

## Theories of European integration

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Thank you for inviting me to take part in this important conference with a contribution on, I read, "Theories about European integration". Surely the task I've been given is too heavy for my shoulders and maybe also for your patience. I assure you that I'll restrict myself to just some considerations about three points that are, in my opinion, of a certain interest.

Before doing that, let me stress the fact, as others have already done, that the European construction is soon going to face a crucial show-down, namely the French referendum to be held on May 29th, that appears to me a clear demonstration of the inner weakness, or intimate fragility of the entire process of European integration and of the EU in itself. French polls, as you know, are anything but encouraging about the possible outcome of the vote. You can understand that it would be a very very strange circumstance if the nation that has been essential to the European unification and started it on the 9th of May 1950, France I mean, rejected the constitutional treaty, that aims at giving the Union a corporate entity on the international stage and much more else. As an influential newspaper as *Le Figaro* has noticed, a negative result would mean, at least, a deep renationalization of the EU and its policies, unless the event were to trigger a political crisis with positive consequences that none can foresee at the moment however.

Well, such a possible European crash with a French flavour, that could occur exactly one year after the last EU enlargement to ten new countries, has a lot to do, in my opinion, with theories and concepts about integration. In this sense: that theories should never be separated from political projects, political will and political uncertainties too. Let me explain this first point. As far as I can understand, it's conscious willingness that makes things move, and not sort of inner laws that work inside the process and scholars try to discover. Of course,

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what we can do is to gauge if a political design is realistic or not, but the logic of an institutional process depends on the goals that actors want to achieve and on the tools they have chosen in order to reach them. Unfortunately, we can sometimes realize that not even actors have clear ideas about what they are trying to do. In this case, theories have a very hard time to support our judgments.

If the majority of French voters say “no” to the European constitution, should we consider their denial as a confirmation of the theory of intergovernmentalism? Such a theory affirms, *grosso modo*, that the actual players of international life are the states and the states can’t renounce their sovereignty to supranational powers, so that the integration process would actually result in a way to better serve national interests and national governments. From this point of view, we should answer “yes” to the question above. In other words, by their refusal of the constitution, French voters would give a blow to neofunctionalist theories that have predicted a progressive increase in EU institutions influence and powers – not to say a federal destiny for Europe – as a consequence of an inevitable and positive spillover in favour of the supranational level. As a matter of fact, the rejection of the constitution would enhance the role of nation state and its sovereignty. As you surely know, an esteemed scholar like A. S. Milward has positively described the entire European integration phenomenon as “The European Rescue of Nation State”.

Nevertheless we can’t help observing that the French government has been giving a major impulse to approve the constitution. So, how to interpret under intergovernmental categories a possible event that the government of Paris and the chief of state in person, president Chirac, are striving to avert with all their forces? At least we can deduce that the French government is convinced that it can better promote national interests and intergovernmental policies inside a constitutional framework than outside.

In the eve of French referendum, we must admit that the European integration process is rather a complicated, lengthy and contradictory one, for at least two reasons. First, because different forces (not only different states) have different projects about Europe – even though they all share the value of a European unity – so that each of them supports different kinds (or theories, if you prefer) of integration. As a consequence, the institutional system of the EU has turned out to be – like the constitution itself – a continuous compromise among different models, and wills, in permanent competition. Secondly, as we can tell in these days, there are some partners, like France, that have mixed feelings about Europe, with mixed consequences too.

More in detail, I would say that those who have always been in favour of a supranational, or federal Europe, are: a) true federalists (and their followers)

who took part in the Resistance against fascism and nazism and wanted to put an end, once for all, to absolute state sovereignty; b) those countries, like Italy or Germany, that had lost the war and hoped to reach a parity level with the others. Among these people (or countries) the theory of the inadequacy of the old national states and of the necessity of uniting them in a federal state has been widely accepted until now (or recently). The direct election of the European Parliament by the citizens of all Europe and the monetary union, which has created the Euro, a real federal entity, can be considered their best achievements.

On the other hand, there are peoples, and countries, that have accepted and even supported the idea of the United States of Europe, but have shown a strong political reluctance to give up absolute sovereignty at the same time. For the countries, the most prominent among them have been Great Britain and, partially, France. Why is that? For the simple reason, roughly speaking, that they had won the war and had obtained some privileges that the others had not: for example, a permanent seat in the security council of UNO, the possibility of creating their own nuclear weapons, colonies, and so on. Furthermore they felt the responsibility to lead Europe avoiding major mistakes and dangers; maybe they also suspected that other countries had not become truly democratic – Italy, for instance, kept nourishing a strong communist party until the end of the Eighties – so that they preferred, not without a reason, to keep in their hands a strong national power.

