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Is the European Union Viable with 27 Members and More? From Market to Geopolitical Community

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As a domestic market the European Union (EU) “at 27 members and more” is clearly viable. As a political body, it can only be viable if it is based on a reformed project. As an active and recognized geopolitical center, it is not yet viable.

Driven by actors of a growing single market and by a security imperative, the EU’s territorial expansion continues without serious consideration of its consequences for the viability of institutions and for the efficiency of decision mechanisms. The sense of belonging to a collective body, which would in turn create a community, has been rendered questionable by the lack of clarity about procedures, the absence of solutions to challenges of the period, and fears of the dilution of individual identities. On a global scale, the EU functions as an economic and monetary center and as a successful laboratory of regional integration. However, it is not considered a major geopolitical actor, due to the lack of unity among the views and actions, expressed and perceived, of its Member States.

What can link these three key dimensions – economy, politics, and geopolitics – is the elaboration, explanation, and promotion of specific European interests, all of which can be examined on three relevant geographical scales: that of the EU itself as a system of relations among a growing number of Member States and their societies; that of nearby and troubled areas next to the EU; and finally that which encompasses a vast world undergoing massive transformation.

The European Union Continues to Expand: To What Ends?

The EU is, with the Atlantic Alliance, the only interstate organization in the midst of continual territorial expansion: whether by direct, full, and

complete integration of new states, or by partial and progressive inclusion of adjacent states within its sphere of political influence and economic interests. Already under way, the EU and the current extent of the Council of Europe¹ will overlap, towards 2020–2025, with the notable exception of the Russian Federation – that is to say, 46 states at least, without doubt more; for by then nation-regions will have taken on state attributes. In this scenario, the “established Union” – a voluntary association of nation-states under democratic regimes that jointly exercise several regalian competences – embodies “Europe” in the sense of an area of secular civilization with variable contours. Moreover, the EU is perceived (e.g., in China and India) as the collective and contemporary political form of “Europe,” which is seen as a cultural assemblage stemming from the combination of Christianity and the principles of the Enlightenment.

Continued Territorial Expansion

If the EU’s influence continues to assert itself on its shores and its borders through various modes of association (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, etc.) and tailored advanced statutes (Morocco, Israel), a second set will emerge in the short term, extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and composed of states integrated into the European geo-economic and geopolitical system in a differentiated manner and on a

The Americans have long had a clear vision of Europe’s ultimate boundaries

negotiated and formalized basis according to evaluated and revisable agreements. In this respect, the EU policy seems to obey its “geography” as each enlargement calls for yet another, through continued territorial linkages that exist nearly everywhere, with the exception of Russia. The geographic notion of “neighborhood” implies an associative approach, linking nearby peripheries, though without immediate inclusion; proximity is presumed virtuous. This territorial dynamic is a product, in democratic regimes, of the following elements: modernity (rule of law, respect for contracts, freedom of expression and action) diffuses according to a spatial logic of proximity, which is also the logic of the market; linguistic and historic familiarity facilitates transfers of new practices, as in the case of migratory

1. In 1994 the Council of Europe chose to be more explicit by emphasizing in Recommendation 1247 of its Parliamentary Assembly that only states whose national territory is located in totality or in part on the European continent and whose culture is closely linked to European culture can in principle become members of the Council of Europe. This includes thus 47 members, among them Turkey, member since the beginning in 1949, Ukraine in 1995, Russia since 1996 but also the three countries of the southern Caucasus (1996–2001), on the basis of their wish for rapprochement with European values, as well as the Balkans (1993–2007).

networks. Furthermore, the EU's expansion corresponds to a purely geostrategic design as conceived by successive American administrations. The latter are the only ones to have long had a clear vision of established Europe's ultimate boundaries, a vision with the following aim: to gather eventually all the countries of the Council of Europe, except Russia, within the "Euro-Atlantic structures," essentially completing the work began on June 6, 1944 and re-launched after 1989 – namely, the pacification of the continent through the establishment of an area governed by democratic regimes where defense is assured fundamentally by the Atlantic Alliance, that is to say, by the United States. This vision has been brought up to date by the localization of crises in which the United States is directly involved, notably in the Near East and the Middle East, the prism through which Turkey's candidacy to the EU is openly supported, as a neighbor of an Iraq to be stabilized, an Iran to be contained, and a Syria to be normalized.

