarian and military issues. The European Union has carried out military operations in the Congo on two occasions, at the request of the United Nations Secretary-General in response to the atrocities perpetrated in Ituri and Kivu. Confronted again, later, with an identical situation and a new request from the UN, the EU refused to intervene. France indicated that it would not participate. We therefore had to implement the famous concept of Battle Group, set down by the military committee. This concept was created based on the operation carried out in 2003 in Ituri. So, in fact, the European Union had then deployed, in eleven days, despite a very complex context. In the subsequent case to which I refer, it was considered militarily that the deployment of a Battle Group in eleven days in Kivu was impossible. This was meant to be understood as without France. The ambassadors gathered around the table, in particular those whose “turn it was” for the Battle Group, then righteously declared that the response was not military, but had to be humanitarian. In other words, that we let the militias commit abuses and that we send medicines to treat the victims of these abuses. I found this moment to be hypocritical and cruel. It shows that we cannot condone a division of tasks that would attribute humanitarian aid, mediation, to the European Union and the use of force to NATO. In addition, the EU has the means to bring together the means of humanitarian action and development aid with a one-off military intervention.

The second example of what the relationship between the Union and NATO should not be, is that of the police mission in Afghanistan that the EU had to organize in 2007. NATO was present, the coalition having become the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The European Union was under strong political pressure to send a police mission, whilst the NATO force included elements of the gendarmerie (police under military control) -notably French. Unfortunately, it was not just a “duplication” that could be considered “useless” but a serious risk of

coordination and in particular of “blue on blue”, as is said in NATO: that the vehicles of the European police officers, not identified by the communication system, be victims of friendly fire. The matter was finally settled, by the military at SHAPE but, it took some time.

The police missions or army reform missions which have become numerous over the past ten years and which would become, in the eyes of some, the main contribution of the EU, these famous so-called “non-executive” missions, are in fact difficult to carry out successfully. This is even more the case when it is necessary to ensure that not only will there never be the slightest desertion or reprehensible attitude, but also, which can happen, that lethal weapons will not be supplied to the forces which are being trained.

This idea of the division of labor seems to me to be one of the consequences of Atlanticism. No one is opposed to peace, to pacifism; no one is opposed to Atlantic solidarity. A strong transatlantic relationship is of course in the European interest and is important for our defence. The problem is that Atlanticism is becoming a system or a religion. NATO was created so that in the aftermath of the war Europeans would gradually rebuild a defence capability within that framework. Decades of NATO defence planning, let alone since the end of the Cold War, have allowed Europe to disarm itself and abandon the defence effort. The proposed targets were ambitious, but we did not respect them and we were forgiven by buying American equipment as part of the FMS (Foreign military sale). Now the United States, long before Trump, has made it known that we have to take responsibility for our defence capacity.

This is the reason why the European Defence Agency benefitted, whilst I was there, from the support of the Pentagon, including for the Air refuelling plane programme.

The paradox of this Atlanticism, to which we might be tempted to return as soon as the climate is calmer, thus lies in the disarmament of Europe, which the Americans no longer accept and which does not respond to the present strategic context. The European Union, by initiating a policy of strengthening military capabilities, inherited this situation.

We are now being asked to extricate ourselves from this dependency. It is therefore necessary to “rearm” Europe autonomously according to current and real threats, including cyber, space and artificial intelligence threats, with the degree of independence that will allow us to feel secure. It is important to achieve this “rearmament” within a European framework because that is where not only synergy

lies, especially with regard to future high-tech weapon systems, but also acceptability.

One question is the acceptability of the famous 2% of GDP spending that must be devoted to defence: some states are getting close to 2% (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Greece), but this contribution will still represent a tiny part of the overall budget due to the size of their GDP. In fact, it is Germany's contribution that will make the difference. If it increased to 2%, the budget would reach 67.9 billion dollars, that is to say a military expenditure 40% higher than that of France. This development will not necessarily be accepted, either outside, or especially inside Germany.

The trend can only be reversed within a European framework, by building real programmes to develop new technologies and by bringing together instruments such as the Defence Fund, permanent structured cooperation and the European Defence Agency to which the Treaty gives a central role, the design of which respects the role of States, the involvement of staffs and national armaments agencies, defence ministers themselves and the possibility of carrying out "variable geometry" programmes

In conclusion, in my opinion, Atlanticism tends to be a way of exonerating ourselves from defence, which is perfectly illusory, as history, both old and recent, has shown.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Thank you very much. Nicole Gnesotto is Vice President of the Jacques Delors Institute. She chaired the board of directors of the Institute for Higher National Defense Studies (IHEDN). She was the first director of the European Union Security Institute and still participates in the work and networks of experts of the European Commission.

An Internet user asks us if the European army will eventually see the light of day. Do Europeans want an army? Does the current situation stem from our disagreements over the identification of threats to the European Union? In particular, it seems that France, Germany and the large Member States do not only disagree on how to contribute financially to the defence effort, but also on how to react.

Nicole Gnesotto, Professor at the French National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts. I share not only Arnaud Danjean's pessimism about the future of the European Union's strategic autonomy, but also Franziska Brantner's vision for the need for the globalization of defence issues. In today's globalization, it seems to me that we cannot just stick to the military aspect of defence.

In 1983, during the Euromissile affair, President François Mitterrand gave the European answer to an Atlantic problem, namely “neither red nor dead”, neither Pershing nor SS-20. To paraphrase this approach would lead to the view that European security lies neither in Atlanticism nor in pacifism. So it is about being European, but the concept seems ambiguous.

First of all, I consider that pacifism and Atlanticism have merged in the history of European security since 1949. The more Europeans wish to clear themselves of the strategic responsibilities of the world, the more they need an effective and firmly anchored NATO with an American guarantee behind it. Therefore, to oppose the two concepts seems to me to constitute a misunderstanding of the history of NATO, which represents for Europeans a guarantee not only of security, but also of peace. The Americans take care of world affairs as was, after all, the original 1954 deal, and so Germany joins NATO and the Europeans leave history. This deal is absolutely unassailable from a historical point of view. Tasks have been shared: NATO provides security for Europe and the European Economic Community (EEC) can build the prosperity of Europe. This NATO/European Union division of tasks remains: NATO ensures security and the Union constructs prosperity.

The Atlantic Alliance has developed for seventy years as a school of disempowerment of Europeans vis-à-vis the concepts of risk, risk-taking, threat, etc. The inertia of the Europeans, denounced by the Americans, is the price of NATO’s success. Indeed, Europeans have unlearned how to manage world affairs.

The history of the Alliance has nevertheless known only one exception to the opposition between pacifism and Atlanticism, namely the 2003 war in Iraq in which the French and the Germans refused to take part and opposed the Americans.

Besides, what does it mean to be European? Diplomats have deployed great imagination in European defence: *staffs*, *headline goal*, *battle group*, CSP, European defence fund, etc. However, we have never defined what it means to be European in terms of defence. Such a definition would solve the problem with the Atlantic Alliance and send the notion of EU/NATO back to a false problem. In my opinion, being European in defence means first of all seeing the world from a more complex and less binary perspective than American thought. In 2003, under the leadership of Javier Solana, the Europeans invented a concept of security which, at the time, was the antithesis of the American concept, but which everyone then took up in the West. This concept was based on very simple elements which seem obvious to us today, namely first of all, a global concept of security - it was the Europeans who invented the concept of integrated security, not the Americans - then, the opening of a global dialogue, including with the devil, and finally the promotion of

multilateralism rather than the ostracism of the enemies. This was the security vision of the Europeans; and so it remains. It has become a conception perfectly suited to globalization. We were right then and we are still right today. Nonetheless, Americans will try again to reinvent a bipolar world, a clash between us, the West, and others, especially China, by urging Europeans to follow this new anti-Chinese American leadership. Personally, I think it is absolutely not in the interest of Europeans to follow America in this binary confrontation. Being European in terms of defence therefore consists first of all in articulating a vision of the world different from simple Manichaeism between democracies and China, considered as an enemy.

Moreover, being European also means deciding like a European. European defence is less about defending Europe than deciding for Europe. This point is fundamental and if we stop talking about the military staff, militarization of Europe, autonomy, perhaps we will succeed in convincing Europeans that it is first important to decide for Europe. For example, in Iran, we implemented European defence without using a single weapon and we took twelve years, between 2003 and 2015, to convince the Americans that there was no military option to solve the problem of nuclear non-proliferation from Iran. It was a major European success in terms of security and defence, but one that we do not value precisely because we did not use military force. However, this step represented an absolutely exceptional defence of Europe. As early as August 2003, the Americans proposed a military operation on Iran and I recall that all of our Democratic partners, notably John Kerry and Clinton, voted for military intervention in Iraq. Barack Obama, on the other hand, was not in favour. It is important to end the obsession with militarism in defence. Without renouncing defence, we must try to think of defence as a decision in matters of sovereignty, and not just as a matter of military accounting.

Finally, I share not only the relief felt by Europeans at the election of Joe Biden, but also the concern expressed by Arnaud Danjean, namely that, with America becoming more frequentable, the Atlantic Alliance will once again be the magic place for our exchanges and our protection. Moreover, the question does not lie in the possible weakening, in the return of Atlanticism, of European strategic autonomy, since it is obvious that this will be the case. The German defence minister was crystal clear: strategic autonomy ended with the election of Joe Biden and the return of NATO. Without this constituting the end of history, we are living in a period during which Europeans will no longer want to develop the strategic autonomy of the European Union.

However, it will be up to the Americans to define the leadership within the Alliance and identify its limits. If they want military leadership, so be it. It will be different if they hope to broaden the definition of their leadership, as they began

to evoke in the document published in December 2020, on subjects which do not fall within the competence of NATO, but that of the European Union. For example, the Americans are asking for control over direct foreign investment in Europe, over our trade with Iran or with China. The Americans want to give us instructions on commercial autonomy. They are asking for leadership in technological innovation - except digital because they are so superior to us in this area that they do not want to share. They wish to create a Euro-Atlantic group, within the Alliance, which reflects and decides collectively on future investments in the field of technological innovation. However, this subject falls within the exclusive competence of the European Union. The more Americans develop a broad vision of Atlantic leadership, the more Europeans will become sensitive to the issue of autonomy and sovereignty, because this vision will attack the very core of the European Union's competences. In my opinion, it will be up to France, during its future presidency, to develop this subject.

Historically, the French are largely responsible for equating the political power of the European Union with military issues. But today, political power goes beyond the military question. This militarization of the notion of European power not only serves France, but isolates it. It is important to get out of this dilemma, to globalize the notions of defence and sovereignty so as to succeed in maintaining not only the Franco-German couple in terms of demands for action by the European Union on the international stage, but also the presence of a third pole in the world order. There is a Chinese pole, there is an American pole, and a European pole needs to be created and we will only succeed in doing it collectively.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. I turn to Ms Franziska Brantner to respond to the three speakers who, in a way, challenge Germany although there are points of agreement on the notion of global security. You are a Member of the Bundestag. Do you have the feeling that these debates are also taking hold in the various German political parties and the German authorities? Do you think that the Germans wish to emerge from an era when pacifism and Atlanticism were confused?

Franziska Brantner. In the German and European debate, mistrust of Paris is often more important than mistrust of Washington. Many Germans believe that when France talks about Europe, it actually sees a bigger France. This suspicion runs very deep. After all, President Macron visited Denmark and other countries, though France had not done so for decades. The French discourse is seen as a desire to create Europe in order to remain French in a dangerous world. If the European strategy is French, it will not exist. I'm not sure the French have really understood and accepted this.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. We could say the same thing about Germany. We are all guilty.

Franziska Brantner. You are right. We Germans must also change our approach. So far, Merkel's policies equate German economic interests with German strategic interests. What a mistake. But the notion of strategy and autonomy is more French than German. The Germans do not fully buy into it because of the mistrust I mentioned and because there is no real substantive debate about this strategy.

I do not think that European strategic sovereignty is to oppose the United States or to distance oneself from it, but to remain good partners. Indeed, if we do not free up space for Americans to take care of their democracy, their country, all liberal democracies will collapse. To be good partners, we need to take care of ourselves, to defend our freedom and our European security ourselves.

In German semantics, the term autonomy suggests that we can live without the rest of the world, which is absurd. I do not want Europe to isolate itself from the rest of the world, but to be integrated into this world while preserving its capacity for action. Therefore, the concept of strategic sovereignty is much more acceptable, because it means the preservation of its capacity for action.

Leaving aside semantics, Europe must affirm that it wants to preserve its capacity for action and gain resilience in a networked world that defends its citizens and identifies the means to achieve this.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Like the Americans, you are hostile to Nord Stream 2. Isn't it up to the Europeans, or even the Germans, to decide what to do rather than leave it to Washington?

Franziska Brantner. What Americans think of Nord Stream 2 is totally irrelevant to me. I am opposed to this project because it goes against the interests of Ukraine, Poland and our European partners and because it funds Putin's entourage. Also, this project makes no climate sense. Even if the Americans were in favour of this project, I would oppose it.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. The problem lies in the fact that we have not the fighting spirit in Europe and we have practically never had it again since the end of the war. It's like that and it's such a shame. It survives a little in France. The British had it, but they are going it alone. We can always think about formats, architecture, but we have to admit that we are only pretending to have the will.

I agree with the observation that, by identifying political Europe, the European Union with the Europe of defence, military Europe, we create a challenge that we will not meet. I think we should certainly make Europe political, take up technological and digital challenges. In terms of the confrontation with the United States, the questioning of the extraterritorial competence of American jurisdictions represents a central subject. It is up to us to set ourselves objectives which require will, courage, determination and which are more in keeping with our means. It is advisable to define an intermediate approach between “La La Land” and the lethal.

I am not sure Biden’s succession to Trump is truly demobilizing. Given the very low appetite of European states for defence issues, in reality, it is not certain that Trump’s abandonment of Europe was the cause or drastically deteriorated that appetite. Indeed, the security issue vis-à-vis Russia is so important that Germany seems to have developed extremely pacifist tendencies such as we have observed at various times in internal German history.

On the other hand, I think that the American reinvestment in the affairs of NATO and the call that they will launch for more mobilization can possibly sensitize us to invest ourselves in the issues of projection in which we are nevertheless directly concerned by proximity to dangerous theatres. I do not expect Joe Biden to help us be different from what we are and I am very worried about Europeans, but I do not quite see the consequences of Biden’s succession to Trump in such negative terms as Arnaud Danjean.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Arnaud Danjean, between the “La La Land” and the “lethal”, to use the expression used by Jean-Louis Bourlanges, do we need the pellet gun? Do Franco-German projects (combat tanks, aircraft) have a chance of seeing the light of day? What is the probability of reconciling France and Germany on issues of global security which nevertheless also encompass military questions?

Arnaud Danjean. I confirm that French visions of strategic autonomy, and the very expression of strategic autonomy, generate suspicion not only in Germany, but beyond, in Europe. However, the German approach generates suspicion in return. I fully understand that Europeans regard strategic autonomy as desired by the French as an extrapolation of French power, or what remains of it, and in particular as an affirmation in relation to the United States. The French see this autonomy as the reduction of dependence, which is different from mistrust. Indeed, we do not distrust the United States, we want to reduce our dependence on it so that we have the capacity to act.

The suspicion that I feel in relation to Germany lies in the fact that by completely demilitarizing the defence approach, by globalizing it on technology,

digital, etc., and by avoiding the use of disturbing words such as sovereignty or strategic autonomy, and by replacing them with capacity for action, we neutralize the system.

I admit that, strictly speaking, military and defence issues are currently very complex at the European level. Of course we can broaden the security issues to technological and economic dimensions. However, we have to admit that we are not succeeding because we face obstacles identical, albeit to a lesser degree, to those we encounter in the military sphere. When it comes to cyber security in Brussels, most of our European partners see it in the context of EU/NATO cooperation while, in fact, NATO has nothing to do with it. NATO does not possess any cyber capability of its own; NATO has the cyber capability of its member states, like the EU, no more, no less.

The problems we face are linked to Atlanticism. Europeans dreamed of the return of the Americans they love, whom they know and who know us; Americans whom we mythologize largely because the United States evolves sociologically and democratically. We will see what the future holds, but we have already suffered from disappointments. I am saddened by this inability of Europeans to understand that the United States is also following a specific trajectory, that its internal developments are predominant over external considerations and that it will follow its own interests. The America First concept will endure anyway, perhaps in a more subdued, polite, and acceptable way than Trump's unilateralism. Either way, this situation is causing Europeans to revert to a form of servility, although the expression is a bit excessive. We see this very clearly in Brussels.

I do not believe that individual European Member States have lost the fighting spirit. From a strictly military point of view, when it comes to contributing to a risky NATO operation, like in Afghanistan or Iraq, the Europeans get involved. Many European countries (Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy) have lost soldiers, and proportionately more than us, in combat operations in Afghanistan's Helmand District, in particular. The fighting spirit still exists. The Member States still have resources, but the European framework is proving to be numbing, because the desire to establish the European Union and European diplomacy as a universal mediator strikes me as extremely pernicious. It is important that the European Union be an actor, an actor which is aligned with no one and an actor which asserts its interests. Unfortunately, we want to be seen as a mediator, in terms of values, where we should also be an actor, in terms of interests.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Franziska Brantner, the term sovereignty is new to the Germans since it does not appear in any of your constitutions.

Franziska Brantner. I distinguished between sovereignty and strategic autonomy. The term strategic sovereignty is much more suited to the German conception than the idea of autonomy.

I recognize that the German concept of establishing trade relations without ostracism arouses suspicion. Handing over foreign and security policy to the United States has indeed been of great benefit to Germany. Germany trades with the Chinese and the rest of the world. It earns money and offloads the rest. However, it is clear that we need to diversify the countries to which we export. Indeed, if we export cars to China and in return we are forced to use Huawei for our data infrastructure, in the end, we will not have gained anything. To get out of this process, Germany needs help, but it will not find it in a European debate that gives it the feeling of being French and turned towards an idea of France in Europe. I think it is essential that we achieve this strategic sovereignty and the Germans must evolve as well, because they cannot trade with Putin or with the Chinese without realizing that they will have to pay the price in return.

At the 5G Digital Sovereignty Committee roundtable, the only provider represented was Huawei. Small providers try to find access to the commission, but it ignores them. The project being pursued is clearly not European.

When it comes to vaccines and the health industry, the committee is lagging far behind.

FMy last point is that Biden's victory makes me happy because it opens up opportunities, especially when it comes to the climate. The United States is once more becoming a partner with which we can work. It is up to us to be optimistic, to seize the opportunities and, at the same time, to work on our capacity for action.

Sabine Thillaye. The various speeches have left me with words that appeal to me, namely not only the word “concern”, uttered by Arnaud Danjean, but also the words “trust” and “mistrust” of one another. These words echo not only political relations, but also human relations, relations between nations. So how could we manage to build something? We have set down a statement, drawn up an inventory. I lay down a challenge to our speakers to define in one sentence the priority and the proposals that we could make.

Claude-France Arnould. Europe must launch programmes, act militarily when necessary, and improve our capabilities to act, whether they be military or civilian. It is action that brings us together.

On August 13, 2008, during the crisis in Georgia, I participated in Brussels in the worst Foreign Affairs Council I have ever seen. Some ministers accused the French, after negotiations during their presidency to end the fighting, of having returned to the time of Munich, in particular the Czech minister. After that, the European Union was given the mandate to set up a civilian observation mission. The PSCs (Political and Security Committee) that followed, to decide on the mechanisms of this mission that the Council Secretariat was developing and proposing, were totally constructive and consensual, as when we launched the operation in Congo in 2003. It is therefore clear that action leads to convergence.

So I think it is necessary to act, build programs and deploy when the situation calls for it.

Opposing the “military” and the “civilian” has never been very productive; this idea is more and more outdated. This is particularly true (but not exclusively) due to technological developments. Space, cyber issues, artificial intelligence, robotics are neither military nor civilian.