Winston Churchill himself had given the clearest demonstration of the mentioned behaviour: soon after the war he started advocating the United States of Europe, calling upon France and Germany to overcome their hatred and their conflicts in order to create a new pacific, prosperous, humanistic Europe. Unfortunately, after founding and promoting the European Movement, after gathering all Europeanists in The Hague in 1948, as soon as France and Germany agreed to build the first European Community, i.e. the Coal and Steel Community, old Winston refused to take part in the venture, even though he came back to Downing Street in 1951. From that epoch onwards, British attitude towards European integration has always been skeptical and, let me say, rather self-centred, with some exceptions. Britons have taken part in the Communities and the Union insomuch as these have been useful to their national interests, not to mention the so-called opting-outs, among which the refusal to adopt the Euro stands out as the most important of all.

However, we must admit that the English behaviour has always been rather clear: they don't want to renounce sovereignty as far as the fundamental state competences are concerned: foreign and defence policy, economic and monetary policy, control of frontiers, etc. Intergovernmentalism has always

been their choice and they have always done their best to stick to it, even though they have often accepted compromises, in order to avoid to be left aside. By the way, we should also notice that Great Britain has recorded as one of the most serious and effective members in introducing EU legislation into domestic life. Besides, from time to time Britons still appear to keep in mind Churchill's The Hague prophecies in 1948, while confirming a certain unpredictability in their temper. Please don't forget, for heaven's sake, the blessed soul of sir Roy Jenkins, the first and only British president of the EU Commission as well as the father of the European Monetary System in the late Seventies (and Churchill's estimated biographer too).

Let's now come down to France, the stronghold of European integration and the second most doubtful Community member at the same time. As Jean Monnet put it in 1943, France has always had the will to compete with global powers, like US, URSS, UK at that time, but it has also had the consciousness that it can't do without Europe, since Europe is vital both for its own existence and also for its capacity to represent a significant region of the world on the international stage. For all these reasons, and those I have referred to above, Monnet was able, after the war, to convince the government of his country, which was then led by sincere Europeanists, to adopt what would have been called the functionalist solution to the European integration problem. Even though the final goal envisaged was a federal one, the functional and sectorial solution permitted to establish significant supranational authorities without touching the essential of state sovereignty.

Since then, France has entered into a challenging engagement (and agonising inner debate) to promote European identity and prosperity while hindering the functional gear, or *la methode communautaire*, to dip too much into sovereignty. Owing to this intimate contradiction, France has been showing real uncertainties about the way to follow: for instance, in 1954, the National Assembly put off sine die the European Defence Community, although it had been proposed by the French government. Or, after general De Gaulle took power in 1958, his ministers started boycotting the development of the Communities, as provided by the treaty of Rome, until Paris got the so-called Luxembourg compromise, that imposed the unanimity rule in the decision making process. In addition, notwithstanding president Giscard d'Estaing's sincere devotion to European integration, France willy-nilly accepted the birth of the European Monetary System in December 1978 or the direct election of the European Parliament half a year later. On the other hand, following a first phase of *nombrilisme* after Mitterrand's victory, our Gallic cousins took the lead of the deepening of the Common Market, thanks to Jacques Delors's presidency of the Commission in the Eighties. However, when a referendum

was convened in France to ratify the Maastricht Treaty, which established the European Union, only a very slight majority of French electors voted “yes” in September 1992. And the same nasty situation, more or less, we are going to face in a month or something more.

The probable explanation of such an oscillating experience lies in the fact that French political society has never decided between a clear intergovernmental approach and a rigorous functionalism. The last, functionalism, has essentially been considered as a means to postpone crucial decisions while keeping European integration within the boundaries of economic and social progress, and with certain aspects of, let me say, supranationality. The problem is that such behaviour is getting more and more difficult to keep on, since functionalism *à la française* is nearing its limits. Let me describe the situation, as far as I can understand.

First of all, also the European constitution as such, in being little more than a traditional international treaty, betrays the contradictions of the entire construction. From a certain point of view, the governments have been obliged to draft the constitution to respond to an increasing demand of significant political improvements, both owing to a wide popular disenchantment toward the “eurocrats” and to the necessity to rule the new EU with 25 member states. From another point of view, the same governments have not accepted the idea of a true constituent process, to bring about at least among the states belonging to the *noyau dur*, the hard core of Europe, namely France, Germany and other founding members of the Communities. As a result, while the ultimate goals keep appearing blurred and confused, citizens, specially in France, where the government felt the necessity to ask the people to decide, are not accepting, or maybe they don’t even understand the tricky game.