Being neither a state nor a nation, the EU behaves like an open organization that is able theoretically to adapt to undefined borders. The debate on the ultimate borders was thus barred from the moment that a border conception akin to that found in American history was adopted, that is, the border as "the frontier," the starting line of expansion and the projection of influence. It is a matter here of a conquest of the East in favor of successive democratic revolutions: this is the central project. In the European Commission, as in the majority of states, including the most Euro-skeptic, the doxa is thus: "We will know the boundaries of the Union when we reach them." In fact, the final map the EU has in mind is already in place. The only reservations about this grand scenario have been put forward with respect to Turkey: by deputies from the oldest Member States and from the European People's Party movement in the name of a project founded first on values; by leaders close to this movement and currently in power in Berlin and Paris; and by public opinion in several countries, namely France, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Ireland. Everywhere else – the United Kingdom, Italy, Northern Europe, and new Member States, Poland, and the Baltic States in the lead – all are in favor of pursuing the expansion. As for the Party of European Socialists, it challenges criteria that are geographical and cultural in nature and emphasizes political and democratic dynamics, whereas the deputies of the group of liberals and democrats advocate an intermediary strategy of associated states.

The Commission's position, formulated under the European Council of 1992 and recalled in 2007, has been to withhold all judgment since, it contends, the term "European" associates geographical, historical, and cultural elements that collectively contribute to European identity; such

sharing of ideas, values, and historical links cannot be condensed into a single definitive formula but, on the contrary, is redefined by each successive generation. Likewise, the definition formulated by the Council of Europe in 1994 is a godsend for the defenders of continued expansion; they feel that the EU would commit a strategic error by now inventing a new irreversible rupture line on the map between “the real Europe and the imagined (uncivilized) Europe beyond.”

Europe: Between Russia and America

Enlargement is thus the result of the image that the EU has of itself: a civil and normative power whose mission is to broaden the scope of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as the benefits of the free market, by favoring political transitions and by preventing the eruption of crises of nationalist origin. The prospect of membership is an effective lever for both internal reforms within the applicant countries and for desired changes in the confines. Security research is a strong motivation for them all: each Member State wants to integrate its neighbour in the same interstate system. This has been Greece's approach to Turkey since 1999, Poland's approach to Ukraine and, when the moment comes, to Belarus. Put more simply, it is also a matter of defining the western borders of Russia. As Vaclav Havel points out, “throughout History, Russia has expanded and retracted. The majority of conflicts have been rooted in border disputes and in the conquest or the loss of territory. The day that we agree peacefully where the European Union ends and the Russian Federation begins, half of the tension between the two will disappear” (Havel, 2005). Moreover, from Moscow's point of view, enlargement, especially when it is associated with that of the Atlantic Alliance, is felt clearly to be a form of containment and a roll-back of territories in which Russia has national interests: Ukraine first of all, but Georgia and Belarus as well. This perception was one of the reasons for the Russia's tough reaction to Georgia last August; the outcome is a new Russian military border far south of the Caucasus range. Finally, the most ambitious territorial version of the EU was explained by David Miliband (2007), who conceives of the neighborhood policy as the waiting room of membership of all peripheral countries.²