Nicole Gnesotto. Renouncement is an option for France, but not for Germany. Another option lies in the construction of a common European policy of suspicion since, in the end, everyone suspects everyone else. The suspicions of the Germans vis-à-vis France are neither recent nor unique. Paul-Henri Spaak, at the time of General de Gaulle, was already denouncing the way in which France was using Europe as the “multiplier” of French power. However, the Germans are also suspected of prioritizing China to the detriment of European interests.

It would be desirable for Europeans to explain to each other, to lay “everything on the table”, so as to then identify what they might be able to build together. What Franziska Brantner said interested me, but it worries me concerning the future of Franco-German cooperation.

Franziska Brantner. I actually think that either everyone admits that they have lived very well with their mistrust so far, or Europeans collectively decide to rid themselves of this mistrust. It is with action that we will be able to build. It would be desirable to mobilize ourselves on the major Franco-German defence projects and to overcome the mistrust probably linked to German mismanagement of the situation. We will thus be able to reach out to each other through concrete projects.

Nevertheless, I think it is necessary to distinguish the military field from other aspects. The debates on the 2% will remain sterile if they are not based on concrete projects linked to the cyber, military, economic and financial fields. It is

also important to strengthen the role of the Euro, a very painful debate for Germany, but which should be opened up in order to increase our power to act.

Arnaud Danjean. I think it is important to get rid of the mantra and that is especially true for we French. If we constantly tear ourselves apart over the words (“sovereignty”, “autonomy”) before we can even act, we will never get there. Let’s work on concrete things, but take responsibility for disagreements when they arise. We do not have to do everything the same, together, at the same pace. Moreover, the most tangible European achievements (the Euro, Schengen, European Space policy, etc.) have been carried out in a pragmatic, concrete way, based on the will of those who wanted to succeed.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Several Internet users ask us about Franco-German projects (combat aircraft, tanks). There are many disagreements between France and Germany. How can we resolve them in order to make an airplane or a tank?

Arnaud Danjean. It will be necessary to follow our logic to the end. This common agenda makes a lot of sense, economically and politically. It is important to define a clear and explicit division of tasks which is not constantly called into question. Franco-German collaborative work is all the more necessary since it does not come naturally. Franco-German political collaboration in defence is all the more necessary as such cooperation does not go without saying.

If it becomes apparent that we will not be able to succeed, decisions will have to be taken because it is not possible to further delay the deadline. The others are advancing, at the global level, in equipment, capacities and programmes.

Dassault knows how to make the fighter plane and it has to lead the project. If Rheinmetall knows how to build the tank, it must build it. The tasks should be distributed. Currently everyone wants everything and that is not possible. If we continue down this path, immobility is inevitable.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. We have not yet exhausted this discussion and that’s an understatement. Perhaps it would be a good idea to renew and extend this debate by trying to formulate very concrete proposals. This passing of the torch between the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the French Presidency perhaps offers us this opportunity.

All our speakers agree on the need to restore confidence. We are faced with somewhat unnecessary word quarrels, with postures that should be overcome. There are procedures in European treaties or in the history of European construction

which show us that the combination of our differences can represent the combination of our strengths. It is not possible to ask the Germans to violate their constitution by waging war in Africa. It is not possible to ask the French to drop their arms before trying to react to adversity.

When it comes to Atlanticism, we could go beyond the current problems by broadening our horizons. We have talked about the challenges, but perhaps not enough of the threats to the European Union, that is to say to each of our Member States. We could also have discussed the relationship with Russia, the relationship with China, the most likely to lead to a resurgence of Atlanticism and which poses a real problem for the European Union if it does not wish to strengthen the Chinese Communist Party.

Thank you all.

ROUND TABLE :
REFUSING DEMOGRAPHIC COLLAPSE:
FAMILY POLICY AND MIGRATION POLICY

Sébastien Maillard, Director of the Jacques Delors Institute. Welcome to our second round table this afternoon on the challenges of Europe. After defence, we shall discuss demography. This is undoubtedly a blind spot in the European debate. Sabine Thillaye, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, presented the subject as underestimated, admittedly studied by researchers but too infrequently discussed politically. The aging of our populations has been a long established trend, but we only seem to understand the political implications now. Europe is dubbed, more and more rightly, the Old Continent, and it will continue to age. Even if life expectancy is expected to gain several more years for both men and women, the global population will decline slowly but surely from 2030. The decline has even started in several European countries.

What must be done concerning an issue that seems inevitable, synonymous with a decline or even marginalization of our continent? The title of our colloquium is, I would remind you: “European Emergency, European Hope”. The aim of our round table is therefore to identify the emergency and the hope. And its title suggests avenues for reflection: rejecting demographic collapse and acting on family policy as well as migration policy.

I am happy to welcome distinguished guests. Gérard-François Dumont, you are a professor at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne. You direct the journal “Population et Avenir” (“Population and Future”) and have written numerous books on demography, geography and geopolitics. You have developed a discipline in its own right, which one could call “political demography”.

I welcome Hervé Le Bras, Director of Studies at the School of Higher Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS). You are a demographer and historian, author of numerous books and publications. Your most recent work was published in the midst of the pandemic: “Will we be overwhelmed?” (Éditions de l’Aube, with the participation of the Jean Jaurès Foundation).

I will have the pleasure to welcome later Dubravka Šuica, Vice President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography (an unprecedented mission). She was a member of the Croatian Parliament, MEP and mayor for eight years of Dubrovnik, one of the most beautiful cities on our continent

but also emblematic of its tragic times, on account of the horrors of war that the city experienced just thirty years ago.

Professor Dumont first of all, there is consensus on the demographic collapse of Europe; what can be done and in particular which policy (family in particular) should we adopt?

Gérard-François Dumont, Professor at Paris-IV Sorbonne University. First of all, thank you for your invitation, for which I am very honoured. At the outset, I would like to complete the diagnosis with a few illustrations before sketching out possible solutions. Knowledge of the current situation and the outcome of public policies can enlighten us on what course of action to take.

The natural increase (difference between births and deaths) became negative in the European Union in 2012. This was due to the increase in mortality, itself resulting from “gerontogrowth”, that is to say from an increase in the share of the elderly in the population, and not a decrease in life expectancy. At the same time, we can observe a decrease in births, which no longer offset deaths as of 2012. Fluctuations can be observed from year to year, births depending on both the fertility rate and the number of women of childbearing age. We see, for example, that in the mid-2000s, the number of births tended to increase as a result of the arrival of young populations. I am thinking in particular of the migratory phenomena in Spain: the National Institute of Statistics has shown that the resumption of births in Spain was linked to immigration, particularly from Andean America. Births peaked in 2008 before declining in the following years, which is explained in particular by the financial difficulties of households in the context of the economic crisis. The 2008 crisis was not very significant at the start because France, which represents a heavy demographic weight on the scale of the European Union, was not initially affected by the decline in births thanks to a policy which was more protective of the family.

Since 2015, births have decelerated significantly, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. The main factor is the fall in the birth rate in France after the “honing” of its family policy. The evolution of births can be linked to the evolution of fertility. It is considered that for the replacement of generations to be ensured, that is to say for 100 women of a given generation to be replaced by 100 women of child-bearing age of the following generation, each woman should have, on average, 2.1 children. However, in the European Union, we are far from this rate as in the upcoming generation the average figure is 70 women, as opposed to 100. This is what I refer to as the “Demographic Winter”, i.e. a situation in which the threshold of fecundity is substantially below the threshold for the replacement of generations over a significant period. As regards the European Union average, this phenomenon began

in the mid-1970s and continues to grow, even if periodic variations are possible, in particular on account of public policies.

The result of all this is an aging of the population from the bottom up. 2020 was an historic year for two reasons, with a proportion of those under 20 continuing to decrease due to the effect of the decline in the birth rate, while the proportion of those 65 and over increased given the arrival at an advanced age of more generations and increased life expectancy. For the first time in 2020, those 65 or older outnumbered those under 20.

Even though fertility is a multi-factorial element, we can emphasize the impact of public policies. In this regard, I have carried out several comparative studies between European countries for fertility and generation replacement. We observe a correlation between “child/family” budgets (according to Eurostat) and fertility indices. In other words, fertility rates are higher in countries that offer a quality family policy and vice versa. Exceptions to this rule exist, as for example in Germany, where the rules of family policy and social behaviour are quite specific.

All these elements lead us to reflect on the consequences of a decrease in the European population. Several countries are already recording a negative natural balance and within ten years, all European countries could be affected. We thus need to find some answers.

Of course, the European Union has no prerogative in matters of family policy. It seems to me, however, that it can legitimately invite Member States to reflect. I will cite three avenues for thought.

The first would consist in developing exchanges of experience between European countries on how to best reconcile professional and family life through services provided to those who wish to have children. We have abundant documentation on the subject and France can provide many examples, both positive and negative.

Moreover, demography is not independent of other social phenomena. It would therefore be interesting to analyze the consequences of various European policies on demography. The objective would therefore be to adapt these policies so that they have a positive effect on demography.

Finally, I do not need to recall that a recovery plan has been decided within the European Union and as part of this recovery plan, we could introduce measures to further encourage families to freely choose the number of their children.

Sébastien Maillard. Thank you for this very relevant presentation, which shows an increasingly pronounced demographic trend. Professor Le Bras, could we imagine a sort of “policy mix” between family policy and migration policy, by analogy with that between fiscal policy and monetary policy in the economy? What levers do we have?

Hervé Le Bras, Director of Studies at the School of Higher Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS). First of all, thank you for your invitation. When a 25-year-old migrant arrives in a given country, he/she has the same effect on the demographics of the host country as a birth that would have taken place 25 years earlier. In France, with 700,000 births per year and a positive migratory balance of approximately 70,000 people, this amounts to an increase of approximately 10% in the number of births. While the fertility rate is 1.82, migration has the same effect as a rate of 1.82 increased by 10%, or 2 children per woman. In addition, the upkeep and education of the migrant from birth until arrival in Europe has been funded by his country of birth, which represents a significant saving for the host country.

The level of migration is generally judged by the arrival of foreigners. Thus, in 2018, 273,000 foreigners arrived in France. We forget that the same year, 70,000 foreigners left, and that 271,000 French people went abroad whilst only 113,000 returned. The balance of foreigners is therefore +203,000 while that of the French is -158,000. The overall migratory balance therefore appears low since it dropped to +45,000 of the workforce, in 2018 and, according to INSEE (the French National Office of Statistics), is quite close to the figures of previous years. On account of globalization, we are witnessing significant movements of both foreigners and French people in both directions. An evolution of one of the four headings of migration then reflects on the other three: limiting, for example, the arrivals of foreigners will have repercussions on the departures of foreigners as was the case in 1974.

Of the 273,000 arrivals in France, 93,000 were European nationals, 56,000 people from the Maghreb and 50,000 from sub-Saharan Africa. This is interesting in light of the “scramble for Europe”, which is the title of the book by journalist Stephen Smith, who held up the spectre of an invasion. We are very far from that...

Migration contributes to population growth. That seems obvious, but it is interesting to measure the level of these contributions. In 2010, I published “back projections”: from demographic projections on the population in 1945, I formulated various “uchronic” hypotheses, such as the absence of a baby boom, zero migration balance or even equally constant mortality. This is what economist and Nobel Prize winner Robert Fogel called “counterfactual history”. These projections made it

possible to estimate that of the 24 million additional French people in 2010 compared to 1945, 10 million came from immigration, 8 million from the baby boom and 6 million from lower mortality. Migration therefore played an important role in the growth of the French population. I would like to be able to carry out the same calculations for other European countries - which should not be too complicated - and especially for Germany, which hosted four million “Aussiedler”⁽¹⁾ in the late 1990s and in 2015 more than 1 million refugees from the Middle East so that its total population has changed little despite low fertility.

What could be the future contribution of migration to the European Union? The Committee on Social Affairs of the European Parliament asked me in 2008 to calculate the volume of immigration necessary to avoid either a decline in the European population by 2050, or a decline in the working population, or to maintain a constant ratio of the number of older non-working people compared to the active population. The result was that it would take 44 million immigrants over 45 years to balance the EU’s population - which is on the order of magnitude of what we see now, so this figure is not insurmountable - but 93 million immigrants to balance the active population - significantly more but let’s not forget that the active population is calculated based on a fixed activity rate while we observe an almost generalized increase in the activity rate of women, and that the decline in retirements could also contribute to this rebalancing - and finally that 590 million immigrants by 2050 would be necessary to counter the effects of the aging of the population - which is quite simply unthinkable.

Compared to their elders, current migrants have a much better level of education. 55% of those who entered France in 2016 had a university level and 15% a level equivalent to the baccalaureate. Among migrants over 50 who arrived before 2016, these percentages are 12% and 18% respectively. Thus, 70% did not have baccalaureate level whilst 70% do have it among new migrants. There are other huge differences as well, but the aforementioned one is particularly important. The newcomers now have a roughly similar level of education to native residents of the same age. Immigrants therefore no longer represent only a labour force but human capital in its own right.

With regard to asylum seekers, an important political problem is posed by the presence of undocumented migrants, who are largely unsuccessful asylum seekers. The French Court of Auditors estimated that 90% of those rejected for the right to asylum remain on French territory. There is a problem with the separation between labour migration and asylum migration. As a backdrop, there is the question

(1) People from Germany whose family emigrated to Eastern Europe and who subsequently returned to Germany

of redefining the notion of asylum, which is no longer just political but extends to habits. I do not think that Europe has the means to lecture the whole world and I believe that it would be better to return to a more political conception of asylum.

As for giving lessons in morality, Europe is not exempt from making mistakes because it freely violates Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which indicates, in its second paragraph, that everyone has the right to leave the country in which they are, whether or not they be a citizen of that country. But Europe is paying Turkey in order that it retains migrants on its territory so that they do not reach Europe. Similarly, the United Kingdom finances a similar mechanism by which migrants are held in Calais. I could cite many similar agreements with African countries. I would therefore tend to encourage the European institutions to redefine the concept of asylum.

Sébastien Maillard. Thank you for this very detailed summary of migration trends in Europe, which allows us to reconsider certain received ideas. At the Jacques Delors Institute, we believe that labour migration should be encouraged.

We now welcome the Vice-President of the European Commission, in charge of democracy and demography. Thank you for honouring us with your presence from Brussels. I recalled in the introduction that you were mayor for eight years of one of the most beautiful cities on our continent, Dubrovnik, but it is indeed in your capacity as Vice-President of the Commission that you appear before us today. In fact, a Green Paper on Aging has been published and the 27 Member States adopted conclusions last week to include this issue in public policies. Can you explain to us the ambition of your Commission in the face of the European demographic challenge?

Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography. Thank you for your invitation. Families are obviously at the heart of our society. The European Union is like a family and unity is our strength. As the first European Commissioner for Democracy and Demography, I attach great importance to issues which have an impact throughout the life cycle. Everyone is interested in the prospect of living a longer life, including the young.

Ursula von der Leyen said the European Union would promote mutual recognition of family ties within it. If we want to support families, we must create an environment that can correspond to all families, whatever their composition (single women, reconstituted families, etc.). I must stress here that family policy and the very definition of the term “family” fall within the competence of each Member State. However, the Commission will continue to support, as it always has, the well-being of families through a number of policies.

Finding solutions to societal issues can quite simply save lives as we have seen with the Covid-19 pandemic, and this can have a significant impact on the demographics of a region or country. Responding to the challenges of demographic change is a key issue in building a more equitable and resilient society where no one is left behind.

Last June the European Commission adopted the first report on the impact of demographic changes highlighting the links between demographic structures and the potential for economic recovery from the crisis. Demographic work identified how the most affected communities could best be supported. This paved the way for a Green Paper on Aging and the preparation of a long-term strategy.

Sébastien Maillard. Thank you for these explanations on the functioning of your Commission. The European Commission’s Green Paper looks at how the lives of families are affected by aging.

Dubravka Šuica. This Green Paper is a very important background document on aging issues. We all age from the day we were born, even if this sounds like a tautology. The lives of young people are influenced by the desire to live longer. I would like to stress the very important message that aging calls for balancing our policy for all throughout their life cycle. On January 27, we launched a Europe-wide open discussion and public consultation based on our Green Paper. It is open until April 23 and I invite you to share your ideas. Many themes such as employment, retirement, lifelong learning, social loneliness or isolation, mental health or economic resilience are discussed. It is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered by aging, for example with the rise of the “silver economy” (services for the elderly), to which we have devoted a chapter in our Green Paper. Families are essential to us, so we take a whole life cycle approach, with youth, entry into working life, active retirement and the years of old age. If one wants to live a long healthy life, it is important to take care of this as soon as possible. We are laying down foundations for a full and complete life.

20% of the French population is now over 65 and we must ensure that these people remain independent as long as possible. Active and healthy aging requires the development of skills throughout life. We must therefore provide opportunities for lifelong learning. Learning often takes place in schools or in the workplace, but skills can also be learned through the family, exemplifying a full and healthy life. The reverse is also true: many older people have learned to use new technologies from their grandchildren. Families can therefore be the foundation for learning and for an active and healthy life. We want to help them overcome the difficulties they are likely to encounter, for example in the balance between personal and professional life in

order to be able to provide care to their loved ones. We want to transpose this directive by August 2, allowing young adults to facilitate their entry into working life, to live an independent life and to found their own family.

On March 4, the European Union launched an action plan aimed at implementing the rights I just mentioned. Many rights are linked to aging. As families are made up of different generations, we must take into account intergenerational solidarity, which underlies the social fabric, especially when it comes to enforcing laws on children. Children's rights should be integrated into all European policies. Vulnerable children have the right to the same level of protection and the same access to services. We will adopt this new strategy on March 24th.

Sébastien Maillard. Thank you for sharing your very ambitious agenda and we look forward to reading your Green Paper on Aging. I know you will not be able to stay with us for the entire roundtable, so I immediately ask you about your view on the influence of migration on demographic trends and on the composition of families in particular.

Dubravka Šuica. I listened intently to Professor Le Bras' contribution. Families provide support during times of transition and not necessarily just one family member is affected by migration. We must support all kinds of movements, between urban and rural areas, for example. We must ensure that rural areas, including the most remote ones, have the infrastructure that encourages families to settle, learn and work there. We also need to ensure that movements from rural to urban areas do not put too much demographic pressure on the latter. This is particularly true in France, where there is a growing gap between vacancies and the number of job seekers. We must also ensure that free movement within the European Union does not result in a brain drain.

In September 2020, the Commission adopted a new pact on migration and the right to asylum, focusing on migration for employment. We know that Europe is an aging continent and that many sectors have vacancies that can potentially be of interest to immigrants. Everyone who has entered Europe legally has the right to build their lives here. We need all available talents to build a better future for all of us. The cornerstone of our immigration policy is the integration of migrants into our societies.

Given the support of your President, I could hardly do without mentioning the Conference on the Future of Europe, which will be the highlight of my presentation. A democracy is not immobile, it must face the future. If citizens are left out, they will blame democracy. We therefore need institutions that give a voice to citizens. This conference opens up a new, public space, based on trust. It is about

involving citizens in political decision-making in the European Union. I encourage everyone to do this. The voices of all French people, including those who live in rural areas and in small villages, will be heard at the conference.

In conclusion, the lives of citizens are at the heart of our policy-making. We are delighted to see France working on reforms aimed at alleviating the pressures. Measures are being considered to enable older people to work longer. I know this is a politically sensitive subject, but it is a key issue for demographics. I am convinced that good migration management will contribute to solving demographic challenges. I look forward to political cooperation across all Member States, including France, so that families can prosper. I see this as a very important topic of discussion for your National Assembly and I am delighted to have seen you select this topic for your conference table.

Sébastien Maillard. Thank you for quoting the Conference on the Future of Europe, in which you play a key role in the Commission. I have one last question if I may: where do you situate the link between democracy and demography in your job title?