Besides, the French government – not alone, we must admit – has tried to escape the rendez-vous with the increasingly federal-like consequences of functionalism through a series of countermeasures that have been damaging the credibility of the most innovative provisions inserted in the constitution. Therefore, at the moment, on one hand, the text of the new treaty is promising the creation of the post of EU foreign minister; on the other, French and British governments, in order to defend their own prerogatives at international level, are supporting the German demand for a permanent seat in the Security Council of the UNO. Of course, French and British stance can be understood and also excused for the move, but all this doesn’t add to the credibility of the constitution.

Generally speaking, the more important European integration becomes, the more dangerous turns out to be the method of resorting to international treaties and to ratification referendums in order to develop the Union. How can

one imagine creating and promoting a common currency, which involves numerous states, if he feels uncertain on his own objectives, first of all on his willingness to support the Euro with a common economic and fiscal policy, that the constitution doesn't even foresee? How can one invite other countries to share further steps ahead, if the risk persists that he could reject his own proposals or decisions?

To conclude on my first point, the time has come, first of all in France, for definitive political decisions, lest the European integration process enters a more and more dangerous and unstable phase, owing to the importance of the engagements to take and the dramatic consequences of possible disavowals. Either a true constitutional process gets started, albeit with a gradual implementation, or intergovernmental Europe must be recognized as the only realistic choice. In this case, however, everybody should expect in the short-medium run: a) an increasing political, economic, and social instability all throughout Europe, b) the end of John Kennedy's vision of an equal partnership across the Atlantic, with France in a rather obviously leading role, c) a possible temptation for the USA to develop imperial ambitions that would deprive Western democracies of their inner moral values.

In short, if global challenges are to be effectively tackled in the next decades, a setback in European integration would dramatically endanger the chances of success.

Please, don't worry; my other two points will be much quicker. As an Italian, I wish to recommend you the personality and the thought of one of the fathers of Europe, Altiero Spinelli. The reason doesn't lie in my personal feelings toward his memory (I knew him quite well), or in a sort of patriotic pride, but in the greatness of a man that had not become an antifascist militant and a European federalist after seeing Mussolini hanged in Milan or his country covered in ruins in 1945. He had spent 16 years in jail and confinement during the regime and while repeatedly scratching his head in seclusion he had decided to abandon communism and embrace European federalism as the true struggle between progress and reaction. His story would be interesting to tell, but I haven't enough time. What I'd like to stress are the aspects of his legacy that could be useful in our epoch, at least from a cultural point of view. First, he was convinced that the cause of the terrible disasters that took place in Europe during last century was absolute sovereignty of nation state, which opposed every country to its neighbours and kept the world in permanent anarchy. Consequently, in his system of thought, as I've already said, the fundamental opposition between forces of progress and forces of reaction was not antagonism between capitalists and proletarians, as announced in Marx's gospel. On the contrary, the crucial cleavage would pass between those who

wanted to keep alive absolute sovereignty and federalists. Federalists, I must specify, were militants who wanted to give Europe the same institutions, more or less, that Hamilton, Madison and Jay had given to the United States. From Spinelli's point of view, institutions were the *préalable*, the *conditio sine qua non*; only new institutions could really change things. More specifically, only a European federal constitution could overcome the vicious link between absolute sovereignty and international anarchy for good. Why was he so determined in his ideas, to which he dedicated all his life? He thought that absolute national sovereignty had caused not only dreadful wars and ruins. On the contrary, after promoting liberty and human progress until the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism, the so-called modern state, being unable to face the challenges of industrialization, technological development and mass society without resorting to domestic militarization and external aggressiveness, had provoked a general crisis in European civilization. Individual and collective freedom, humanistic values, progress in general had been threatened and suffocated by the transformation of citizens in serfs and gears of the state.

I don't want to overestimate the current European constitution under ratification. I also admit that Spinelli's political philosophy kept penetrated with some apocalyptic alternatives, together with a revolutionary attitude, which had belonged to his communist engagement, even though the young prisoner had completely repudiated not only Marxism and all deterministic predictability of human destiny that derived from its idealistic roots, but also Benedetto Croce's historicism. However, I share the feeling that the future of our civilization, as far as our responsibility as Europeans goes, depends on whether the constitution is approved or not, on whether it is progressively improved or not. In my opinion, notwithstanding problems and defects in the text, the 29th of May cannot be dismissed as a minor event, as some speakers have asserted during our conference. In any case, a positive decision by the French people could mean that institutional crossing of the Rubicon that Spinelli had been striving for during his whole life.