2. “We should take the European Neighborhood Policy a step further. We must state clearly that participation is not an alternative to membership, or a waiting room. And we must offer access to the full benefits of the single market. The first step would be the accession of neighbouring countries – especially Russia and the Ukraine – to the WTO. Then we must build on this with comprehensive free-trade agreements. The goal must be a multilateral free-trade zone around our periphery – a version of the European Free Trade Association that could gradually bring the countries of the Maghreb, the Middle East and Eastern Europe in line with the single market, not as an alternative to membership, but potentially as a step towards it.” (Miliband, 2007)

Millenarian and federalist dreams remain intact in the background. The first dates from the Middle Ages: unification of Europe under a *respublica christiana*, nostalgic for the *pax romana*, implied extending the borders to the edges of the known world in order to allow the advent of the empire of the last days and to create a community both homogeneous and certain of its values and beliefs. The growing power of sovereign and national states shattered this spiritual ambition. The second dream, that is, the federalist dream, intended to imitate the American experience on the European continent as it is the reference of all things: the Convention gathered in 2003 to write a constitutional treaty meant to be an exact replica of the one held in Philadelphia in 1787; the stable president of the European Council would be a new George Washington, in reference to the expression "Founding Fathers" which applied to both situations; the quest for an "ever closer Union" is the direct echo of "a more perfect Union," which is referred to in the preamble to the US Constitution; the EU in its most expanded

Is the European Dream only an American Dream?

version would have nearly as many states as the United States, which would be a sign of achievement; the two mottos are very similar ("unity in diversity" and *e pluribus unum*, the latter being Latin for "out of many, one"). Does the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) not embody a new "Pax Americana"? Is the European Dream only an American Dream? Should we make a clean sweep of European history? Obviously the European project was built at odds with the recent past of Europe. But there again, the experience of the Americans³ in 1776 was once more cut and pasted, in a break with the past. And recent scenarios of a large transatlantic market and of a "Western union" aim to update the American reference, which was essential in its time but empties the European project of all autonomy; for such patterns exempt Europeans from buckling down to construct a geopolitical community. The Georgian crisis made clear that the EU, led by Paris, Berlin and London, has to follow its own path, according to its own interests, between American perspectives and Russian ambitions.

Building a Community

In expanding to nations long deprived of state systems and that maintain a close relationship with their painful pasts, European construction, which used to be the stabilizing framework for German reunification, is only viable if it permits a conciliation of the expressed national interests and favors convergences on common issues. Jacques Delors's expression

3. "Farmers and scholars, statesmen and patriots who had traveled across an ocean to escape tyranny and persecution" (Obama, 2008).

“federation of nation-states” (Delors, 1998 and 2003) is the most accurate description of European geopolitical singularity. In short, the challenge lies in shifting from an experienced and sometimes bygone Europe to a conceived Europe: this is the primary interest. But building a community implies having a solid understanding of the singular history and the social and political reality of the other states. Educational programs are still lagging: it took 60 years for the first Franco-German history textbook to be written. Hungarians and Slovaks also launched such a project. European issues are dealt with unequally in the media. Not all Member States have a diplomatic representation in the other 26 states, and determinants of national positions on issues of common interest are not always clearly understood, even in Brussels. The consequence of the revolution linked to the growing number – that is to say, the transition to 27 members – lies in a growing differentiation of interests (e.g., East or South, which priority?), which can only be curbed by a renewed agreement between the larger states. An EU with 27 members and more is viable in the long term only if Germany and France have firm, shared common, solid positions on major issues (enlargement and the neighborhood policy, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, and the Near East, energy and climate).

Should the EU Become an Actor in the Multipolar World, and if so, under which Conditions?

The EU is a large regional market but of global importance as far as trade is concerned. The world would require it to be a geopolitical community capable of organizing a global political strategy that is not limited to trade and the environment. This qualitative shift would imply an agreement on the primary goal – that is to say, not only on the single market, the expected prosperity, and the way of life to be protected, but also on the emergence of an autonomous geopolitical actor. It entails developing a lucid analysis grid of the state of the world, which is presented in the following in five points, and identifying a limited number of European interests that are a priority on a world scale, as well as some goals.