Dubravka Šuica. This question is very interesting. To answer it, I would suggest you return to etymology. The Greek word “*dēmos*” means “people”, and therefore refers to the life of citizens. People who live in rural or abandoned areas are used to seeing public services disappear and they feel excluded from the democratic process. They no longer participate in elections, blaming their problems on democracy. In reality, it is demographic change that is at the root of these difficulties. That is why we pay special attention to rural areas, the rights of the child and aging. We seek to deal with demographic issues but at the same time we are interested in the future of Europe. We want all citizens to be able to participate in this democratic exercise and express their hopes and fears, and we hope that we can improve our lives all together. There is therefore a strong proximity between the concepts of democracy and demography even if the link is not necessarily obvious at first glance.

Sébastien Maillard. Thank you for granting us some of your precious time. We can pick up the rest of the debates in French. First of all, Professor Dumont, is there a place for a European population policy?

Gérard-François Dumont. It seems to me essential that the European Union be interested in the evolution of its population because its future is strongly dependent on demographic dynamics. The population constitutes human capital, which in turn can create wealth, and its territory is also a source of wealth. The territory is fairly well taken into account through cohesion policies and it seems

necessary that the population also be taken into account through a deepening of knowledge on possible European policies in demographic matters. Even if the European Union does not have any direct authority on this subject, it can contribute its expertise, as evidenced by the publication of a Green Paper on the aging of the population. Upon reading it, we understand that the EU must go further. The Green Paper in fact focuses mainly on gerontogrowth, that is to say the increase in the number of elderly people, or even “aging from the top”. This Green Paper suggests measures which would promote better active aging, better employment for the elderly and better adapted retirement systems. The recommendations of the European Commission in this area are welcome. However, it would be interesting to supplement this Green Paper with a similar document which would concentrate on aging from below and therefore the decline in the birth rate and the fertility rate. The idea will be to allow European families to decide more freely on the composition of their family. The European Union could thus help enlighten countries on their political choices.

Sébastien Maillard. Professor Le Bras, this is a new area of expertise for the European Union. Do you consider that a reflection at a European level is relevant?

Hervé Le Bras. The past shows that thinking at a European level is difficult, as evidenced by the great diversity of national laws on abortion. The past therefore does not support this initiative for the moment.

The link between demography and democracy is interesting. In her response, the Vice-President highlighted a new element: the distribution of the population over the territory. The larger the population, the more complicated the political equation is. Montesquieu, when discussing forms of government, notes that the republics - which correspond to the principle of democracy - are modest in size, which he attributes to the complexity of the decision-making processes. Monarchies are, on the other hand, of medium size whilst empires are even bigger again. Making democracy work for 440 million people is not as easy as it is on a village scale. In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau imagines with difficulty how a democracy could function effectively beyond ten thousand inhabitants.

Labour migration issues are important but they are very often hidden. In most European countries, we consider labour migration, family reunification migration, students and the recognition of the right of asylum. The two most important streams are those for students and family reunification. Labour migration is quite marginal, accounting for just over 10% of the total number of entries. On the other hand, with the exception of students who tend to work part-time, the majority of immigrants

work as soon as they arrive on European soil. The activity rate within this population is close to that of the French-born.

More than half of family reunifications concern “French families”, that is to say most often mixed couples. The spouse who works generally greatly facilitates the integration of the one who arrives. So I think that discouraging family immigration would be totally counterproductive. Migrants are not made up of masses of children as one might think. The profile of North Africans who arrive is that of young adults who have lived in an urban environment. In any case, fertility has fallen to around 2.3 children per woman in the Maghreb (2.1 in Tunisia). We therefore have little fear of an invasion of children from this region, on the grounds of family reunification.

I am not sure that the European Union should deal with issues such as the one mentioned by the Commissioner, in particular with regard to retirement age. These subjects are extraordinarily sensitive, as we have seen with the pension reform in France. Each country must find its own consensus. The aim should be to carry over rights between pension plans in different European countries rather than the retirement age.

As for family policies, I suggested avenues for reflection around fertility, contraception and abortion, but that does not solve the problem of aging in the immediate future: the children who would be born as a result of such policies (which has not been proven) would not enter the labour force until about twenty years later, which would not change the ratio of elderly inactive to active people before that time.

Sébastien Maillard. Professor Dumont, given that your field of study is political demography, could you tell us your perception of the link between democracy and demography?

Gérard-François Dumont. These concepts are linked to the principle of subsidiarity developed through the European treaties. It is not a question of establishing a European family policy which is uniformly applied at the European level. On the other hand, it is important for the European Union to suggest avenues and promote exchanges. Family policy must be able to adapt to local realities (in a very rural department compared to another very highly urbanized department, for example).

Let me come to your question. The aging of the population is not fundamentally favourable to democracy. In the 1930s, it was an aging population that eventually brought Hitler to power. The sustainability of democracy presupposes a balanced age pyramid, and we observe, on the contrary, increasingly unbalanced age

pyramids, at the risk of one age group preventing the democratic expression of another age group. This represents a danger for democracy, whose balance rests on intergenerational solidarity. In a world of increasing authoritarian regimes, it is important to preserve demographic practices. It therefore seems wise to me to combine these two terms.

Sébastien Maillard. I would like to come back to aging from the bottom up. Clément Beaune said in an interview last December that a European demographic policy seemed desirable to him and he even suggested the idea that family allowances could be financed from European budgets. Would you be in favour of such a measure and would a birth rate policy be taboo in your eyes?

Gérard-François Dumont. As I explained earlier, the solutions must correspond to the situation in a given country. In this respect, let us clearly distinguish between migration policy and family policy. It is not so surprising that the European Union is struggling to implement a common migration policy, quite simply because the demographic situation of the different countries and of the working population of these is fundamentally different. In other words, the working population of some European countries is shrinking, which prompts them to want to attract immigrants, while others see their working population increasing and therefore do not see the immediate need for this. It is therefore very difficult, given heterogeneous demographic dynamics, to reach a European agreement on a common migration policy. On the other hand, at the level of family policy, the homogeneity of needs is greater since all European countries are facing a demographic winter, even though the fertility rate varies from one European country to another.

So it's quite normal that they think about common answers. The effectiveness of these relies on trust. However, we know well from the experience of France that the latter does not result alone from family allowances nor from a childcare system or a tax system, but from a combination of these types of policies and especially on the confidence of the population in these political measures. It also clearly means that family policy depends on mentalities in different countries. French family policy should therefore not particularly be based on the same model as in Italy, the reason being that in France, children receive the same welcome in society whether they are born within marriage or outside of marriage - this is the case for more than half of children in France - while in Italy, it is still widely considered that children are intended to be born to married parents. Moreover, if in France, the continuation of a professional activity for women after their maternity is well accepted, in Germany, even if mentalities are beginning to evolve, the idea of the "raven" woman is still connoted negatively: this term is applied to women who return

to work after the birth of their children. It is therefore necessary to plan actions in Germany to facilitate changes in mentalities.

I therefore do not think that a quantitative policy should be considered at the European level, but rather a qualitative policy which would allow each country to implement measures consistent with its own context and the needs and mentalities of its population. The European Union must encourage these efforts. I have already said this concerning the 3% budget insofar as family policy must be seen as an investment in human capital. These expenses must therefore be considered as such and not as operating expenses. Likewise, the recovery plan could be an opportunity to encourage Member States to better meet the needs of their populations in terms of family policy.

Sébastien Maillard. I do not want to restart the debate on the fiscal stability pact, which is the subject of another round table. I would like to give Hervé Le Bras the opportunity to react to these comments.

Hervé Le Bras. Professor Dumont's opinion on the demographic origin of Germany's vote in the 1930s belongs to him alone. On the other hand, there is a link between the rise of Nazism and demography through the idea of *Volkskörper* ("body of the nation"). The demographers of that time, and in particular Friedrich Burgdörfer, insisted a lot on the subject, and their words were widely relayed by Nazi propaganda. So there is an ideological connection, but globally there is little correlation between the proportion of older people and electoral results.

Moreover, not all opinions are divided on the interest of population growth. The ecological currents which are not at all of this opinion plead, on the contrary, for a reduction of the demographic pressure, which generates problems of pollution, emission of greenhouse gases, etc. I would therefore be more reserved about an opinion that would systematically support population growth. Alfred Sauvy, one of the greatest French demographers of the post-war period, was interested in the correlation between population growth and economic growth. He was at the basis of a whole school of thought on the subject. He couldn't find any correlation, although he would have wished to come to a different conclusion. Sauvy was born in 1898 and had experienced the defeat of the war against Prussia through his family. He even participated in the end of the First World War. For him, the demographic question was sensitive. He found no positive correlation - nor any negative correlation, for that matter, which could have fuelled the environmentalists' theses. In this regard, therefore, we should avoid referring to situations which do not relate to demographic growth by expressions such as "demographic winter" or

“demographic poverty”. We do not necessarily have to make a value judgment on the demographic growth or decline that we observe.

Sébastien Maillard. We know demographics are a power factor. I would like to give the floor to Jean-Louis Bourlanges, who chairs the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the question of the link between birth rate and ecology.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges. Thank you. I am quite surprised by the last remark of Hervé Le Bras. On the contrary, during my studies in economics, there was a strong correlation between the post-war population boom and the post-war boom in prosperity. In the 1930s, the situation was more unfavourable. Conversely, the end of the baby boom in the 1960s was followed fairly quickly, in the following decade, by a slowdown in growth. By adopting a Keynesian reasoning, we imagine that births increase the needs of families and therefore the demand of households, while citizens without children tend to withdraw into themselves.

This is the first time I have heard Gérard-François Dumont’s thesis about the supposed link between German demography in the 1930s and Hitler’s rise to power. In my opinion, the victory of the National Socialists can be explained by three successive traumas: the civil war, insofar as the Socialists and the Communists never knew how to overcome the Spartacist crisis, then the crisis of the bourgeoisie faced with hyperinflation and finally the crisis of the 1930s with a working class affected by mass unemployment. These three successive waves, added to the resentment of defeat, are more likely explanations at first glance.

You mentioned the totally illusory nature of wanting to re-establish a sufficient demographic situation without appealing to net migration. I would still like you to comment on these results. It seems to me preferable that the age pyramid be relatively balanced. However, it tends to turn into an inverted pyramid with an increasingly thin base and an increasingly thick top. Family policy could help to rebalance it as much as possible. Furthermore, there seems to me to be a connection between what society produces and what it imports in terms of population. You may find a counter-argument to my empirical reasoning, but I have the impression that a society that is fertile-dynamic is more likely to welcome outsiders. Otherwise, the ideological fear of replacing historic populations may be expressed. I have the impression that we could not adopt a moderate policy of moderate reception of immigrants - which seems to be the position of the European institutions - without seeking to break the dynamic which has led to a drop in the birth rate. The combination of the two does not seem optimal to me.

Hervé Le Bras. Thank you for your comments. I think in the case of Germany, the humiliation felt through the “*diktat*” of the Treaty of Versailles was of great importance.

As for the correlation between demographic growth and economic growth, the work I cited focused on a particular period but also on a set of countries. A full historical analysis would be much more difficult to undertake. You cited the example of France and the Thirty Glorious Years, but in China, it was when the birth rate was highest that growth was slowest, and it was from the introduction of the policy of the single child that its development has accelerated.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges. External factors could explain this also.

Hervé Le Bras. Of course, but external factors should also be taken into account in the case of France! It is therefore advisable to be wary of conclusions drawn from specific cases.

The following point concerned a balance to be found between family measures and migration policy. What is the most relevant measure? Family measures do not appear to be particularly effective. Econometric studies have shown that the consequences of a change in family policy are relatively neutral. The Poles and Hungarians are realizing this today. As for immigration, ideological rejections are the potential source of complicated integration. Balance is therefore difficult to find.

Sébastien Maillard. Professor Dumont also wanted to react.

Gérard-François Dumont. First of all, I would like to stress that the European Union faces a deficit in births compared to deaths. The concept of a demographic winter is not connoted by a value judgment - it makes it possible to address a reality as the fertility rate has plunged well below the replacement threshold for several decades. History shows that there is a correlation between economic growth and population growth, even though growth naturally also depends on public policies. The two countries in the world with the highest and fastest growing GDPs are, on the one hand, the United States, whose population has increased from 5 million inhabitants in 1800 to 330 million today, which represents the strongest demographic growth in the world, thus also stimulating economic growth as the child is an active part of the population, and, on the other hand, China, which represents an extremely large market, that facilitates its own businesses - which can reach their break-even point in their own domestic market before exporting. At the same time, the European Union is forced to adopt a rather conciliatory attitude because the Chinese market interests many of our companies.

The creation of wealth in a country is correlated to the labour force. If I compare Belgium's GDP to that of France, I notice that it is approximately one sixth of ours, but also that the Belgian working population is also six times smaller than in France. If the working population declines, which is already happening in some European countries, there is a risk that the economic dynamic will run out of steam.

Finally, a child who has just been born does not enter the workforce until the age of 22 to 25, but in reality this child plays a role from birth: he/she is a consumer and his/her parents must change their way of living to meet their needs or even make professional efforts to increase their income. Children play a role in the economy, if only through the creation and closure of school classes. The drop in the birth rate in France for six years, which is linked to the family planning policy, will thus lead to class closures.

Sébastien Maillard. I want to come back to the Vice-President, who was able to stay with us. I would like to invite her to comment on the exchanges.

Dubravka Šuica. The debates were so interesting that I preferred to stay. I have learned a lot from listening to you, and these contributions are very valuable in the context of policy development in demography, aging and children, as well as in the management of immigration, which is of great importance. These examples from the history of the 1930s and post-war years are very interesting. The economy plays an important role, but demography is always a key element in determining economic policy. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sébastien Maillard. Since we still have a few minutes before us, I would like to invite the Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Sabine Thillaye, to respond to this debate.

Sabine Thillaye, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. Doesn't demographic collapse affect the behavior of our society? Is an aging society still capable of taking risks? Americans still take risks, which we don't. We have to deal with the existing population, and deal with the issues of healthy aging and work for older ages. But, in what state of mind?

Sébastien Maillard. Indeed, Professor Dumont, isn't demographic collapse at odds with ambitions for power?

Gérard-François Dumont. We are forced to note a certain antinomy at the present time insofar as the demographic weight of Europe has considerably diminished, as has its international influence. The rest of the world feels that Europe is living in the past and no longer working on plans for the future. This is likely to

call into question its geopolitical positioning in the long term. France, for example, is still a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and has a right to a veto there, but its demographic weight in the world is quite limited. Other more populous countries could legitimately claim to join the Security Council in turn, such as India and Brazil, and you have seen that France supports these demands. At practically every visit by a French minister to India, he/she reminds us that France is in favour of its integration into the UN Security Council as a permanent member. We are therefore witnessing a geopolitical weakening resulting from demographic changes.

As soon as the working population stagnates or shrinks, it creates less wealth, and the growth rate in the European Union was already low before the last crises. If the production of wealth decreases, it becomes more difficult to sustain efforts in order to support international influence. France has also sharply reduced its consular network abroad as well as its cultural presence. This is also the consequence of its demographic aging, which has mobilized a significant part of the national wealth produced. Some expenses related to geopolitical actions have been eliminated in return.

It seems to me important that the European populations look to the future in a positive way and for that, they should feel that public policies are giving them positive signs. However, very bad decisions to restrict family policies have been taken in recent years which have led to a loss of confidence in public policies. Mme. Chair is therefore absolutely right to emphasize the interactions between the geopolitical position of Europe, its demographic dynamics, its demographic policies and its family policies.

Sébastien Maillard. Professor Le Bras, is an aging society losing its capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship?

Hervé Le Bras. No, the capacity for innovation and research is linked to the training of small, high-performing teams. You will notice that Athens was at the forefront of innovation in the fifth century BC when its population did not exceed 35,000 citizens. I am also thinking of the Florence of the Quattrocento (fifteenth century) and of thinkers like Galileo, Machiavelli or Leonardo da Vinci. Florence was less populated than Châteauroux today. The most telling example is that of the seventeenth century in England, with the founding of the Royal Society with figures such as Newton, Boyle or Hobbes. At that time, the population of England was seven million. This country was small in size, but suddenly this group of thinkers had a decisive influence. France's problem is that the government does not encourage the spirit of research. The operation of research institutes has become incredibly

cumbersome, and researchers no longer have any real freedom in their research choices. The return on research has become incredibly low compared to countries once considered very poor, such as South Korea, but which have been able to lead bold policies in favour of innovation and research. Questions of innovation and research are therefore fundamentally linked to the organization of research.

Sabine Thillaye. I was talking more about a state of mind.

Hervé Le Bras. That is a very difficult notion to define.

Sébastien Maillard. The next round table will address the issues of the race for innovation and research in Europe. I would like to thank our speakers for their contribution to this fascinating debate, for example through the links between democracy and demography or between demography and economy. Thank you for your attention.

**ROUND TABLE:
LEADING THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RACE
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION**

Delphine Simon, journalist at France Inter. Welcome to all to the third round table which leads us to the conquest of space and scientific research. I would like to greet two distinguished guests.

The first is Cédric Villani, a mathematician and winner of the Fields Medal, non-aligned Member of Parliament for the Essonne Department and Chair of the Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices. You participated in the first two scientific committees of the European Commission until 2017, under the authority of Carlos Moedas, Vice-President of the Jacques Delors Institute and former European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, who unfortunately will not be able to join us today.

We also welcome Magali Vaissière, who was Director of Telecommunications and Integrated Applications of the European Space Agency (ESA) from 2008 to 2020. You were the first woman within the ESA to head a technical department. At that time you lead a team of two hundred European and Canadian engineers - Canada is an associate member of ESA. You also worked for 24 years in industry, developing ground-based radars at Thomson CSF.

The Covid crisis has highlighted the importance of research through medical investigations into vaccines. Some have been developed using innovative technology based on Messenger RNA (mRNA). For a long time, Europe was at the forefront of the scientific and technological race. Its objective, for many years, was to devote 3% of GDP to research and development, but it has great difficulty in achieving this. Do we not risk becoming a second-rate player, overtaken by the United States, China and South Korea? Is the European innovation system still relevant or should it be reinvented? The new European funding program Horizon Europe, adopted in December, has just been launched this week. 95 billion Euros will be provided over the next seven years; is this enough given the stakes at hand?

Cédric Villani, Chair of the Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices. It is an honour to participate in this round table. Talking about Europe, talking about hope, talking about urgency, is something I am extremely comfortable with, especially as it corresponds to my

background and my long-standing commitments. I may be a pure product of the French system, still recognized today as one of the most successful in the world for research in mathematics - we are the second most recognized country in the world by awards after the United States and the first if one compares the number of awards obtained to the population – yet, I consider that Europe played a major role in my training. I have indeed benefited from European thematic networks, and this has enabled me to work with researchers from Italy and Germany, and then from Spain. I subsequently worked in large American universities, which also played a big role in my career, but before that I drew on new ideas and research directions through European collaborations and without that my career would certainly have been different.

After gaining the Fields Medal, I seized opportunities to play an active role in society, and therefore took on a number of positions including vice-chairmanship of a pro-European think tank EuropaNova. For years, I continued to call on Europe to structure its network, and not to limit itself to debates but to support its approach to investments in health, research, culture, industrial projects, etc. Such projects will also allow it to strengthen its legitimacy in the collective consciousness.

Following up on that, I participated in the first Scientific Council of the European Commission, at the time of President Barroso. It may be surprising that the European Commission waited until the early 2010s to set up such an important body. This shows that the political construction of Europe is still largely incomplete. The discussions were certainly pleasant between the participants of this first body, but they were absolutely sterile due to their lack of impact. Driven by a strong federalist spirit, I nevertheless agreed to serve a second term. The operation was much better under the presidency of Carlos Moedas, whose vision, dynamism and enthusiasm I salute. I regret, however, that we did not have a single opportunity to meet President Juncker. Some of our opinions have however been followed up, such as our work on cyber security - a subject on which I subsequently contributed to the National Assembly. The construction of Europe is a political process, but it is also about taking ownership of the major challenges of the future.