My third and last point. A rather new theory about integration argues that Europeans are on the way to establish a federation of nation states. Former president of the Commission, Jacques Delors, first formulated such a concept, accepting the goal of federalism after experiencing the difficulty of relying only on economic functionalism and on the method of *petit pas* (short steps) to enhance integration. Frankly speaking, I'm not sure that the states of the Union are all true nation states. Vice versa, if Delors is right, we should acknowledge that in Europe there are more states (nation states) than we usually think. Let

me explain my view, although I understand that it could worry some of our friends from new member countries.

The problem already existed in the Community of the Six, although circumscribed at the common market level. Was Luxemburg, for instance, a nation state? Or was Belgium a true nation state? Maybe Luxemburg was more so than Belgium, even though it wasn't easy to compare the Grand Duchy with Germany or France. And what about the UK or Spain? At any rate, almost all Western and Central European countries were the result of a concentration of previous states. Let's also notice that until the passage to political Union in 1993 the conundrum hadn't appeared so thorny. Unfortunately, after the last enlargement and in the eve of new accessions, things have become much more complicated. Let alone ancient kingdoms like Poland or Hungary, but in the East the phenomenon of aggregation of smaller states into bigger ones has hardly occurred. On the contrary, Czechoslovakia has split in two and Yugoslavia in five or more. All these entities are supposed to become nation states within the EU, while some are already in the machine. Therefore, one and all these states do have or will have the right of foundering a European constitution or denying access to other new member states. Each of these countries already has or will have the right to place one of their citizens both in the European Commission and in the European Court of Justice (also at the Tribunal level), which act as collegial bodies. At the end of enlargement process, late-joiners will surely have the majority both in the Commission and the Court, not to mention the excessive crowding of the Council of ministers, albeit they account for just a fourth or less of the entire EU population and a tenth or less of EU economy.

To be more precise, the current treaties and the new constitution don't differ on this relevant issue. The sole novelty goes (with a certain simplification) as follows: after the first legislature under the new treaty, the number of commissioners will be reduced to two thirds of the member states total figure, on a rotation principle and on a basis of absolute parity among countries. It goes without saying that the problem of over-representation of smaller states will remain the same, better, will be enshrined in the system for an unforeseeable stretch of time. May I add the same rule, one state – one seat, applies also to the European System of Central Banks and the Court of Auditors?

As far as I can see, such a process, which was in part imposed by the necessity to hasten the enlargement to the East, in part was passively accepted for lack of debate, is not a safe or a wise one. The multiplication of smaller states, if they are to be considered as true states, with all the prerogatives that real states claim and deserve, is going to create an imbalance between formal



Europe and real Europe, between the EU of paper majorities and the EU of actual majorities. Inside Western and central Europe there are numerous nation states that have no voice, even though they are more important, more populated, more dynamic, more democratically experienced than most of the new members of the EU. Think for instance of Scotland, or Catalonia. Why not having a permanent David Hume's or Adam Smith's fellow countryman acting as a judge in the European Court of Justice? Personally I would feel very happy if that happened. Anyway, beyond that, what we utterly need is a newer, firmer equilibrium to achieve through a serious reevaluation of European history, European realities and European identity.

In brief, our uncertain notion of nation state is undermining the stability and the future of the Union. Its institutions are seriously risking unreliability, ineffectiveness, unrepresentativeness. My conclusion goes: let's give up the myth of nation state and its often ridiculous pretence of absolute sovereignty together with the right of veto; let's dismiss the slippery concept of auto-determination; let's enter into a true federal bound with a dual sovereignty, both of the European people as a whole and of the peoples of the single member states; let's give Bavaria, Sicily, Normandy the same rights conferred – in a federal framework, though – to much smaller provinces like Estonia, Slovenia or Malta; let's take into account that in America 300 million people are distributed within 50 states, so that a 450 million citizens – 25 member states European Union could easily acknowledge the political existence of the old-new entities that have been living for centuries in its core.

Could we annihilate, doing so, the long historical process that has created the biggest nation states? Obviously not, surely there are institutional solutions to avoid a fragmentation of actual states, as well as to push smaller entities to unify their voices. At the same time, true political dynamics must prevail on unnecessary parochialism: European political parties and leaders should take most of the decisions, not local circles for the simple fact of belonging to improbable nation states. For instance, the composition of the Commission must be emancipated by the absurd rule one state – one member, while rotation criteria should be discarded whenever possible. Beyond that, in the meantime, a major contribution to European integration could come from courageous initiatives by the above mentioned *noyau dure*, whether composed of nation states or not. It's always been up to them to start a further institutional deepening of the common house. Other members could follow later. Nevertheless, Europe must escape the risk to sacrifice its potential and its richness, not to say its existence, on the altar of a merely nominalistic nation state. At the end of May, the decision of French people will have a dramatic impact on the future of the Union, of its states, and of our theories too.