EU in the World: Five Realities

European construction goes hand in hand with the current phase of globalization. European governments gave priority to the reorganization of the continent due to a regional security imperative; it was accompanied, and at times preceded, by strategies of European firms, which knew how to take advantage of salary differentials and of strongly growing new markets in order to restructure their production systems, adapt to global competition, and export to emerging countries lacking equipment: German firms in

Central Europe, Italian ones in Southeast Europe, French ones in Poland, Slovenia, or Romania, Nordic firms in the Baltic States and in Poland. Since the beginning of the 1990s, European construction and its spatial expansion, as well as “globalization,” occurred in parallel. This fashionable word, created in 1983, is used to define the new aspects of the current phase of transformation of the world economy, that is to say, the capacity of companies to act in real time on a global scale using information technology and the computerization of service economies. It is time for European states and governments to politically come to terms with the fact that European firms, like those in the US and Japan, are involved in the modification of the economic landscape.⁴ Unlike Japan, which was already an industrialized country from the 1950s on, emerging countries are developing now: the needs of their domestic markets offer considerable opportunities to European economies.

**Since the 1990s,
European construction
and “globalization”
are synchronous**

The current phase of globalization originates in the strategy of these nation-states. In most of these countries, political decisions made at the highest levels enabled them to participate in the global economic game (the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] in 1978, the Indian government in 1991, state control in Russia since 2003, etc.) Globalization has been developing as an alliance between these states and foreign investors and then between these states and new national champions, such as Lenovo or Tata, which became famous due to their acquisitions of Western industrial leaders.⁵ The global economy is facing the challenge of taking over new major exporters, such as China, as it did for Japan. In terms of geography, the new economic landscape is more dispersed: 99 states recorded a growth rate higher than the global average in 2006. However, the description of the world still has a Western countenance: the concept of emerging markets dates back to 1981, having originated from observations made by a Dutch banker in South Korea; then the “BRICs” category was coined by Goldman Sachs researchers in 2003; and its extension to the “Next Eleven” in 2005 also stems from a New York investment bank. India’s economic performance was brought into the spotlight rather late; in 2003, the US changed its strategy and looked for a counterweight to the Chinese growth model under an authoritarian regime. For Europe, this new geo-economic landscape is not at all a zero-sum game.

4. In 2005, more than half of Chinese exports came from assembly and transformation operations of imported semi-finished products and components that were mostly carried out by subsidiaries of foreign companies (more than 80%). Foreign investment in the manufacturing industry in China is split nearly equally between production for the domestic market and production for exportation (CEPII, 2006).

5. In 2007, 62 multinational firms based in emerging countries belonged to the first 500 global firms; emerging companies accounted for 19% of market capitalization.

Globalization is not limited to the market; the world is not reduced to economic globalization. Advertising executives explain that we are living in a world of representations; it is their job. The world is a forum, a single but not unified media scene. What is happening in reality competes with the public's immediate interpretation of facts, circulation of images of the "other" and exploitation of stereotypes, and shocks of broadcasts and receptions. Long-term memories can feed resentment, fuel tensions. Statements of European policy on third countries should be open, like it used to be on the internal sphere, rather than mobilizing a Western holy alliance project. What the Europeans say is important and goes beyond the norms that they enact. The EU works like a stabilizing utopia and does not have to give up this role; but its processes take time, unlike the fast-paced nature of the media (4–7 years are necessary to adopt a directive due to the number of authorities consulted in a democratic process).

At the same time, the world is an arena, which is based on balance of power and battles of will. It is heterogeneous in comparison with an EU governed by law and contract and regulated according to compromises among national interests. The EU is not synchronous with classic geopolitics; this is sometimes perceived as a weakness. "It must mature," declared the Russian ambassador in Brussels, pretending to believe that a consensus patiently constructed by 27 states and representing half a billion citizens is not as important as the unequivocal position of one government.