As a Member of Parliament, my first assignment was on the French strategy for artificial intelligence. In my report submitted to the Government in March 2018, I underlined the major role of the European input. Europe has a considerable strike force in the area of research on artificial intelligence, which places it largely at the level of China and the United States. However, it lags behind in terms of development and innovation, after the basic research stage. Europe is in this case a dwarf compared to the United States and China. There is no shortage of brains, but the capital - public or private - available for investment is largely insufficient. The

objective of the Lisbon strategy that you mentioned in the introduction was to achieve an effort of 3% of European GDP in favour of research, of which 1% would come from public funds. We are far from this. The research budget is regularly the subject of intense debate, and I am thinking in particular of that concerning the European Research Council during the last budget session. This organization funds scholarships for deserving researchers in Europe.

In my report, I recommended the creation of collaborative networks between European research centres, which would have made it possible to exchange students and teachers, to share material and to work collaboratively on projects, computing infrastructures, etc., including in connection with major industrial projects.

We have repeatedly mentioned the possibility of setting up large European organizations capable of financing breakthrough innovations. The idea of reproducing the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in Europe is an old chestnut. In these times of Covid, we would also like to be able to copy the model of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), which has helped inject billions of dollars into vaccine development. The report by the Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices - which I chair - on the vaccine strategy also emphasizes the need to develop health agencies at a European level in order to take into account the issues where international cooperation and rapid action are important elements. This is the case with vaccine development. We would have liked to have benefited from such an organization when the Covid-19 epidemic first struck.

We regularly observe, in the National Assembly, that our capacity to respond to crucial national challenges is limited to carrying out preliminary steps at a European level. I am thinking of issues in which I have been involved such as regulations on pesticides, animal welfare, agro-ecological transitions and, of course, digital questions. We must accept that our sovereignty is partly shared with the other Member States and that in many areas the political progress that we can achieve at a national level depends on efforts at a European level. The political challenges depend more than ever on research and innovation, and we therefore need strong research institutions at a European level.

Delphine Simon. The question of European collaboration also arises in the space field. The ESA has long been one of the world leaders in this field and today it is faced with competition from new players (constituting the “New Space”), particularly in the development of launchers. Doesn't Europe risk being left behind by these Chinese and American competitors?

Magali Vaissière, Director of Telecommunications and Integrated Applications of the European Space Agency from 2008 to 2020. Thank you for inviting me to this round table. The space sector is very interesting because Europe and France still enjoy a status of excellence. A growing number of countries want to invest in this area, but France remains a pioneer - the creation of the CNES (National Centre for Space Studies) dates back sixty years. If we look at its population, France is even the second largest investor in the world (behind the United States) in the space sector. France and Europe take a very active part in the exploration of the Universe (missions to various bodies of the solar system and in particular Mars, star mapping, etc.) but also in scientific missions carried out on board the international space station (ISS). We remember the mission of Thomas Pesquet, which was highly publicized. France also participates in missions intended for the general public, in particular in the field of telecommunications: broadcasting of programmes, Internet access, geo-location (the Galileo system). In addition, launchers allow Europe and France to access space autonomously.

It is true that many new players have appeared since the beginning of the 2000s, in particular thanks to the phenomenal success of satellite television broadcasting around the world. A real world market has emerged, becoming very competitive both for the manufacture of satellites and for launchers. France and Europe have captured market shares of between 30 and 50% (especially for satellites) and held them until last year. However, we have observed profound changes in the space market over the past decade.

Even if in France, the space sector is considered strategic, we must keep in mind that while the world space market is valued at 270 billion dollars, the share of satellites is only 12.5 billion dollars and that of launchers 5 billion dollars. The rest of the world market is made up in roughly equal parts of terrestrial services and equipment (mainly GPS receivers). The entire global market is roughly equivalent to Apple's (\$260 billion) or Amazon's (\$280 billion) turnover.

Space technology must feed on the progress made in other fields (digital in particular) and we must anticipate as much as possible the development of services based on space technologies.

I will now come back to the profound transformations of the space market, embodied in particular by SpaceX and its leader Elon Musk. This company, created in 2002, has revolutionized the market for launchers, through the design of partially reusable launchers and above all by revolutionizing relationships with institutional clients. 70% of SpaceX's contracts have been obtained from the US government. The United States and especially NASA have agreed to high risks - because SpaceX

was a newcomer - but the results are there: access to space has become much cheaper and costs continue to fall. A one-kilogram launch into orbit sold for around \$ 1,000 in 2006, a price that was reduced by ten in 2020. SpaceX has also accelerated the development of its new products dramatically.

Other entrepreneurs have followed Elon Musk's example, including Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon, who created the subsidiary Blue Origin to compete with SpaceX. He is now interested in the satellite market, where SpaceX seems to be a dominant global player - its Starlink constellation is already the largest ever launched. The Starlink project aims to provide high-speed Internet access anywhere in the world through thousands of satellites in orbit. More than 1,200 Starlink constellation satellites have been launched since 2019 and thousands more will follow. A "beta" service has already been marketed in the United States and Canada since last July and other countries are expected to follow, including France - Arcep (the French Authority on the Regulation of Electronic and Postal Communications) has given its approval. Three land bases are to be set up on French territory.

China also has a growing number of players with global ambitions who are already working on a number of projects. The Chinese government has encouraged the use of private capital in the industry whereas such investments were traditionally controlled by the state up to 2014.

How can Europe maintain its rank at the global level? The relative weakness of our budgets appears to be a handicap. Our risk aversion and complex decision-making processes can also slow us down. Competition between European countries sometimes takes precedence over solidarity. Synergies between the public and private sectors and between the institutional civil and military sectors are also weak.

Nonetheless, the battle is not lost because we can still capitalize on certain strengths. We are still in the world's leading group in space technology, and we have excellent engineers and scientists. We must practice greater openness to other sectors, thus breaking the isolation of the space sector, and continue to invest in technologies to reduce our level of dependence in critical areas (processors for example). We must also encourage innovative concepts and foster the emergence and growth of start-ups. We should not be afraid of creating competition between different solutions. We must facilitate the transfer of technologies to the market, for example through public-private partnerships (PPP). We need to launch large infrastructure projects which are globally ambitious (like a European constellation project) but which can have a rapid impact on the world market - otherwise we will not achieve our ambitions. Finally, we must show initiative in Europe on the

regulatory front. I am thinking, for example, of space traffic management in order to limit the amount of debris in orbit.

We can also participate in ecological transition. The *Copernicus* constellation, dedicated to the observation of the Earth, is considered by the Americans as “eyes on the planet”. This constellation makes it possible in particular to study climatic drifts and makes a decisive contribution to the development of knowledge on the subject.

Many applications derive from observation (such as weather forecasts), navigation or satellite communications, and make it possible to render a number of practices on Earth “greener” or “sustainable”. I am thinking, for example, of sustainable agriculture, a principle aimed at distributing agricultural inputs according to data collected by satellite. The energy sector and the transport sector (road, rail or air) are also concerned. Observation also helps improve pollution prevention and management. I could cite many other areas.

Other more indirect applications could be imagined, such as those resulting from almost universal access to the Internet, a major subject in this period of pandemic. I would even go so far as to claim that space technology can help preserve the democracy we hold dear in Europe. European Commissioner Breton suggests developing a European constellation offering a secure means of communication and Internet access on a global scale. This would reduce the dependence of Europe and therefore preserve its sovereignty.

Space technologies contribute to most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as defined by the United Nations. It is therefore important that France and Europe maintain their rank and continue to invest in this sector and in the most efficient way possible, that is to say by reasoning by project rather than always conforming to the same historical doctrines.

Delphine Simon. Thank you for this concrete presentation. We hear your call for political determination, like in the United States, where the authorities have assumed risks to allow the industry to develop. Do we ultimately not have need of an ecosystem like that of the Americans?

Cedric Villani. If Europe does not manage to have mastery of strategic technologies, this strategy will be imposed by others, and Europe therefore loses part of its sovereignty. *Galileo* and *Copernicus* are thus issues of sovereignty. Infrastructure over which we have no control may become inaccessible in the event of diplomatic tensions.

While the *Starlink* constellation provides many services, it contributes significantly to light pollution in the sky, and it is still far from being fully deployed. Elon Musk was keen to reassure the astronomical community, promising to make satellites less bright, but this talk has yet to result in any concrete action. Americans deploy technology without always worrying about the indirect consequences around the world. Sovereignty therefore seems particularly important in this area.

Moreover, if reforming our institutions is an ambitious undertaking, producing cultural change is even more difficult. Referring to this idea, Einstein said: “It’s easier to break an atom than a prejudice”. Between Europe and the United States or China, in turn, the capital you are likely to raise is significantly lower. Investments are much higher in these countries, with admittedly a large share of unsuccessful projects but also with considerable success. In the United States, decision-making circuits are significantly shortened and high risk-taking is assumed. The example of *SpaceX* speaks volumes about the ability of investors to provide lasting support: the US authorities maintained their investment despite the fact that *SpaceX* was not profitable. During this time, European governments no doubt considered that it was no longer relevant to continue to provide taxpayer funding. What about private investors, who maintained their support for Amazon while the viability of its business model was not yet established, until it became the most profitable company in the world. European investors would no doubt have withdrawn, considering that physical bookstores still had a bright future ahead of them.

Another major difference is related to the structure of funding. In Europe, the funds are provided in the form of loans, thus constituting a debt, but in the United States, the preferred model is that the providers of funds become shareholders of the company they support and that they become full partners. This model is also present in other countries like Israel. The Technion (Israel Institute of Technology) operates on this model.

Creating an institution is not enough to trigger a cultural revolution. During Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidency, structures were created to support the development of public-private partnerships. Technology transfer acceleration companies have been created as well as many institutes and tools, but their success is limited for the moment. These structures have sometimes tended to assert their own interests rather than allowing exchanges between the stakeholders they were supposed to bring together. Some success has been seen at times, but not at the level of initial expectations. The development of these initiatives has been slowed down by a cultural brake.

Delphine Simon. Perhaps Magali Vaissière’s reaction?

Magali Vaissière. I largely agree with Cédric Villani, who highlighted the cultural differences between the Anglo-Saxon world and Europe (and France in particular) very well. I regret that the United Kingdom left the European Union because it was a source of ideas and because its pragmatism was sometimes very useful to us. We will need to be even more open to be aware of the changing environment.

It is not by imposing tools that we can create an ecosystem but rather by inviting stakeholders to come together around common projects. It is up to the latter to imagine the tools that would enable them to accelerate their cooperation. The goal is to be able to get to the market at the right time. The deadlines for decision-making and implementation are excessively long in Europe. We see a manifestation of this on a subject independent of our debate, through the vaccination campaign. The result is often disappointing when we impose generic and universal tools on all actors. We have excellent scientists and engineers in Europe.

In fact, during the previous round table, one speaker emphasized the fact that creativity always springs from a small number of people and not from over-sized organizations. I share this vision. We can thus achieve a very significant strike force. A diversified ecosystem must be able to be created without large groups and start-ups displaying mutual fear. Groupings will be possible around specific objectives.

Delphine Simon. The European Union will devote 95 billion Euros to research over seven years, of which a quarter will be for basic research and the remaining three-quarters for applied research. Does this distribution seem balanced to you?

Cedric Villani. Applied research generally requires more funding than basic research. I cannot comment on the most relevant allocation rate. Moreover, what qualifies as “research” varies from country to country, and in industry compared to academics. This is, moreover, one of the sources of the misunderstanding aroused by the CIR (research tax credit). So-called “fundamental” research (a word sometimes debated) still deserves a significant share of support.

The method of funding is a question not to be overlooked because there is a difference between calls for projects and open research programmes. The balance can be quite tricky to find. The overhaul of European funding methods resulted in the emergence of research by objectives, to respond to major societal challenges,

rather than by discipline. This can be justified, but such a vision may seem off-putting to an academic, even if the latter is aware of the need to overcome interdisciplinary divisions. The assessment can also be complicated by the fact that expertise is more organized according to disciplines than to objectives. Suppose you have developed a project that relies on mathematical and chemical concepts for consequences in biology – and this does indeed exist. In such a project, work in mathematics and chemistry is important before being able to develop an application in biology.

The principle of the European Research Council was to fund excellent research, but without favouring certain fields of application or certain countries, and without taking economic criteria into account. Such a tool, naturally complemented by other tools more focused on projects and international cooperation, can prove to be useful. A complementarity of methods must be sought.

Delphine Simon. In this regard indeed, we see that conflicts sometimes appear between science and innovation. How can we strengthen the links between the two areas?

Magali Vaissière. This question is quite complex. A first difference comes to mind: in the private sector, innovation choices are guided by expected financial results. A private actor is limited in his/her risk-taking because they do not wish to question the economic and financial viability. I encourage the public sector to take more risk, even though taxpayers are likely to criticize a decision to invest in a project that will not necessarily be successful. But if both the private and public sectors are risk-averse, there will be a decrease in innovation.

We certainly lack entrepreneurs like Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk in Europe, although I could name a few like Richard Branson. In France, on the other hand, I hardly have any names that come to mind, the entrepreneurs being quite conservative. Some have built very large companies but without showing much technological innovation or risk-taking.

Cédric Villani's observations about investments are correct. Even if in Europe, we understand that public finances do not allow the distribution of funds in an inconsiderate manner, the greatest limitation comes from the fact that the level of risk accepted is ultimately very low.

Delphine Simon. I am relaying a question from an Internet user: what European policy could allow us to prevent innovative European start-ups from being plundered by companies from other continents?

Cedric Villani. This subject has given rise to many debates. I am thinking, for example, of the controversy that followed the French veto on the takeover of Dailymotion. France's vision today is more nuanced. For a few years, the dream of every start-up creator was to one day be able to sell his/her company to an American group and start a new project with a certain material ease. I am convinced that the European vision has developed. However, we need European champions who could participate in takeovers or privileged partnerships with start-ups.

I would also like to point out that the United States very frequently blocks the takeover of innovative American companies by foreign firms. The American model is based on both free enterprise and protectionism. Certain private actors introducing innovative projects thus benefit from very high public aid. "Well-placed" protectionism is therefore not to be ruled out on the European side.

Delphine Simon. Do you think it is Europe's role to protect start-ups while encouraging the emergence of European champions?

Magali Vaissière. Let me give an example: last summer, the British authorities injected massive amounts of funds into OneWeb, a young company that had a Global Constellation-type project but found itself on the verge of bankruptcy. This helped preserve British interests in the satellite industry.

If, conversely, the European Union and the member states that make it up do not support the sector by helping start-ups, they will not be able to reduce their dependence. And we come back to the problem mentioned earlier.

Delphine Simon. Do the race for ecological transition - through very ambitious stated objectives - and the technological race go hand in hand? Apparently yes, but are they reconcilable, considering for example that the carbon footprint of digital technology is growing rapidly, and in the current health context? State budgets are not without limits...

Cedric Villani. We have no choice in either of the two areas. The ecological, energy and environmental transition is an imperative obligation. Otherwise, all of humanity will face its end. There is a figure of one billion people whose land would become uninhabitable in about forty years due to climate change. Biodiversity has collapsed, as have insect populations which have declined sharply. In my childhood, when we drove through part of France on vacation, we regularly had to stop to clean the dead bugs from the windshield. Not anymore. The list of endangered species and areas where biodiversity is endangered for all kinds of reasons (light pollution, artificialization of the soil, etc.) continues to grow. We are facing an emergency related to the depletion of materials such as copper or rare

earth elements in a few decades at the current rate. The French Parliamentary Scientific Office recently issued a very comprehensive report on plastic pollution - the most comprehensive ever produced in France on the subject thanks to the involvement of Philippe Bolo and Angèle Prévaille through hundreds of hearings. The picture it paints is frightening. Plastic, through fragmentation, enters all ecosystems and remains for a very long time. The list of environmental scourges that threaten us is such that we cannot ignore them. If Europe does not lead by example in terms of ecological transition, who will?

At the same time, we also have no alternative to the development of the digital domain. During the Covid crisis, Apple and Facebook made historic profits despite the global recession. The turnover of these companies is in the hundreds of billions of dollars and their capitalization exceeds a trillion dollars. The digital industry is ubiquitous and growing and if Europe does not play its role, it will just be completely economically dwarfed and will no longer be able to influence the way the world works.

Of course, it is very difficult to combine these two imperatives. It is true that the digital carbon footprint is increasing due to energy consumption and the low level of recycling in this industry. Prudence is clearly necessary in the future. The Chief Project is the organization that has worked the most on the subject in France, but it is not the only one. Experts from different agencies (such as the International Energy Agency) relativize the ecological footprint of digital technology, but this issue is also an imperative.

Delphine Simon. Magali Vaissière, you just described the *Copernicus* project as an “eye on the planet”, using the description that the Americans have of it. What is the contribution of space research to climate matters and is Europe making its particular voice heard on the subject?

Magali Vaissière. Thanks to *Copernicus*, Europe is emerging as the region of the world where climate issues are the most studied. Very significant investments have been made in this area, absorbing a very significant share of European budgets dedicated to space. The development of the *Copernicus* constellation is the result of a colossal effort at European level.

Europe must be even more exemplary than today by supporting the development of services to citizens, who could use this data to reduce the carbon footprint and improve the sustainability of their professional activity.

You pointed out that the Covid crisis has shown how essential digital technology is, and this has enabled the American giants of the sector to rake in

historic profits. In this regard, I would like to highlight the dangers of the digital divide. Children who did not have a sufficient connection to the Internet or access to digital technologies found themselves in difficulty. How will we live in our digitized society? It will have to be inclusive, and it will be necessary to imagine solutions such as the use of satellites in addition to fibre optic networks.

I agree with Cédric Villani: we cannot choose between ecology and digital, both are imperative.

Delphine Simon. Lucette, an Internet user, wants to know how we could develop research centres on biodiversity and health, with a research centre on soil decontamination. This would, I imagine, preserve water quality and health. Who would like to answer this question?

Cedric Villani. I don't think it's a good idea to have a research centre that is too specialized. It is important for research centres to be able to enrich their thinking in several fields of research and several specialties.

The challenge is not so much to create a research institute on soil remediation but to identify and support the teams working on the subject.

Implementation issues could also be raised. One could imagine that laboratories could carry out experiments on industrial wastelands or "brownfields" to be decontaminated. There are already enough of these sites and we do not need to create new ones.

The challenge is therefore not really to create a new research centre, but to connect the stakeholders in order to facilitate their action. It is a matter of research policy.

We know, moreover, that researchers tend to choose their research topics based on their scientific curiosity rather than on the applications that their work will make possible. We therefore have every interest in leaving the field open to their creativity rather than forcing them into specific fields of research. Europe has no shortage of researchers; it is rather at the level of the implementation of research strategies for economic development and business growth that we must work.

Delphine Simon. Our time for this roundtable is running out. Magali Vaissière, could you summarize for us what the space industry can expect from Europe?

Magali Vaissière. We must put the uses of space at the service of major challenges, such as those of digital technology and energy transition. Europe must continue its efforts while having an open look upon changes in its environment and accepting the idea of sometimes deviating from past models. It is our methods that must evolve in order to be able to maintain our competitiveness on a global level and a certain relevance in relation to emergencies.

Cedric Villani. I would like to pick up on that point. Europe will not achieve anything without a strong awareness of its external environment. Eighty years ago America was a scientific dwarf compared to Europe. The Second World War completely changed the situation. Pre-war France, Germany and the UK were all in the lead. Both the Russians and the Americans were inspired by the German space program of the 1930s. The great powers acquired this status through their ability to draw inspiration from Europe at a time when the latter was at the cutting edge of progress. Europe must naturally seek to develop its strengths and show protectionism when necessary, but it must also know how to spot good ideas on all continents.

Delphine Simon. Thanks for this debate. I now give the floor to Sabine Thillaye, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the National Assembly to conclude this very interesting day.

Sabine Thillaye. Thank you very much to all of our speakers, who gave us a lot of food for thought, which is a real breath of fresh air for us parliamentarians. The leitmotif of this day is the need to act. I also retain the transversality of the themes: it is impossible to think about a subject while disregarding other issues. Europe is not the same as after the Second World War. We are no longer subject to the same internal tensions but we have to make decisions in a changing environment. This morning, we asked questions about the new challenges. We need creativity and flexibility to tackle these issues; we also need to take more risks. Finally, we need to think about methods. We will see that again tomorrow when we reflect on how our institutional models evolve. I hope we will find answers to our questions in this area.

TOWARDS THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: AN AGENDA FOR TWO YEARS

Sabine Thillaye, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly. Today, we will be more particularly concerned with institutional issues around two round tables entitled, “Thinking about the institutional model” and “Three institutional emergencies: budgetary democracy, new powers, and the position of national parliaments”. I have the pleasure of welcoming Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute and former Prime Minister of Italy, who grants us the honour and the pleasure of opening our morning session.

Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute, former Prime Minister of Italy. I am delighted, on behalf of the Jacques Delors Institute, to open this day which I am sure will be intense and interesting. I will immediately focus on the major issues of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

I saw this concept as essential, fundamental from the start. It is a great idea which will allow Europe to pick up the thread of an institutional change which was already blocked 16 years ago by the two Dutch and French referenda of 2005. For 16 years, we have had the Treaty of Lisbon but also changes in European rules. These were either changes in behaviour, therefore in the form of unwritten rules, or changes in the form of texts which were implemented outside of the European treaties.

It is important to note that Europe has been shaken by the desire of citizens to be more present, more critical. We have lived 2020 in a special way, with a new desire on the part of European citizens to give confidence to Europe. Today we must listen to this request. It is for this reason that I am in favour of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

This is an idea that was launched by France about two years ago. The opening of the Conference had to be postponed due to the pandemic we are experiencing. Much work has been done at the Jacques Delors Institute but also in other places of reflection in Europe in order to best prepare for this Conference. We have exchanged on many ideas and we created a group of young Europeans from 27 European countries but also from countries wishing to join the European Union. This body is called the *Budapest European Agora*. We wanted this exchange forum

to be located in a European capital which is not necessarily known for its pro-Europeanism, but in a capital where many think tanks meet to discuss the future of Europe.

I will raise three issues that I consider essential for the future of the European Union.

Firstly, I believe that this Conference is now taking on a new form following the year that we have been through. It was President von der Leyen who gave this direction in her September 16, 2020 State of the Union address. We were at a particular moment, we thought the pandemic was almost over. Unfortunately, then we went through the second wave and now the third wave. In this very striking and very important moment, Ursula von der Leyen gave the Conference on the Future of Europe the mandate to work to build a Europe of healthcare. I think this is a great idea, a great challenge, and above all it will make it possible to link Europe and the institutional debate to something very concrete. We must ensure that the institutional debate does not stray from the interests of citizens.

Speaking of the Europe of healthcare, the president is absolutely right because this is a subject incredibly linked to everyday life and above all to our hopes and expectations. This healthcare Europe did not exist and we have sorely missed it during this pandemic. When the crisis started in March, we all asked ourselves: where is Europe? Europe could not intervene in the field of health but also in other social matters because it did not have the competence for this. Jacques Delors, then President of the European Commission, fought a great battle on these subjects against Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. My first wish would therefore be to ensure that the Europe of healthcare, which is driven by citizens, becomes a reality.

Secondly, I believe that we must do our utmost to eliminate all veto rights and all unanimous votes within the European Union. This is a controversial but essential subject. In the midst of a pandemic, for the past six months, we have seen the devastation that national vetoes are wreaking. We have seen the position of Cyprus on sanctions against Belarus, Poland and Hungary on the issue of the European recovery plan, and other such issues. I think it is important today to lead the battle against vetoes and to tell citizens that a veto is never in the interests of citizens or in the general interest.

Thirdly, I would like to address the issue of the place of citizens in the decision-making process of the European Union. The Conference on the Future of Europe must link citizens more and more to the European idea and must make the

citizen a protagonist. Today, the European citizen is not a full protagonist on European issues. He/she votes in the European Parliament but he/she votes for his/her national representatives. The national representatives sit in the European Parliament as a national delegation. I think it is necessary to link the vote of the European Parliament more to everything that happens and is decided in Brussels. We must ensure that citizens are more invested and participate more in the decision-making process.

The European Commission is launching citizen participation projects within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe. We want to make our contribution to this. This must be the high point of European life. We need to be mindful and engaged in this particular moment. It is wrong to think that citizens are not interested in these subjects. If we associate these topics with very concrete aspects of everyday life and if we add the fact that the citizen is able to influence European political life, then this Conference can be a success.

It is wrong, for example, that the rules for appointing the President of the European Commission change with each European election. The last three Presidents of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, Jean-Claude Juncker and Ursula von der Leyen were all chosen with completely different rules. Mr Barroso was chosen by the members of the European Council. On the contrary, Mr Juncker was chosen by the political parties within the European Parliament, even though certain states had vetoed this within the European Council. Ms von der Leyen, in her case, was chosen again by the European Council without taking into account those who had run for and campaigned for the European elections. We are therefore in the presence of three methods, three completely different choices.

ROUND TABLE: CONSIDERING THE INSTITUTIONAL MODEL

Pierre Vimont, Ambassador of France, former Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The first round table focuses on the institutional model of the European Union and how to conceive it. Over many years, there has been an evolution. We have moved from a Community model which sometimes found itself confronted with the intergovernmental model, to a different model in which the European Council is playing an increasingly important role. These two different concepts overlap and force us to reflect on the following questions: what is the institutional model of the European Union today? Is there a need for revision? Mr Letta proposed an agenda for the method of selecting and appointing the President of the European Commission. This is one topic among many that it is essential to work on. We can also consider the right to initiate, qualified majority voting, the size of the Commission, the debate on the *spitzenkandidat*, variable geometry, many subjects on which it will be interesting to give the floor to various speakers.

I would like the speakers to take their thinking a little further to ask themselves what this development consists of. What does this evolution reflect? How does it translate into legal terms? What about the political point of view? What does this development say about our institutional model and about the identity and nature of the European Union as it has developed over the years?

When we are abroad, we are often asked what the European Union is. Can we define it? The definition that has always struck me as both the most precise and the most subtle was that of the federation of nation-states. This set of words is a good way to highlight the two sovereignties, in a way, which clashed and which are today still in a phase of adaptation, construction and reconciliation. It seems to me that it would be interesting to reflect upon that.

The first speaker of this round table on the institutional model of the European Union is Jean-Louis Bourlanges. He is currently chair of the French National Assembly's foreign affairs committee and deputy-chair of the European affairs committee, chaired by Ms Thillaye. He was also a Member of the European Parliament. Since 2017, he has been an MP for the Hauts-de-Seine constituency. Jean-Louis Bourlanges is also a member of the board of directors of the Jacques Delors Institute.

The second speaker is Luuk van Middelaar. He is an academic, a political philosopher. In particular, he has produced fascinating works including two books which have been translated into French and English from the original Dutch, *The Passage to Europe*, and, *Alarums and Excursions*. These two works provide completely new elements concerning the conception of the European institutional model. Mr van Middelaar is not only an academic but also a practitioner, having worked in the staff of Herman van Rompuy, the first President of the European Council under the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, between 2010 and 2014.

The third interlocutor is Róza Thun. She has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009. She sits in the EPP group in the European Parliament. She was formerly president of the Robert Schuman Foundation in Warsaw. She also headed the representation of the European Commission in Warsaw. She is the international vice-president of the European Movement.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. I chose, and moreover freely, to take, within the framework of this conference, a major risk: that of annoying everyone by approaching the question of the future of European construction from an angle which, for a long time, no longer interested many people, that of the institutional issues of the enterprise. Claude Imbert said: “When I hear about Europe, I take out my pillow”. This numbing effect of the European debate is largely due to the fact that it has always been concentrated, we now say “focused”, on institutional and procedural questions which mean nothing to most of those who are not, like many of us here, addicts of community abstraction, Brussels circuits and procedures.

And yet, as an old reader of Livy, I do not hesitate to take up the torch of Menenius Agrippa who explained to the Roman plebs who were on strike on the Aventine that the organs of which we did not see the importance to the naked eye, in this case the stomach which distributed the means to act, over limbs which acted spectacularly, had an eminent responsibility in the success or failure of a man’s action.

I am a little tired, I must admit, of constantly hearing the demands for a concrete Europe invoked, the Europe of practical needs and immediately perceptible advantages, that of the “delicacies of action”, as Gérald Bronner would say, while it is clearly the ignored, concealed, stretched weaknesses of the Union’s decision-making system that prevent it from effectively meeting the historical challenges that the peoples of Europe must face together if they want to preserve their interests, their influence and their freedom in a world which does not seem

precisely disposed to wait quietly for the end of the European siesta to impose its law and its values on us.

Imagine what the role, the influence, the power of the United States would be today if it was administered by “an American council” of fifty states taking decisions “by mutual agreement” in the framework of intermittent symposia.

Far be it from me to want by these words to transpose the decision-making process of the United States to the European Union. My only concern is to share with you my conviction that the deficiencies in our decision-making system are at the root of the permanent disappointments engendered by the Union and of its inability to play the role that opinion expects of it.

Let us beware of the dictatorship of the concrete, of the immediate and of the practical, and let us know how to make our own the formula of Althusser, which could just as well have been written by Claude Lévi-Strauss: “we must bring to the heart of empirical disorder the unalterable rigor of the concept”. We cannot afford to say today what is good for Europe if we do not start to question the nature of the European Union.

What is at the foundation of Europe is its geography, this small cape of Asia with uncertain limits of which Valéry spoke. It is above all a story, that of a civilization that has developed around a demand for freedom, rationality and secularism, which the Pascalian theory of the three orders perfectly summarizes: the order of bodies and temporal power which engendered the free administration of citizens, the order of Reason which allowed intellectual innovation, scientific adventure, growth and progress, finally the order of the heart, that is to say that freedom of religious conscience.

The fact remains that the European Union is both Europe and more than Europe: it is an institutional, constitutional pact, as Habermas would say, the very one from which a majority of the British people wanted to be freed, uniting around them certain European peoples and States - some only - a pact intended to exercise in common certain competences falling under the sovereignty of these States. This pact can be analyzed as an effort, at the same time impressive and still very imperfect, as an answer to two questions concerning firstly the institutional and procedural modalities of the exercise of these competences, and secondly the principles of devolution of the competences transferred by the Member States to the Union.

The thesis that I will support here is that the governments of Europe have been very imaginative in answering the first question and that what is called the

“community model” does indeed constitute an intelligent, democratic and effective response to the problems posed by the management of the powers transferred to the Union, but that, on the other hand, these governments have proved to be hesitant in the establishment of a rational mechanism for devolving the powers thus transferred.

The number one problem that arises for us is therefore less that of the adjustment of the community decision-making system and the absorption of an alleged democratic deficit grossly overestimated by a public opinion which is against all forms of power, than that of eligibility to the community system of powers retained at State level in defiance of any logic of rationality and subsidiarity, or even more hypocritically falsely devolved to the Union within the framework of ineffective and paralyzing procedures.

We will therefore address these two questions in turn:

I. An excessively dramatized question, the democratic deficit

The denunciation of the democratic deficit is an object of almost general consensus among the peoples and leaders of the European Union. It feeds on various elements: sovereigntist denial of any possibility of democratic life inherent in a supra-national entity, protest against a dictatorship of technocratic reason imposed on peoples, questioning of the alienation attached to everything in the delegation process within the framework of a representative democracy and correlative sacralisation of direct democracy, submission of the life forces of societies to “the arbitrariness of a stateless administration” and permanent unease of citizens in the face of the sluggishness, complexity and opacity of decision-making mechanisms within a Union of 27 sovereign states comprising nearly 450 million inhabitants. In short, the trial is being heard from all sides and the prosecutors make a very pertinent point.

This negative feeling is a major political fact and is nourished by a more general suspicion of the traditional methods of pluralist and liberal democracy, of the guarantees with which it surrounds itself, of the complexities that it imposes on itself, of the timidities in the conception and action which contrast with the imperative effectiveness of authoritarian regimes.

I do not agree with this trial of representative democracy because I believe that there is no model that is superior to it, or even comparable, if we consider that the object of democracy is for the public authorities to take action following the will of the citizens and as a condition of respecting the rights and fundamental freedoms

intended to allow the latter to express the orientations which they intend to impose on the human communities of which they are the citizens.

The organization of democracy in a community as specific as the European Union must respect four criteria:

1. It must be a *Kratos*, a power to carry out, effective and respected, even if it is exercised in the name of a *Demos* therefore determined by the will of the people.

The inefficiency that results, for example, from unanimous powerlessness is as damaging to democracy as the exercise of power that does not emanate from the people and is not monitored by their representatives. The “vetocracy”, that is to say the power recognized by each State, and even sometimes each fraction of a State, to say no to the vast majority of States and peoples of the Union, cannot to be considered a democratic system. Democracy is the power of peoples, it is not their helplessness.

2. A federal system

The European Union, whether one dares to call it “federal” or not, rests on the association of the member states that constitute it and the citizens represented in a supra-national parliament elected by universal suffrage.

The balance between states and citizens underpins the entire institutional construction of the community, whether it concerns, for example, the procedure for appointing and monitoring the President of the Commission and its members or the adoption procedures and monitoring of legislative acts.

If we stick to what we used to call Community Europe, that is to say that of the former first pillar of the Maastricht Treaty, this balance between the Council and the Parliament is really flouted only in the context of special procedures relating to the adoption of the multiannual financial framework, of the own resources decision and of the annual budget of the Union.

Above all, this balance must not be called into question where it exists and operates without particular difficulties. In this regard, it is necessary to wonder about the intellectual and political nonchalance shown by those who want to replace the current procedure for appointing the President of the European Commission by the automatic designation of a *Spitzen candidate*, in the person of the candidate appointed as leader by the party having obtained the most seats and which has the most votes in the European parliamentary election.

It must be seen that this mechanism would result in simultaneously taking power away from the European Council, that is to say the States, and the Parliament, which would be condemned to appease a personality imposed on it by a more or less democratically organized and structurally minority party.

How can we fail not to see the immense danger that there is, from a democratic point of view, in attributing a particular legitimacy to the representative of a party that has won in the framework of a multi-partisan system and not a bi-partisan one, as is generally the case in the UK? In 2002, in France Mr. Le Pen almost beat Jacques Chirac in the first round of the presidential election. And yet, two weeks later, Mr. Chirac was elected with 82% of the vote against 18% for his competitor. In other words, the first round was a fundamentally irrelevant instrument for selecting a legitimate candidate to represent a community.

Let us be careful that the mishap that France avoided nineteen years ago does not strike the European Union in the coming years. Let us never forget that what puts a candidate at the head of a poll in a multi-party system is really not voter preference but rather the unequal degree of party fragmentation.

The appointment of Mrs von der Leyen, and her Commissioners as well as the approval of the Commission have shown that the balance between the European Council and the European Parliament is broadly secured in the current framework. We have to be aware of this and not try to impose false solutions on a problem that does not exist.

3. A negotiating democracy

European democracy must be about negotiation and inclusion, not confrontation.

The European Union is too heterogeneous, too divided, to adapt without risk of shattering bipolarized confrontations, even Manichean, capable of awakening all the potential factors of division and secession: north-south, east-west, right-left, Catholic-Protestant, parsimonious and needy.

From this point of view, the plurality, dear to Montesquieu, of powers in search of balance and cooperation is not an institutional weakness but a political guarantee because it obliges each one to understand and respect the other, all the others.

In the same spirit, we must celebrate the virtues of the qualified majority, a majority which requires much more than the adhesion of half of the peoples and of

the Member States, and which, therefore, has the double merit of favouring negotiation on the confrontation inherent in the simple majority, and decision-making efficiency on the paralysis inherent in unanimity, that is to say in the generalization of the right of veto.

Here again, there is a principle and a procedure that must imperatively be safeguarded, a principle and a procedure whose only flaw is that it is generally proscribed in the sphere of political decisions.

4. European democracy must finally be “representative”

This in no way excludes that it also be participatory. It is the job of the European Parliament, and more generally of what I would irreverently call, the “Brussels-Strasbourg Show”, to involve civil society actors as closely as possible. The fact remains that a human community of nearly 500 million people can only be shattered if it sets out to play the dangerous game of direct democracy and the referendum. In the Union, there is no thesis or antithesis that does not include a synthesis, or even a compromise, which in essence excludes referendum power, binary confrontation, the “I won, you lost”. In the European Union, the referendum can have only one role, and it is certainly legitimate in this role, that of allowing a people to “get out”, to break with the others, to secede and leave as the British dared to do and as the supporters of the no in 2005 refrained from doing at the risk of locking the “no party” into a dead end. The referendum in Europe paralyzes or brutalizes. It cannot be a relevant instrument for joint decisions.

In conclusion of these reflections on the mode of operation, let us say that the community system thus described deserves to be defended, and even in some respect exalted for its intelligence, instead of being, as it too often is, derided and vilified. Without a doubt, it could be made clearer, simpler and more user-friendly in the eyes of our fellow citizens. However, I do not think there is any need to transform it in depth. Moreover, we must fear that we could make the situation worse by trying to improve it. An example of what we must be careful not to do: use the indisputably bloated nature of the Commission as a pretext to demand the return to the letter of the Lisbon Treaty and organize an egalitarian and rotating reduction in the number of Commissioners. Let us beware of this “false good idea”: we can perfectly live and rationally organize the work with a too numerous Commission. A Commission which, on the other hand, for five years out of fifteen, is cut off from a German, French, Italian, Spanish, Polish or Belgian commissioner would suffer from a very serious lack of legitimacy. The supposed “best idea” in this case is clearly the enemy of the right one.

On the other hand, let us know how to recognize the five superiorities, in terms of democracy as well as of security, of Community Europe over intergovernmental Europe:

- a common power of initiative i.e. that of the Commission, to compose without frightening or making waves;

- A Council of Ministers of the Union deciding by qualified majority in order to bring together without paralyzing;

- A Council of Ministers-Parliament co-decision, in order to oblige the representatives of the States and those of the citizens to cooperate on an equal footing without however subjecting the others to its will;

- A central bank to manage, with an efficiency that is not seriously contested by anyone, the common currency;

- A Court of Justice to guarantee respect for the rule of law;

How can we fail to see that there is the same difference between the community system thus described and the intergovernmental system claimed by sovereignists as between a human being and an amoeba. Indeed, the intergovernmental system is a system deprived of any common impulse, condemned to a paralyzing unanimity, foreign to any form of parliamentary and citizen control, and finally subjected to no monitoring of legality.

The real institutional question to be resolved is therefore elsewhere: why is a mechanism so perfectly suited to its purpose so poorly implemented? The powers devolved to the Union are ultimately few in number and when they are clearly political in nature, they are managed within an intergovernmental framework which condemns decision-makers to crippling unanimity. When it comes to politics, directly or indirectly, it is not the United States but each state in fact that has the sovereign decision.

The number one constitutional problem of the European Union therefore remains seventy years after the Treaty of Paris establishing the ECSC, that of a rational devolution of political powers to genuinely common institutions. The new agenda imposed on the Union, that of a Europe that Luuk Van Middelaar in his own way describes as “Machiavellian” makes it urgent to unblock the Union on this crucial issue.

II. An unresolved question: the organization of the devolution of powers to the European Union

The question of the devolution of the competences attributed by the Member States to the Union has from the very beginnings of European construction been the subject of special treatment intended, if I may dare say so, to put it on the back burner. Monnet and Schuman focused on the body and engine of the institutional vehicle, but were very cautious about the issues it would seek to address. They therefore invented “gradualism”, what has sometimes been called “spill over”, that is to say the idea that the Union would see its field of action broaden in an almost spontaneous manner since any new power would create a need that would also be new, the satisfaction of which would require the implementation of an additional power. Thus, with competences pushing each other one would end up endowing the European community with a fairly extensive portfolio of responsibilities.