Europe is not yet seen as a geopolitical actor

It is true that the majority of emerging countries are authoritarian regimes. China is making progress in Africa, as it avoids judging the political scene. Economic growth no longer favors democratic transition. And democratic countries of emerging regions (India, South Africa) directly oppose Europeans' positions in the WTO (World Trade Organization) on trade issues or in the UN (United Nations) when dealing with human rights, even when the 27 Member-States of the EU speak "with one voice." However, it is in the interest of states entering the global game to look for stability. In that respect, Europeans have proven experience in the management of interdependence, which gives them a clear lead.

The EU is perceived throughout the world as an advanced laboratory of regional integration. From the point of view of Asia and North America, the EU's enlargement policy is a success, like the creation of a single currency and a large market (Lisbonne-de-Vergeron, 2007). Through an accelerated regional integration, Europeans are active players at the world stage. Large emerging states are paying a great deal of attention to the EU since they remain themselves divided by internal physical, fiscal, and trade

barriers; neither India (with its 28 states and its 22 official languages) nor China nor Indonesia constitute a single national market. But Europe is not yet seen as a geopolitical actor because of the lack of convergence between the major nation-states that make it up. Here is the gap between the power of the regional economic entity structured in a single market, capable of imposing its rules of access and norms, and the weakness of a nascent geopolitical community.

On a Global Scale, What Are European Interests?

First the EU must not give up its main asset, its success at regional integration, which was founded upon the unique pooling of some elements of sovereignty and the creation of collective norms aimed at regulating competition in bodies open to compromise (Foucher, 2007). The EU works according to its own contractual method and any rule agreed upon jointly is imperative for all. On this basis, it is in Europe's interest to develop a European pole based on its experiences, its stock of ideas (on global issues, ecology, effective multilateralism), and a broader openness of its public opinion than exists in the United States. The current experience in Europe cannot be transposed as such, for the historical circumstances that lead to its creation have not been repeated elsewhere.

On the economic front, there is a strong trend towards a new phase of globalization that is polycentric in nature; the risk is that it will become the dominant factor structuring the international system, with the economic forces being stronger than the regulatory capacity of political authorities. As the main economic and trade power in the world, it is in the interest of the EU to assume its responsibilities in global governance, above and beyond trade negotiations. The EU can introduce regulations to limit the negative effects of economic globalization and respond to the social demands for protection without denying the virtues of openness. Other paths of intervention and regulation should be explored: currency and exchange policy, the persistent problem of the US trade deficit, the strategy of the Bretton Woods institutions, and the reduction of energy dependence.

On the strategic front, the EU is ranked first due to the amount of development assistance it has distributed, its share of contributions to the UN budget, and its participation in peacekeeping operations and civil-military actions. The EU is the only international actor that can act on each level of a crisis (military, development, police, law, trade, etc.) (Bentégeat, 2007). Several Member States have real external action capabilities at their disposal, as well as state analysis and negotiation tools capable of teaching

them, in a realistic manner, about complex situations and about the tough constraints of transformational diplomacy.⁶ These Member States give the EU the role of major international actor in terms of security (prevention, stabilization, reconstruction), though this dimension is not readily apparent. This interest in assuming the responsibilities of a strategic actor, which is not shared by all Member States but supported by public opinion, would require the deepening of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in order to advance the implementation of integrated defence capabilities.

All this should prompt the drafting of a text equivalent to the one presenting the security strategy of 2003, which mentioned the existence of European interests only twice. This text should present a synthesis of national visions and interests leading to common policies designed for the main states and entities on the world. Further, the text should be understandable enough to be published in the media. This should be the first mission of the policy planning staff of the future European External Service.

Which Geographical Areas and Foreign Policies Will the EU Be Able to Influence?