This system has worked relatively well, but within narrow limits. We have effectively moved from lowering tariffs to harmonizing standards and harmonizing standards at Monetary Union. However, this mechanism only allowed very marginally - through the common agricultural policy, this French exception imposed on Europe, and the structural and cohesion funds, this marginal if not symbolic concession to solidarity - very marginally, I said, allowed the European Union to cross the sacred door of politics and to become a Machiavellian Europe, the Europe of conflicts of value and interest, of ideological, strategic and budgetary trade-offs, in short that of a powerful Europe as opposed to a European space.

This limitation of powers has ceased to be compatible with a satisfactory integration of Europeans into the harsh, brutal and fragmented world of the 21st century. I agree on the point made by Van Middelaar concerning the transformation of the European project.

We must therefore answer two questions: how to explain this limitation? How to overcome it?

- 1. The blockage to be overcome is both political and institutional in nature.
 - a. Politically

The devolution of a competence to the European Union is conditioned by the existence of a consensus between the member states on the political legitimacy of this devolution. However, the manifestation of this consensus encounters two major obstacles.

- The undetermined nature of the ultimate goal of the European Union

Let us examine in turn these two difficulties of the aim of the Union. Was it designed to overcome otherness, appease historical conflicts, civilize exchanges between former belligerents, thus create a legally organized framework of relations between states accustomed to fighting or even hating each other? In short, restore peace after centuries of unnecessary wars? Such a Europe is not intended to be much more than a legally organized framework, within which states live their lives in peace and sovereignty. This framework is intended to expand indefinitely as the boundaries of hatred it manages to overcome. Thus conceived the Union is an enhanced cooperation of the United Nations.

On the contrary, does the Union not have the mission of expressing the identity of a particular historical civilization, of retrieving its former position, of defending the interests of promoting values and restoring the influence, shattered as it emerged from the two world wars, of a prestigious civilization which had practically committed suicide between 1914 and 1945?

These two goals have coexisted uneasily since the origin of the enterprise and are underpinned by two very different conceptions of the European Union: minimal Europe on the one hand, guardian of internal peace and ensuring the quality of exchanges between the member States but weakly intrusive in the life of each of them and endowed with very limited budgetary means and incapable of leading other than at the margin of common policies which are more or less peripheral. This Europe is that of the common market, of the internal market and even, at least initially until 2008, of monetary union. Its aim is to allow things to be done than do them, to let things happen and to expand indefinitely. It was this Europe that the British cherished and which justified both their participation and their opting out.

On the other hand, an action-oriented Europe, requiring budgetary resources and voluntary initiatives, a Europe locked within assumed historical and geographical limits, a Europe of solidarity and power, attached to reciprocity more than to exemplarity, concerned with its interests as much as its values and less turned in on itself than open towards the rest of the world. This is in contrast to British Europe, the French-style Europe of which the CAP was the first expression. Between these two Europes, Germany has always hesitated, oscillated and tried to gage its ambitions according to the developments or stagnation of the European Union. Germany hesitates, but history has chosen. It now imposes this “Machiavellian Europe”, particular and strategic under the effect of the loosening of transatlantic links and the ideological, economic and political fragmentation of a

world which has not responded to the universalizing hopes that Francis Fukuyama had placed in it.

It is clear, however, that the absence of a real consensus on the ultimate goal of the Union, in short, mistrust of the development of a political Europe which is more than Hanseatic solidarity strongly paralyzes the process of the devolution of powers to the European Union.

Added to this is the weight of a lack of consensus in a community of states that is too heterogeneous to overcome fundamental disagreements. Europe was built on the democratic, liberal and social consensus of the post-war period. This was an imperfect consensus, no doubt, since it left the nationalists and especially the communists by the wayside, but was a dominant consensus. However, it never found the means to overcome some basic disagreements. We can variously cite the structural or cyclical character of the alliance with the United States, the legitimacy of a European requirement of military projection and external intervention, the justification for the use of nuclear energy, in the civil sphere, as well as in the military sphere, and the appreciation of the risks and benefits of immigration. Not only was yesterday's consensus imperfect, it is now seriously questioned and very close to being shattered. European societies, like American society for that matter, see two hyper radicalized ideologies stand face to face, hyper conservative and nationalist on the one hand, hyper progressive and revolutionary on the other, which make a consensual approach very difficult in a supra national framework.

The interests of the European peoples converge in the long term, but this community of destinies is struggling to emerge in the short term. This is especially the case as it appears to be dangerously weakened.

b. Institutionally

One has to start from a simple idea and draw the necessary conclusions. The idea is that the European Union is without doubt a federation of sovereign states, but it is certainly not a federal state. The points in common between these two types of entity are twofold: they are both managed by largely supra-national institutions and they both aim to produce legal norms - what is called derivative law - having, like a norm of primary international law, that is to say a treaty, primacy over norms of internal law.

To those who dispute this primacy, let us simply recall that it is inherent in the very existence of a common legal order because such an order could not survive if the law common to the parties could be called into question by the law of each of them.

There is, however, a massive difference between a federal state and a federation of states. The first is sovereign, the second is not. The federal state has the “authority of having authority” while in a simple federation of states, it is the states which have sovereign power, that is to say a power which is only bound by itself. The powers of the Union are exclusively powers of attribution, freely and sovereignly delegated by each of the States to the common entity. It should be noted in this regard that the concept of European sovereignty, dear to President Macron, if it is very clear politically insofar as it merges with the Gaullian concept of European independence, is legally inappropriate and carries only a metaphorical dimension. In the European Union, it is not the Union that holds sovereignty but each of the states that make it up.

As a result, in a federation of states like the European Union, the devolution of powers does not obey the principle of subsidiarity because this would suppose, in order to be implemented, a single decision-making centre, responsible for rationally distributing powers between European, national, regional levels etc. If we except the area of shared competences, which sees sharing subject to the principle of subsidiarity, devolution actually obeys a principle of expediency which is therefore a promise of irrationality. For national competence to be devolved to the Union, it is not enough that this delegation be in accordance with the general interest of the latter, it is also necessary that it be in the particular interest of each of the States on its own to relinquish it for the benefit of the whole. However, the reasons for a State to consent to this type of surrender are very variable and sometimes not very positive. A State could, for example, tend to delegate what matters little to it to the detriment of what really matters, to delegate that which is insignificant and to that to which it is indifferent. This temptation leads to what a great Belgian legal expert once called an “upside down federalism”, based on an anti-principle of subsidiarity, the State sometimes seeing in a transfer of competences either an instrument of exchange, or the opportunity to make others pay for a policy that they would otherwise be forced to finance themselves, as the French did with the common agricultural policy. The portfolio of community competences thus constituted is therefore both very limited - states do not like to give up their powers - and very inefficient. It is no coincidence that at least 80% of political competences remain managed at the national level.

The diagnosis is clear: where the European Union has the power to act - in the monetary field, for example - it does the work and its action is understood if not always approved.

III. How to find a way out of this situation?

1. A central challenge: overcoming lack of consensus

The necessary development of the Union - that is to say its adaptation to the requirements of “Machiavellian Europe” supposes that the common institutions have the means to have recourse to the provisions which together form the community credo - supranational initiative, qualified majority in the Council, Commission-Parliament co-decision and judicial review of Union acts - which the principle of subsidiarity now requires to Europeanize.

However, it is clear that this mobilization, given the persistent fragility of the bond uniting the peoples of the Union, is only possible where there is consensus or the possibility of consensus on the directions to be pursued together. It is difficult, for example, to imagine a qualified majority vote to take measures of war or even more simply to authorize, promote, prohibit the use of nuclear energy, zero immigration, extreme measures of cultural liberalism, which all are, however, included in principle in the contract of adhesion established by the treaties.

It is this duty to establish a political consensus on the Union’s medium-term orientations which in reality establishes the legitimacy of the European Council of Heads of State or Government and justifies the apparent weirdness of a quest for a common accord and seeking the adoption of this unusual production called “conclusions”. The European Council is the place where the common will of the States and their determination to act together are tested and verified. It is the place where the existence of a double consensus must be affirmed:

- A consensus on the values and principles guiding European states and on the effective consequences that should be drawn from them in terms of guidelines to be defined. This first consensus is more and more difficult to establish when a growing number of States, such as Hungary or Poland, are moving away from the body of values or principles which were nevertheless at the basis of the membership contract signed by each of them and that the instruments provided to guarantee their respect appear tragically inoperative.

- A consensus on the relevance of the European level for carrying out the actions to be undertaken, in the absence of any shared interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity.

The growing difficulty in achieving this double consensus largely explains the Union’s tragic inability to meet the main challenges that have been thrown at it over the past twenty years, whether they be the demand for an economic and

budgetary extension of the Monetary Union, the repeated international crises which shook the borders of Russia, the Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa, the control and treatment of migratory flows, and more generally problems of all kinds, security and military, industrial and social, scientific and technological, ecological and climatic that the European Union has neither the will nor the means to seriously confront.

It is unrealistic to imagine that in the foreseeable future, the matters which the principle of subsidiarity would require to transfer to the European Union and subject to majority voting rules, could in fact be really so transferred. At the very most, we must recognize that the Union, and this is not nothing, has resisted without breaking up during the major crises which have assailed it: its force of inertia offers in this respect a singular contrast to its persistent lack of creativity and mobility. This was the case until the magnitude of the challenge thrown at it by the pandemic made it understand that movement had become for it the condition of survival, a movement that it was certainly able to initiate but that it cannot be content to reduce to a simple step forward.

2. Should we revise the treaties?

Institutionally, there is no way other than by a unanimous decision to bring the member states to an extension of the area of competence of the Union subject to the so-called community procedure. This could be achieved by modifying the Treaties, which presupposes the unanimous signature of governments and ratification, by referendum or by parliament, once again unanimous. It is now very clear that there is neither in governments nor in national parliaments a sufficient level of consensus to sign and ratify a substantial revision of the Treaties. It is therefore excluded that there could be unanimous agreement on the significant extension of the Community procedure, that is to say essentially on the extension of qualified majority voting in areas which are both new and significant. There is no consensus to seriously attack “vetocracy”.

3. Communitizing the European Council

It is intellectually tempting to imagine transforming the European Council of Heads of State or Government, if only informally and without revision of the Treaties, into a full-fledged community institution and become what it already is in the exercise of certain powers, a Council of the Union, sitting at the level of Heads of State or Government, and subject to the same procedural rules as the Council of Ministers, such as, in particular, qualified majority voting. However, it would be a pipe dream to expect something substantial from such a transformation because no

procedural constraint will ever have the power to overcome a fundamental disagreement between member states.

The mission of the European Council is more of a political orientation than a legislative proposal or decision. It therefore seems to me that this prestigious body should refrain from taking over the day-to-day work of the Community institutions, unless it takes the place of the Council of Ministers in the event of a political blockage. Then and only then, could it sit as a Council meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government and decide by qualified majority.

4. Using the passerelle/bridging clause

The passerelle clause provided for by article 48/7 of the TEU, a general clause in addition to the six specific bridging clauses provided for by the Treaty, certainly allows the procedural rules applicable to certain categories of decisions to be modified, such as, for example, in the adoption of the multiannual financial framework provided for in Article 312 of the TFEU, and even to down-play certain special procedures provided for by the Treaty such as for example Article 311 relating to the own resources regime. However, the mobilization of this passerelle clause can itself only be decided by unanimity, which brings us back to square one.

We are therefore deadlocked and apparently doomed to meet the immense political challenges of the future with the poorly measured institutional and budgetary means of the past. And yet we cannot stop there. To get out of this, as we have always done, we must define strategic priorities both in terms of political objectives and procedural means.

5. Limiting goals and participants

a. Setting priorities

As regards our objectives, it seems reasonable, in the aftermath of the adoption of the emergency plan which does not erase (even if we hope that it will put an end to them) the last twenty years of hesitation by political Europe, to favour the emergence of an intermediate Europe, halfway between the logic of soft power which is no longer sufficient and bellicose violence which is not in the DNA of the Union, a powerful and united Europe of course, but one centred, on the one hand, on social protection objectives, such as health, and on the other hand, on technological and economic developments which constitute the infrastructure of influence and authority.

This choice seems to me to imply as a priority the unlocking of budgetary and fiscal Europe. The current budgetary organization, deeply regressive compared to what it was up to the institutional tightening-up initiated in the first years of this century, is today based on a double denial of efficiency and democracy. It suffers in particular, Alain Lamassoure will speak more expertly than me, from two major drawbacks:

- On the resources side, it is paralyzed by the article of the TFEU which makes the establishment of a system of own resources subject to the adoption of a kind of treaty - signature and unanimous ratification of the States - within the Treaty. Such a cumbersome procedure exposes the Union, as we have seen, to all kinds of blockages, escalations and abuses of procedure. Today the system is practically reduced to a mechanism of national contributions which have “own resources” only in name and which has been revealed, as everyone has seen in the laborious negotiations of the multiannual financial framework, to be fundamentally unsuited to the demands of solidarity and efficiency which should be its own. The first priority must be to provide the European Union with a common tax system, separate from that of the member States and capable of eliminating not only the practice but the very principle of the rebates which for nearly forty years have disfigured budgetary Europe.

- On the expenditure side, the budgetary system is deeply imbalanced between the two branches - Council and Parliament of the budgetary authority because it *de facto* obliges the European Parliament to adhere to a contract, the MFF, drawn up, negotiated and adopted outside it. We will never mention the regression introduced into the European budgetary system by the “innovations” of the first years of this century endorsed by the Treaty of Lisbon: the budgetary procedure is henceforth reduced to an intergovernmental and multiannual bargaining carried out without any serious participation of any Parliament, and worthy of the division of the spoils described by Victor Hugo in *Ruy Blas*.

We can only return to a situation of equilibrium, such as existed in the past for almost half of the expenditure, that which was improperly qualified as “compulsory expenditure”, only on the double and unrealistic condition of 1 / authorizing Parliament to refuse a multiannual financial framework which does not take into account its priorities and to revert, in the event of disagreement with the Council, not to simple and dissuasive budgetary renewals but to a proper annual budgetary procedure and form, 2 / regulating within strict limits the budgetary negotiation between the two branches of the budgetary authority, the Council and the European Parliament. The most logical thing would be to return to parliament, and to extend this to all expenditure, the powers that it formerly had over the so-

called “non-compulsory” part of expenditure (that is to say, in practice, of all non-agricultural expenditure), thus that of arbitrating in the last resort in the event of disagreement with the Council, but within the framework of a maximum standard of expenditure growth, formerly called the MRI (maximum rate of increase) set within relatively strict limits since it was defined by the combination of three criteria: the tax rate, the rate of increase in the Union’s GNP and the increase in national budgets.

I have no illusions. No one is ready today to embark on such an ambitious reform of the budgetary procedure. Let us start from the idea - perhaps overly pessimistic - according to which an ambitious revision of the Treaty does not constitute a realistic prospect and that it is therefore impossible to carry out a reform of the own resources system decided by qualified majority and subject only to ratification by the European Parliament.

I therefore believe that it is necessary to cut back and concentrate efforts on what is increasingly felt to be an absolute priority, that is to say the overhaul of the own resources system, by the establishment of a battery of new instruments such as the tax on financial transactions, the tax on digital activities, a corporate tax whose base and rate would be harmonized and of course the carbon levy at borders.

b. Limiting participants: the choice of strengthened cooperation

The fact remains that even such an innovation cannot garner the agreement and support of the twenty-seven members. We must therefore also reduce the number of participants and agree to progress in this field only with the most motivated of our partners.

There remains the question of the institutional procedures that will allow us to move forward in this direction. We then have two means left, and only two means of moving forward, two means which it is fortunately conceivable to combine: the enhanced cooperation procedure, the principle of which is laid down by Article 20 of the TEU and the modalities defined by articles 326 to 334 of the TFEU, but combined with a use of the passerelle clause.

The passerelle clause, which therefore makes it possible to submit to the ordinary legislative procedure - qualified majority voting and co-decision - has only positive points except for one: it can only be implemented, as we said before, unanimously. This means that it traps us in the same difficulty as the procedure for revising the treaties, requiring parliamentary or referendum ratification, and that it, too, is hardly practicable.

However, the enhanced cooperation procedure makes it possible to circumvent a possible lack of consensus, since it allows only part of the Member States to be involved in the common policy and it can moreover be combined with the passerelle clause to allow participants in enhanced cooperation to benefit from the facilities of decision-making by qualified majority.

Nonetheless, the enhanced cooperation procedure poses a series of problems which cannot be avoided. We will highlight three which are largely due to the fact that even though enhanced cooperation was sought by those who wanted to move forward, the provisions of the treaty were vehemently negotiated by those who did not seek this but who did not want to find themselves marginalized by the former:

- The concern not to disrupt the legal, economic and social functioning of the Union of 27. It would be impossible, for example, to set up a carbon levy at borders without committing all the Member States. It would nonetheless make it possible to create for a few and if these few really want it, a European corporate tax, a tax on financial transactions and even, but this does not go without saying, a digital tax.

- Openness to all volunteers. Each member state can participate in the creation of enhanced cooperation or join it on the way. This includes those who would be tempted by “entryism” for the sole purpose of slowing down and limiting its emergence. They could, for example, oppose the implementation of the passerelle clause in the framework of enhanced cooperation and therefore the substitution of the unanimous majority, or even more generally of the ordinary procedure for a special procedure.

Strangely enough, it is also up to any parliament in the European Union to oppose the creation of enhanced cooperation. In other words, between interference and veto, the opponents of this notion have many options in order to make it fail or at least prevent its increased support.

- The nature of parliamentary monitoring. In this regard, it is difficult to imagine that this monitoring could be exercised other than by a European Parliament meeting in reduced formation to the members from the States participating in the enhanced cooperation. However, this device is not provided for, which locks the “reinforced co-operators” in a democratic impasse.

Of course, the combined use of these two sets of provisions does not allow for everything.

Our colleagues in the European Parliament, like Mr. Larrouturou, are considering, in order to provide this enhanced cooperation with drawing power, to allocate the profit or the product of these taxes to the reimbursement of the share of debts generated by the emergency plan minus the sums due by the Member States of the cooperation. However, it is not certain that an own resource collected by only a part of the Member States can be allocated to the European Union and be deducted from the national contributions (GNI) of the States concerned.

c. Limiting participants: bypassing treaties

The ultimate means by which it would be possible to move forward would be, as was done to institute Shengen or to reform the coordination and surveillance of budgetary policies, to work out the most urgent transformations within the framework of a separate treaty - an own resources or fiscal resources treaty, for example - distinct from the TEU and the TFEU, associating around France and Germany, all those who would be willing to harmonize a significant part of national taxation and to integrate into the budget of the union all or part of this harmonized and even unified taxation: thus we could thwart the ruse of the devil who invented “reinforced cooperation” with the aim of exercising as closely supervision as possible the supervision of the “non- co-operators” on “ co-operators”.

The legal obstacles that stand in front of such a path are not negligible. I will mention two: the association of the Union’s institutions with the work of the signatory states and the subsequent integration of the fiscal instruments thus developed into the letter and practice of European treaties involving a greater number of partners. The precedents of Shengen can be either resolved or circumvented without it being possible to obstruct the double determination of a number of states to unite their approaches and put this common will at the service of the Union.

Intellectually and from a media point of view, it is of course tempting and it would be very satisfying to go through a revision of the treaties aiming to substitute the rule of qualified majority for that of unanimity to trigger the passerelle clause. It would be a further step, which many refuse to take, bringing the federation of sovereign states closer to the federal state. In any case, this would be a major modification, both simple and crucial, which would be likely to unblock the situation.

Let’s be realistic. We must, as Marx and Jean Monnet, the two M’s taught us to do, ask ourselves the only questions that we are able to solve. Let us take advantage of the coming months and of the French Presidency to open a breach in

the powerful technocratic and sovereignist citadel which is that of the Union's budget and, in particular, of its revenues. Let us add that the establishment of enhanced cooperation undoubtedly constitutes, through the threat of marginalization of those who are not in, the best weapon available to Member States in order to exert effective pressure on those who fail to respect the values and fundamental principles of the Union.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the real battle that we must fight, the real Bastille that we must take if we want to hope to build the Europe of tomorrow, a Europe of power, solidarity and confrontation, with other means than those of yesterday's Europe, a Europe of exchanges, frameworks and standards. As always with the European Union, you have to know how to limit your immediate objectives but show a very strong determination to achieve them. It is undoubtedly on the testing ground of own resources that the further development of a Union that will have finally become political will be played out.

Pierre Vimont. As I listened to you, I thought of this phrase that you know well: in the United States, no taxation without representation. I will hand the floor over to the two other speakers responsible for responding to this broad presentation by Jean-Louis Bourlanges, which raises many questions.

Luuk van Middelaar, academic, former adviser to Herman von Rompuy, President of the European Council. Thank you very much for this invitation. I would like to situate the context of the institutional change mentioned by Chairman Bourlanges. The current institutional system is no longer the community method. The developments over the past thirty years have indeed reflected profound historical and political changes.

The community method, originally, was a very fine toolbox, brilliant, to produce standards, a common market and legislation. This method had a great capacity to find compromises, to involve the economic and social partners and the Member States. This system had a number of qualities which, as we have seen over time, could turn into weaknesses. The concern to involve everyone can lead to stagnation. The complexity of the procedure dilutes the responsibility, and this breaks the link with public opinion.

A third weakness, which caught my attention more, is that this system of balance and prudence was very ill-equipped to deal with danger, with crisis situations. This partly compensated for the emergence of the European Council, not as a parallel system of an intergovernmental method, but to make up for the weaknesses of the initial Community system. It is through the involvement of heads

of state and government in the machinery of Brussels that the European system as a whole is strengthened as it gains in decision-making capacity. It also gains in political authority and decision-making capacity in times of crisis.

The Community method produces standards. A Community system is not necessarily equipped to act. Thus, in areas like the euro, migration, foreign policy, we must call on common resources in the real sense of the word, but also on the resources of states, in order to take decisions together. This is what the European Council, when it functions well, allows us to do.

The European Union has decided to have a common currency and external borders, simply by abolishing internal borders. These are common assets, which, by necessity, will lead to risky situations in which we have to improvise.

In Europe as it is today, the importance of the European Council reflects the fact that the Union is not a state, neither a federal one, nor therefore a unitary one. It is a federation of states. A specificity of Europe is the relative weakness of the central power in its relationship with the constituent parts which can be expressed by a veto. This is a fairly deep political and historical reality.

The veto reflects, in a sense, the fact that the European Union is not a federal state. Like Jean-Louis Bourlanges, I think that we should limit its use and manage to get around the blockages. However, we must beware of the illusion that we could abolish all vetoes, as well as the illusion that we could do without the European Council. This would amount to distorting the European Union. It was in front of the National Assembly that Minister Couve de Murville already exposed this underlying reality of the veto. He recalled that the European centre lacked the authority to make decisions on the most vital issues, such as the price of wheat at that time. Fortunately, since then a majority decision vote has been introduced on many subjects.

However, for example on asylum policy, even though the decision was taken in 2015 that all states should participate in European solidarity, some countries have refused. It is therefore undoubtedly necessary to find pragmatic means. We cannot impose decisions that are viscerally refused.

As regards the community method, one could say that there are two institutional paths at work. On the one hand, there is a parliamentary path, which seeks to place Parliament at the centre of the system, with the Commission as government. This is a path historically pushed by Germany for reasons of internal structure and demography.

However, the presidential path, supported by France, is based on a strong executive, with the European Council.

These two paths coexist. The European system is the result of fifty years of clashing political visions. If we remove the “French” element from this fairly fine balance, we end up with a system perfectly suited to the German federal model but less suited to the French system - or Spanish, Dutch, or Polish.

The place of public opinion is to be found in two institutions, which can legitimately speak on behalf of citizens. These are the European Parliament and the European Council. One speaks on behalf of citizens as Europeans, the other as nationals of a state. For me, focusing only on the Community method leads to the view that citizens are represented in EU bodies only by the European Parliament. This is not true. Our national parliaments are European parliaments in that they participate in the collective political life of this European Union, since it is, once again, a federation of states.

Róża Thun, MEP. Thank you for what I just heard, which was exciting, committed, true and wise. I would like to share some personal and quite practical thoughts.

I would like a Europe which is a world power for peace, freedom and human rights. For that, we have instruments. Unanimity in the Council is a disaster: we will not advance without a qualified majority towards a Europe that can be a world power.

I am speaking to you from Warsaw, and from here I clearly feel that Europe will not have a future if it is not in a position to demand from the Member States that the law and the decisions of the Court of Justice be respected. As has been mentioned, I fought against communism in my youth, and we won. I then embarked on the integration of Poland into the European institutions because I knew, like thousands of others, that together we could establish an area of democracy, free market and respect for people. I grew up in a country that didn't have any of these.

Here, too, we won. However, today many wonder how Europe can passively watch the persecution of judges who implement the rule of law and the harassment of prosecutors. You certainly know that the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice are the same person in Poland. People watch with amazement how the government ignores the judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union. Faced with this situation, the European institutions are acting, but not enough.

In Hungary there are no longer any free daily newspapers or radio stations. The Polish government is following exactly the same path. The citizens are astonished by the weak European reaction. We are tired of hearing this phrase from the European Commission: “We follow with great concern”. We must act, and for that, the instruments are not numerous enough.

I am talking about Poland, but it’s not just a Polish affair: the same danger exists in other countries. We must use the instruments we have now, with conviction, and to the maximum of their capacity. Moreover, every day I feel the urgent need to develop a true union, without unanimity and equipped with usable, functional and rapid instruments.

For the European Commission to effectively be the guardian of the treaties, it must be given more powers. Without this, our whole fantastic project for peace and democracy will not work. On the one hand, we are launching projects close to citizens, such as the Europe of healthcare or the Green Pact. On the other hand, citizens feel that in situations of danger to democracy and justice, this Europe is absent.

If we are talking about the future, we have to start with this point: all discussions on the institutional model must be about how to demand more powers.

Pierre Vimont. I would like to develop a direct discussion between the three speakers and restart this debate with a few comments.

As regards the role of the European Council and the way it has entered our institutions, there are two ideas that I retain. The first is that of Luuk Van Middelaar, who notes that the European Council is the body that responds to crises: for 10 years, in all major crises (financial, Brexit, health, migration), the European Council has been on the front line. From there a second reflection develops: the European Council perhaps invented a different level of the Community method, considered to be more legislative and parliamentary. The European Council is at a level where political momentum is being given. Is the European Council a forum for blockage or a forum for impetus? I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

The second reflection, which is one of the avenues that Roza Thun and Mr. Bourlanges have proposed, is qualified majority voting. Isn’t there a political reality that cannot be ignored? For example, we voted by qualified majority for the text on the relocation of immigrants who arrived on our territory, but this text does not apply because the political reality was not taken into account and was opposed to it.

The third question relates to the expansion of competences. Since 2020 and the appearance of the virus, there has been a de facto extension of the powers of the European Union. Isn't the European system flexible enough to allow for this development? Jean-Louis Bourlanges said that we were no longer able to revise the treaty, but shouldn't it already be applied with all the provisions that exist and which give a lot of flexibility? We were talking about the bridging clause, enhanced cooperation, but I could add constructive abstention in matters of foreign policy, which would perhaps make it possible to get out of certain blockages. Basically, doesn't our system already have this flexibility that would allow us to move forward?

Jean-Louis Bourlanges. Has the European Council been on the front line and has it reacted well? My answer is that we reacted very badly to everything: to the crisis in Iraq, to the economic and monetary crisis. The only good thing was to convince the Germans to leave the European Central Bank free to support European economies. However, the European Central Bank does not follow an intergovernmental logic.

In reality, I am not questioning the role of the European Council: I think you are right to say that the European Council is the supreme political authority, responsible for the legitimacy of public opinion. In the face of disagreement, this is the only way to solve the problem.

The example of the migration crisis is very clear. Hungary decided to question the institutional logic which it accepted.

In general, the European Council is a provider of legitimacy: it is therefore logical that when it comes to the recovery plan, it launched the initiatives. I believe in a general power of political orientation of the European Council which is distinct from the community mechanism.

I disagree with Luuk van Middelaar when he says that the community system must be reserved for the norm: not at all! It must apply to the budget and to the launching of joint actions. We can see that decision-making is paralyzed by unanimity. It is essential that the European Council does not interfere directly in legislative affairs, or even executive affairs.

It is accurate to say that a qualified majority is not enough. But it is serious that on an essential issue such as migration, the European Union has not been able, either unanimously or by qualified majority, to manage anything.

Regarding the current bridging clauses, what can be done when you don't want to use them? It takes unanimity to implement these clauses and things get blocked. The current situation reflects a political problem. The European Union has proved itself incapable of meeting the challenges it faces in the areas of foreign, economic, migration, technological and defence policy.

On the other hand, I applaud the European Council, which has been good at preserving. When the issue is to prevent an unravelling of the Monetary Union or of the European Union itself through Brexit, states have stood up, defended the record and reacted. The European Union is quite solid in preserving the “acquis” but is ill-equipped to meet the political challenges of the Europe of tomorrow.

The question raised is whether the role of the European Union is only to defend what we have done in the past, or whether, as President Macron argues, our challenges call for political action. This requires more efficient and flexible decision-making mechanisms, even if the guarantor of the final political consensus must be the President of the European Council.

Luuk van Middelaar. I agree with Jean-Louis Bourlanges that the European Council's capacity for anticipation is insufficient. On the other hand, it knows how to act in an emergency to face a near-mortal danger, for example when the survival of the euro was at stake.

In order to increase the European Union's capacity for anticipation, I would plead for better coordination between the Commission and the European Council, which is the supreme and legitimate authority. For me, the key lies there. The role of the European Council is central in the executive power of the Union, with the Commission, the Council (notably the Eurogroup) and the ECB.

To conclude on the subject of powers and the pandemic, what is fascinating is that the European Union has taken huge steps towards integration, both financially with the recovery plan, but also with the purchase of vaccines. For once, these developments were made at the request of public opinion. In March 2020, for example, the Italian people called for solidarity between states: this call to action from Europe won the day. This is for me one of the first examples where the initiative came from the European public sphere. This proves that, even on the side of public opinion, there is an evolution.

Pierre Vimont. Roza Thun, I would like to ask you an additional question about Poland and the failure to respect the rule of law. The Commission has tried to find a solution by resorting to Article 7 of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament and the Court of Justice have also intervened, but as you have pointed

out, there is a deadlock. Should the European Council take up the subject and should there be a real discussion between heads of state and government, or can you imagine other possible solutions?

Róża Thun. There is no publicity about what is happening at the European Council. We learn more from the press conferences of politicians in member countries: this is not a good solution. You've talked a lot about the European Council, but when you consider that each Member State has a veto, it is an instrument of incredible power. It is the leaders representing only part of the citizens in their own country, who can block decisions throughout the European Union. They have too much power.

In addition, the recovery fund is our big project in the coming years. It must go through national parliaments. We have to be very careful not to "sell" our European values in exchange for the correct functioning of this fund and that could be the danger.

Finally, I think there is a lack of a European space: we have no European politician known throughout Europe, no European media, no European language. If we do not teach a common language to all, if we do not invest in a binder at a European level, there will be no European thought, nor a real debate on values and our place in our immense construction.

Pierre Vimont. Two questions from our participants and those who are listening to us strike me. On the one hand, some wonder whether we should not move to the direct election by universal suffrage of the President of the European Commission, but also of the President of the European Council. On the other hand, shouldn't we go further in the Franco-German relationship and set up a real Franco-German government?

Jean-Louis Bourlanges. France and Germany want to act together but have fundamental cultural differences. The right system is for the French and the Germans to agree on the substance, and then we set up a project involving everyone. This is what has been done for *NextGenerationEU* and I think it has been successful. The Franco-German axis must not be cut off from the European Union: it is a lever, which may or may not work, but which is only of interest if it is the whole of European construction that progresses.

When it comes to the idea of electing the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council by universal suffrage, I am adamant: we must not do that! A presidential election is inherently antagonistic. Any confrontation of a bipolar character, inevitably Manichean, is a promise of

confrontation between the countries which will have voted mainly for and the countries which will have voted mostly against. The European Union is dedicated to collegiality. What sparked the Civil War in the United States of America was the election of Abraham Lincoln. This example is significant: when there are strong tensions or the seeds of disagreement, as within the European Union, we must invent methods of conciliation.

Luuk van Middelaar. I share Jean Louis Bourlanges's opinion on this point. Electing a President of the Union by direct universal suffrage would not be a good idea. The legitimacy on which the elected figure could rely would not reflect the political reality of the European Union. The synthesis that Jean-Louis Bourlanges wants already exists: it is between the parliamentary system with the European Parliament and the European Commission, and the presidential system with the European Council.

On the issue of the Franco-German couple, it is not for me as a resident of one of the "low-countries" to express myself. I am in favour of a good Franco-German understanding, but I think that it is better for the other Member States that these common opinions be developed behind the scenes rather than in broad daylight. These agreements should not give the impression of having been pre-agreed. We must subtly allow the Franco-German impetus, then anchor it in the European structure as a whole.

Róża Thun. We need to give more powers to the community institutions: we need France and Germany in the European Union and not a separate government.

For the European Presidency, there was a proposal to create a transnational European list for election to the European Parliament. A large majority of MEPs did not want this solution. The main problem is the lack of a European public space. Imagine an election for the presidency of Europe: who could be a candidate recognized throughout the European Union other than a football player, singer or actor? A common political space for all of Europe is sorely lacking. I hope we will take this direction.

Pierre Vimont. This question of European public space was asked by a participant regarding the coverage of European events by the media. The European Affairs Committee is preparing a report on this issue.

Sébastien Maillard. There is perhaps a blind spot in the analysis of the articulation between impulse and initiative. Over the course of the crises, the European Council has imposed itself, moving from a role of initiator to a direct management role. It has also stolen the limelight from other institutions from a

media perspective. The coordination between the European Council and the Council of Ministers of the Union is not good; too many subjects go back to the European Council. It should return to its primary role of initiator and the General Affairs Council should regain its real place.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani. Outside the borders of the European Union, the main challenge we face, notably in the case of China and autocratic regimes, is that of being effective in meeting people's needs. When we talk about the need to belong, we have to look, not so much at the institutional architecture, as at the institutional practice. Parliamentary committees would benefit from focusing on the effectiveness of EU decisions on the ground. It is through efficiency that an additional sense of belonging among citizens will be built, and that the treaties can perhaps be changed.

The Council is the place for politics. It represents integration through example. If there is an agreement between France and Germany on or between France and Italy on migration or asylum regimes, this can spread throughout the European Union.

The European Commission has a real problem of efficiency and communication. It works more with states than with citizens.

The European Parliament, for its part, has a problem of representativeness, underlined by the Constitutional Court of Karlsruhe: a Maltese MEP represents 60,000 citizens, a French MEP 830,000.

You cannot change everything at once, but you have to focus on institutional practice. European constitutional law is written in the inter-institutional agreement, thanks to which much can be done, without changing the treaties, to become more efficient.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges. I would like the European Council to meet less often but for longer.

Let us not forget that the European Union is a cooperative federalism: it is the state administrations that manage the federation and not, as in the United States, a dedicated administration at the federal level. Hence the problem of the quality of the come-back of the national administration and the need to ensure respect for the rule of law and the proper functioning of national administrations.

On the subject of representativeness, I disagree with the German Constitutional Court. In a federal system, two contradictory concepts must be

combined, equal representation of states and equal representation of citizens. A federal system is always a compromise between these two concepts. In the United States, the Senate ensures the equality of states and the House of Representatives that of citizens. In the European Union, we have sought to combine these two concepts within each institution, with a system of regressive proportionality in the European Parliament and a double majority in the Council. It is normal that, within a certain limit, there is an over-representation of small states, provided that this does not paralyze the whole machine. One cannot imagine a European Union which would be controlled by the four big states.

**ROUND TABLE:
THREE INSTITUTIONAL EMERGENCIES:
BUDGETARY DEMOCRACY, NEW POWERS,
THE PLACE OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS**

Pierre Vimont, Ambassador of France, former Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS). During this round table, we will discuss budgetary democracy, with Alain Lamassoure, new powers, notably concerning Europe and healthcare, with Xavier Prats, and the role of national parliaments, with Satu Hassi and Chair Sabine Thillaye.

Alain Lamassoure, Chair of the Scientific Committee of the Robert Schuman Foundation, former Chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Budgets. One of the quirks of European politics - and a major difference from national politics - is that no one cares about the EU budget. Last year, I entitled my course at Sciences Po “The European budget, the black hole of European politics”. 2020 saw an incredible revolution, the title of my course became “the black hole turned into a shooting star?”

The European budget is an original, rigorous, anti-democratic, anti-European and ultimately ridiculous budget.

It is original because it was intended as such from day one. The big difference between the European Union and a classic international organization is that instead of being financed by contributions from national budgets in proportion to their national wealth, we decided to finance it with own resources. It worked from the beginnings of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) until the mid-1980s, with a tax on the turnover of the coal and steel industry, tariffs and a contribution based on harmonized value added tax (VAT).

The budget is designed in an incredibly rigorous way. Not only must it be voted in balance, but it must be performed in balance, every single day of the year. In addition, the annual budget is constrained by a multiannual framework which, every seven years, sets expenditure ceilings by expenditure category, and which is anything but flexible.

It is an undemocratic budget, as Jean-Louis Bourlanges and Pierre Vimont have pointed out. The principle of “no taxation without representation” is not applied, with general indifference.

The last characteristic of the European budget is that the Member States have retained abusive powers to limit it to a ridiculously low level and eliminate its originality, since its financing is in reality today 80% based on contributions from national budgets. With each country aiming to contribute as little as possible and receive as much as possible, there are now 27 Margaret Thatchers around the Council table. The budget has been limited for 20 years around 1% of the gross domestic product of the Member States. At the same time, four successive treaties have broadened the powers of the Union and the number of Member States has more than doubled, with new members who, having an average income below the average, are entitled to receive cohesion funds. Despite these developments and the crises that have hit us, the European budget has been kept at a ridiculously low level.

The political consequences of these decisions are devastating. The imbalance between considerable regulatory power and ridiculously limited budgetary power has a permanent self-locking effect.

Firstly, the European Union presents itself as a giant with an enlarged regulatory arm and a shrinking budgetary arm. Naturally, the giant overuses its enlarged arm. For someone who has only a hammer to use, every problem is a nail. So when it is faced with a problem the Union regulates, that is all it can do.

Secondly, the Union does not “deliver”, in the English sense of the verb “deliver”. This creates unease among citizens, who have the feeling that the heads of state are lying to them with the announcements made at the end of the European Councils. The announced world policy is financed by tips. A majority of citizens now understand that many of the important decisions for their future depend on a European agreement and they are impatient.

This brings me to the 2020 revolution. In previous European parliaments, many of us struggled in vain to remedy this situation. With the pandemic, three major locks were removed at once. What seemed completely utopian a year earlier became evident within a few weeks.

The rate of 1% of gross national income, which had become something of an unwritten rule, was pulverized by the stimulus package.

The absolute balancing obligation has been replaced by almost unlimited borrowing capacity, after years of theoretical debates about Eurobonds.

The intellectual lock which led to substituting national contributions for own resources has also been broken and the possibility of creating new own resources is being studied again.

This was made possible by the incredible pressure of the emergency, which imposed itself equally on all European countries. The needs to revive the economies of each of the Member States were such that each was forced to borrow heavily. It was a matter of national survival, for “frugal” countries as well as for others. As the economic model of the “frugal” countries is based on exports, their own rescue also depended on the rescue of their client countries. Governments, political parties and financial markets suddenly realized that the degree of community of destiny achieved within the European Union was such that we were doomed to solidarity.

What remains to be resolved and what can be recommended? In my opinion, there are three categories of problems to be resolved.

The first is the implementation of the recovery plan. This takes time given the procedure that has been decided. However, it is up to MEPs, national parliamentarians and governments to explain to public opinion and the media that this delay is not due to the Brussels bureaucracy but is the consequence of the double unanimity of 27 governments and 27 national parliaments. This delay is not, in itself, really worrying since interest rates are zero and each country has been able to pre-finance its recovery plan, assured as it is of future financial support from the European Union.

The second problem is that of own resources. Admittedly, a timetable has been adopted, but it must be recognized that the European Commission does not have the culture of taxation, nor does it have the necessary experts; as for the European Parliament, when it comes to taxation, it has no authority.

The tax proposals that are put forward seem to me to be both poorly studied and insufficient at the technical level, and sometimes unrealistic at the political level. One can only be unpleasantly struck by the difference between the task force set up in the 1990s to prepare for EMU and the institutional tinkering supposed to prepare Europe for taxes. For example, everyone supports the tax on non-recycled plastic, but let's be clear, it won't bring anything. The carbon tax poses incredible technical problems when it comes to assessing the carbon component of imported products, not to mention legal problems with the WTO and political problems with our main trading partners. Finally, the GAFA tax is very popular, but the tax proposed by France two years ago will not only have a very limited return but, in addition, will be fully passed on to the - European - GAFA customers. Finally, it is

unfortunate to justify our inaction by the debates underway at the OECD. A few years ago, the United States changed its corporate tax without waiting for the recommendations of the OECD. For me, we adopt the tax reform we need and then discuss it with our partners in the OECD, and not the other way around.

For my part, I have three recommendations on own resources. The first, which is not very original, is the auctioning of rights to pollute, taking advantage of the very limited and rather poorly functioning experience of the European market for greenhouse gas emission allowances.

The second is VAT. Not only is it the tax that pays the most, it has already been the subject of European harmonization for 50 years. Three options are possible:

- The allocation by each country of one or more VAT points to the European budget;

- The allocation to the European budget of VAT applied to imports from outside countries; technically, this is relatively simple since it is the same administration that applies customs duties and import VAT;

- Finally, consider that the single market has economic added value for each of the Member States and allocate to the European budget a percentage of the VAT collected on intra-European trade;

My third proposal is a corporate income tax. Unlike the GAFSA tax, it would be a direct tax, which would hit businesses, especially digital ones, and not their customers. In this regard, I am struck, while the subject is ripe from a technical point of view, that no French Minister of Finance - nor any from another country for that matter - has seen fit to bring it to ECOFIN.

Finally, the third problem to be resolved is that of the continuation of the recovery plan. Indeed, a substantial part of it is made up of loans to member states which will be repaid. Perhaps these enormous sums could usefully then be devoted to European policies, after having financed national policies. Indeed, what is called the European recovery plan is nothing more than a contribution paid by the European Union to national budgets for national recovery policies. While the latter respect European priorities, they are nonetheless purely national. The 27 agree to play at solidarity for the benefit of each other but in the future, this solidarity should also serve common policies. There is, however, one condition: an end to unanimity. In this regard, if the conference on the future of Europe does not lead to enhanced cooperation, it will be useless.

Xavier Prats, former Director General of the European Commission for Health and Food Safety. Talking about the European Union and healthcare should be an easy task. What better argument, indeed, in favour of European cooperation in the field of health than the covid-19 pandemic? Should we really praise the merits of cooperation in the face of a virus that knows no borders, with countries that share the same market and the same values? Yes, it should be easy.

The pandemic has highlighted a paradox that has always struck me throughout my career. We are asking the European institutions for two things that are fair but which are not compatible with each other. The first is to act only in areas where it is legitimate for them to act, without going beyond and giving the impression of a sprawling bureaucracy. The second is to deal with what interests European citizens.

So what interests European citizens? Education, employment and health, three of the areas where the European Union has very little competence. It can indeed change the lives of people, businesses and countries by using its trade or competition powers, but it has no particular competence in these three key areas. However, if it does not act in these, which are of particular interest to European citizens, its legitimacy could be called into question.

In the area of health, until the pandemic, member states were reluctant to cooperate and even simply to exchange information. Moreover, health is not always a national competence. Sometimes, as in Spain, it is a regional competence. This compartmentalization meant that, when the pandemic arrived, the only legal instrument available to the European Union was a simple Council decision of 2013, of which the legal significance was very weak. This decision was swept aside by the pandemic.

It could not have been otherwise because it seems to me difficult and dangerous to entrust to the European Union such sensitive decisions as, for example, to vaccinate such and such a category of the population. Contrary to what the founding fathers thought, or even Jacques Delors, one can increase economic interdependence in extraordinary proportions without this leading to any more political or social affinities.

What lessons can be learned from this pandemic? I see four:

- better preparation by investing more in staff training and medical infrastructure;
- better response capacity in the event of a health crisis;

- strengthening of primary health care;
- strengthening European and international cooperation in research and mobility of health personnel.

Can we meet the expectations of citizens without giving more competence to the European institutions? It seems difficult to me, but we will have to be very careful, especially in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The risk, in fact, is that it focuses on the question of who has the right to do what. This question has always been sterile. For me, the debates should be about who brings added value. In this regard, I note a serious difference between the Juncker Commission, which is very respectful of the competences of the Member States, and the von der Leyen Commission which, even before the pandemic, seeks the best means for Europe to act. In this case, the means to be mobilized are simple: more money, more stocks and the creation of a biomedical authority.

By way of conclusion, the European Union should be inspired, for its action in the field of health, by the example set by the scientific community in terms of solidarity and cooperation.

Sabine Thillaye. We can ask ourselves the question: why, in such a context, evoke the role of national parliaments? However, their role is fundamental to me. The necessary link between the European Union and the territories has been mentioned on several occasions, but it seems to me insufficient. There is what is decided at the European level, which passes through to the national level, and materializes on the ground. However, by virtue of their position as close as possible to citizens, national parliamentarians are in the best position to judge the effectiveness of European action and, therefore, to serve as vectors for transmission. But we have to provide them with the opportunity to do so.

National legislators must be interested in the development of European law, starting with the budget. While the European Parliament votes on spending, it is the national parliaments that decide the bulk of European resources, namely the contributions on tax revenue. It therefore seems necessary to me to rethink the link between national Parliaments and the European Parliament, without hampering the role of either. National Parliaments must drop their purely defensive role as guardians of the principle of subsidiarity.

Alongside the role of guardian of the principle of subsidiarity, which is somewhat “defensive”, we have a role of political dialogue with the European institutions, and above all, of monitoring the positions defended by governments within the Council of the Union.

Each national parliament has a European affairs committee, but not all European affairs committees have the same prerogatives. In France, we probably do not have sufficient prerogatives to monitor the government. Whilst in Finland the parliament gives the prime minister a binding mandate, in France the parliament is simply informed of government action. Our impact is therefore very weak. The European Parliament is supposed to have a monopoly on the representation of European citizens, but national parliaments have a better link with concrete realities. It is therefore incomprehensible that their role be so reduced.

Nonetheless, national parliaments have created a structure at a European level. COSAC, which has existed since 1989, gives a real role to national parliaments, but it is not a fully satisfactory tool either: these parliamentary meetings have no decision-making power. COSAC, which brings together national parliamentary delegations, adopts conclusions, but these conclusions do not really have any concrete impact. It is therefore also necessary to improve coordination between national parliaments in order to “exert more influence”.

The Conference on the Future of Europe should enable useful institutional reforms to be implemented. Workshops could be set up in the autumn to reflect on the priorities of the French presidency of the Union. One could even imagine a parliamentary initiative procedure: why not, since there is already a citizens’ initiative procedure? For example, when a third of national parliaments would vote in favour of a measure, the Commission could only oppose it with a reasoned opinion. If half of the national parliaments supported this measure, the Commission would be obliged to table a legislative proposal within a year.

The importance of European affairs in the French parliament should also be better taken into account. The National Assembly’s European Affairs Committee is not a standing committee. We therefore do not have the power to amend bills. I would like our committee to become a standing committee. We would also like Parliament to be better informed about current legal and political developments in the European Union. Discussions organized before the holding of European Councils would be useful.

In conclusion, we must both reinvent the relations between national parliaments and the European Union, and also take better account of European issues here, in France.

Satu Hassi, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament. As a former member of the Finnish Parliament and the European Parliament, I have a fair idea of how they work. For citizens, it is important that

national authorities play a major role in the European legislative procedure. This is a question of legitimacy. When Finland joined the European Union, this was an important debate: we wanted the Finnish Parliament to retain the power to legislate.

The Finnish Parliament thus gives the government a real mandate before negotiations in the Council. It is the *Great Commission* which is in charge of defining the position of the Parliament and therefore the position of Finland. Its prerogatives are really important. If the outcome of the negotiations in the Council differs from the mandate given to it by the *Great Commission*, the government must justify itself publicly.

This system has several advantages. During difficult negotiations, this mandate represents important support for the government: since it has a mandate, it cannot accept any compromise. It also helps to ensure that there is no conflict between our position on national issues and our position on European issues. Last but not least, for European citizens, it is important that there be accountability and clarity. Citizens often have the impression that the European Union is a “magic machine” which produces incomprehensible decisions. The role of national parliaments is essential for democracy and for the legitimacy of European institutions.

Pierre Vimont. Listening to you, I am struck by the existence of two cultures in Europe: parliamentary culture, which is very present in the Scandinavian countries and in the Netherlands, and the presidential culture which we know well in France.

Perhaps, in the past, the powers of the European Parliament were strengthened too much to the detriment of the role of the national parliaments: shouldn't there be a rebalancing?

Moreover, Alain Lamassoure, what do you think of the idea of giving the European Parliament real power in tax matters? Does the European Parliament have sufficient legitimacy and expertise capacity?

Alain Lamassoure. As things stand and for the next few years, I do not think that the European Parliament is perceived by European citizens as having sufficient legitimacy to exercise fiscal power, any more than to decide on a military operation outside Europe. These are truly matters of sovereignty.

But it would suffice if we were to consider the European institutions, in tax matters, as we consider local communities in France. For example, the housing tax is collected by the municipalities, but this does not mean that the municipalities

have fiscal autonomy: the tax is created by the national legislator, who determines its base and the general terms of the tax, and the municipality has only a small margin of manoeuvre, very supervised, on the rate. Likewise, one could imagine that the sovereign institutions in fiscal matters - the national parliaments - confer on the European institutions marginal power over the rate or over the methods of collection of a tax allocated to the Union. There is no need for fiscal power transfer.

Pierre Vimont. Should there be increased monitoring by the European Parliament over the actions taken by the Commission in the context of the Covid crisis, which in a way constitute a new competence?

Xavier Prats. I consider that the question of the monitoring of the activities of the Commission is a false debate. The levels of oversight and the degree of transparency exercised over the Commission are much higher than those which exist in the executives of the Member States, including the Scandinavian countries. In my opinion, the problem must be reversed if we want to bring the Union closer to the citizens: not to strengthen national scrutiny over European institutions, but to make national governments aware that it is also up to them to take charge of European affairs.

Pierre Vimont. How to restore vigour to the oversight of the French parliament over European affairs, which seemed to be stronger in the past?

Sabine Thillaye. The words of our Finnish colleague remind me that debates on Europe were held regularly in plenary sitting under previous parliaments. However, the practice was abandoned due to a weak mobilization of the MPs of the time.

In addition, France is one of the few Member States whose President of the Republic participates in Council meetings. However, he/she cannot appear before the MEPs in plenary sitting. Under these conditions, in order to arouse the interest of the MEPs whilst giving a solemn aspect to the exercise, it would be advisable for the debates in plenary sitting to be held on the basis of a statement by the Prime Minister. The different political groups could speak up before the Council, as is common practice in other Member States. For example, I attended a statement by the German Chancellor to the Bundestag in December, which gave rise to some interesting discussions. This type of exercise also allows one to take the pulse of national opinion.

Pierre Vimont. As for me, when I was permanent representative in Brussels, I noticed that certain counterparts from other Member States regularly returned to their capitals to be heard by the relevant committees of the Parliament.

Would France not gain from developing this type of practice to give full weight to parliamentary monitoring?

Alain Lamassoure. In the 1990s, Édouard Balladur, then Prime Minister, proposed that the permanent representatives be members of the Government rather than diplomats, in order to ensure a permanent link between national political life and Europe. He believed that we had reached an advanced stage in European construction which justified the secretaries of state being based in Brussels and no longer in national capitals. However, as members of the Government, they would have retained the opportunity to speak in Parliament. This idea did not take off, however.

Nonetheless, we have implemented another preventive control mechanism prior to Council meetings. When the Maastricht Treaty was adopted, we had to carry out a constitutional review. In addition to the provisions necessary to render the Constitution compatible with the Treaty, we added other provisions relating in particular to the oversight of the executive by the National Assembly. Before each important debate in Brussels, an agenda review by the European Affairs delegation was scheduled. If the subject was deemed important, then a debate had to be organized in plenary sitting. During the period when I was Minister of European Affairs and Philippe Seguin, President of the National Assembly, we ensured that this practice was respected. The holding of debates in plenary sitting effectively enabled spokespersons of political groups, whether they were in favour of European policy or not, to express themselves.

Unfortunately, this habit was abandoned afterwards. It is a matter of political will. The example of the Finnish Parliament could be reproduced in the National Assembly.

Pierre Vimont. I do remember the idea of replacing permanent representatives with ministers. It aroused great emotion among my colleagues. It seemed interesting to me.

Xavier Prats. The relationship between members of the Spanish political class and Europe is different. European institutions are seen as efficient. However, dialogue with the Spanish authorities is weak or even non-existent.

Consolidating the legitimacy of the Union necessarily goes through national parliaments in my opinion. However, I do not think we can come up with a single formula. Parliamentary traditions and powers are different. It is less about inventing regular mechanisms and more about cultivating the habit of dialogue. I believe that if we maintained a regular presence of national parliaments in Europe, they would

better understand the debates and issues at a European level. I am not sure that a formal mechanism is sufficient to do this.

Jean-Louis Bourlanges. President Chassaigne and I are preparing a report on the mechanisms for transposing Community directives, in which we are trying to incorporate elements of comparison with other Member States. In this context, we had an interesting exchange with our diplomatic mission in Stockholm; I am struck by the great heterogeneity between the Scandinavian and Nordic countries. In Sweden, for example, the subject arouses little interest. The Swedish authorities are content to intervene at the time of the transposition while the Danish authorities are vigilant throughout the procedure. This is why we must be careful not to adopt Montesquieu's theory of climates and note that there can be cultural differences even within groups that we think are very homogeneous.

Pierre Vimont. It should be noted, however, that all our European partners closely follow the activities of the European Union, in order to defend their own ideas. This interaction has always intrigued me although I cannot find it in our country. How can we make it grow?

Sabine Thillaye. In the Committee on European Affairs, we try to maintain this interaction. We consider that we have a role outside the inter-institutional dialogue but also inside our Assembly to be a watchdog and inform other Members. The Secretaries of State for European Affairs regularly come to inform us.

However, the discussions remain confidential and do not take the form of a debate in plenary sitting. As a result, many MEPs are excluded from European issues. This is why we are trying to cooperate with the standing committees, by organizing joint hearings for example.

I think that we would need an institutional law that specifies the Government's information obligations, particularly in relation to our committee. For the moment, these obligations are specified by a simple circular. We should institutionalize this more. We need to put these questions at the centre of our work so that each MP can bring European issues to their constituency and make the link. What we lack today is the connection. Why is Europe seen as an abstraction? We talk about Europe, but Europe is us, each of us. We all need to make the link with Europe.

Pierre Vimont. In conclusion, what lesson do you take away from this discussion?

Alain Lamassoure. I retain a fundamentally new positive element resulting from this crisis: national public opinion has understood that we need Europe to be effective. Far-right parties, for example, are increasingly rallying to Europe: we see this with the French “Rassemblement National” but also with the Italian Northern League. What is at stake at the Conference for the Future of Europe will be whether governments will be able to launch the big new initiative that Europe needs.

Xavier Prats. The crisis has shown us the need for enhanced health cooperation. We have an unprecedented opportunity, given the gravity of this health crisis, to give impetus to European construction. In my opinion, this requires the mobilization of France.

Sabine Thillaye. I agree, this crisis may represent a tremendous opportunity. It shows our strengths and weaknesses. Post-war Europe was built to cope with our internal differences. It must now position itself in a world that has greatly changed and defend our values. The crisis shows that we need Europe. It also shows our weaknesses, namely that we are still powerless to defend what is our foundation: democracy and the rule of law. Being in a democracy does not necessarily mean living under the rule of law.

The construction of Europe is very young on a human scale. Before, we had never tried to build such a deep Union. 27 countries, 24 languages, each negotiating with their cultural and historical background. We often highlight failures. Let’s also look at the successes.

Pierre Vimont. There are two cultures, two legitimacies, two forms of democracy moving side by side and the problem is how to fit them together; that’s the lesson I have learned from this morning.

**CONCLUSION OF THE COLLOQUIUM
BY CLÉMENT BEAUNE,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

I am happy to be with you for this colloquium with its key words: emergency and hope for our Europe, our European Union.

I believe these words are well chosen because we are still in a period of difficulty, a year after the onset of a health crisis and an economic crisis which hit us hard and tested European cooperation. If we quickly analyze the results of this crisis and the impact it has had on this cooperation, we can draw some lessons from it.

When Europe has the means to react urgently to a crisis, by mobilizing France, the Franco-German couple and all our partners, it succeeds. We did this last spring to build a historic stimulus package that we must now deploy and implement. This is also the case for our common institutions, for example the ECB which, in monetary matters, has managed to implement essential support to preserve our businesses and our jobs. Europe has acted much better than it did in previous crises, including the financial crisis and the debt crisis.

On the other hand, when Europe does not have the means or when coordination is difficult, such as with competition on masks or border measures, we encounter difficulties. At times, there was a turning-in upon oneself. But we have been able to avoid disintegration in order to find ways of cooperation.

Faced with the unprecedented challenge of vaccination, we have chosen Europe. Today this is criticized and I want to defend it because, none of the problems that we had to deal with, such as the need to produce more substantially and quickly in Europe, would have been better dealt with if we had been alone, each against the others, France against Germany or other countries. If we had gone to war for doses of vaccines, neither Europe nor our health would have been any better. Let us defend this framework because we have been able to find the resources to strengthen European cooperation.

We must think and prepare post-crisis Europeans. In a few months, there will be the long-awaited French presidency of the European Union. We must prepare for it with actors from all political backgrounds because it is an essential

moment. We must reflect on our climate ambition and push it forward, continue on the path of solidarity and budgetary ambition by reviewing our common rules, by putting in place the own resources which are linked to this recovery plan, by pushing forward this revival itself and continuing on other subjects: social rights, youth, migration, trade policy reform etc. We will not reach final agreement on all these issues during the French presidency. However, we must move forward towards this much needed European sovereignty.

The French Parliament will contribute to this Conference on the Future of Europe, which will deliver its first political conclusions in spring 2022 under the French presidency. We are now launching this exercise which will last about a year. It will be the opportunity for an open, broad debate, in which national parliaments, professional organizations, citizens' panels will have to participate to say what we want to do with this European Union for the next ten or fifteen years. We must not prevent ourselves from thinking about the future and nurturing that hope beyond the emergency.

Thank you for your work.