Within the scope of influence that European states can exercise on a global scale, some factors rely on heritage (languages, history, legal and political traditions), some on geography (distance or proximity and common borders), some pertain to current interactions (trade and air but also cultural and human, as well as investments), and still others derive from policies followed by the EU bilaterally and/or in international organizations (agreements and dialogue, strategic partnerships, standards). The cartography of this presence in the world can be drawn in horizons of influence, responsibility, and action.⁷

Combining these various criteria yields gradients of presence on four types of geographical spaces. The EU's presence is clearest in neighboring countries, due to the proximity of economic and human interactions. It demarcates a vast area on the path to integration due to the attraction effect of the EU. Nevertheless, its transformation through durable influence clashes with a series of asymmetries: politically and geopolitically with a

6. The main contributors to external operations from the European Union are: the United Kingdom (6,300 troops among which 5,200 in Afghanistan); France (11,000: KFOR, Africa, Afghanistan); Italy (7,800: Lebanon, FIAS, KFOR); Germany (7,400: FIAS, KFOR); and Spain (2,800: Lebanon).

7. A first cartographic draft was made in 1993 in the conclusions on the European future in Foucher (1998: 312–13).

revisionist Russia; historically, economically, and psychologically with Maghreb countries; and strategically and diplomatically in the Near East. What is occurring from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural River and the Caspian Sea is vital to European interests; it is a sphere of interest of the utmost importance in terms of stability.

The African continent, between the Sahel-Saharan zone and South Africa, has close ties with Europe (immigration, development assistance, markets, laws), though in a context of persistent asymmetry and increased competition (China, India, United States, Japan) that allows ruling elite to avoid political pressure from the EU. Africa is still perceived as a particular field of responsibility for the EU, due to a sense of historical debt, which does not prevent increase in public indifference. A realistic approach would be for the most engaged European states (the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal) to suggest that they and African states jointly elaborate a long-term action plan.

With North America and Latin America, India and Australia, European states share a long history, languages, legal standards, democratic regimes, most often common positions in the UN (except for India), effective connections, and intense migratory exchanges. The Euro-American relationship is fundamental. It must be renewed and strengthened at the beginning of 2009; the US and the EU must engage in a clear and thoroughgoing examination of their agreements and disagreements. If European interests coincide with American interests, even if only in a small way, that common ground will provide the means to achieve a less conflicting polycentrism. In view of the strong growth experienced by large countries in Latin America and South Asia, the EU has launched strategic partnerships in those regions (India in 2004, Brazil in 2007). While Brazil shares the EU's regulatory concerns, provided that it contributes to the rule enactment and presents itself as the advocate for a developing Latin America, India is primarily concerned with receiving recognition as a great power. Moreover, for Latin America and to a lesser extent South Asia, their concern for diversification of their horizons and their interest for the processes of regional integration offer opportunities to the EU (UN, standards, environment, research, and innovation).

The Euro-American relationship must be renewed and strengthened

Finally, a heterogeneous entity extends from the Arab-Persian Gulf to East Asia. It is in this region that European influence and presence have historically been the weakest. This is particularly the case regarding Iran,

Saudi Arabia, China, Thailand, Korea, and Japan. Linguistic and cultural differences, physical distances, weakness of historical relationships, the EU's dependence on energy products, uncertainty about the impact of sovereign funds (the Gulf and China), and the vigor of competition (Japan and Korea in the past, China today) – for the EU it is a region that poses major challenges to Europe's future without the EU's being able to exercise sufficient influence, even though this zone is given priority, particularly by EU companies. The partnership and cooperation agreement signed with China in 2007 and the economic dialog in 2008 have allowed a realist China to show its interest in "multipolarity" and in reducing US influence in Asia, but the EU would be mistaken if it were to conclude that this aim could lead to multilateral advances. Moreover, with the exception of Afghanistan and Iran, European states are absent from negotiations on major strategic issues (North Korea, security of maritime routes), unlike the US, which is a central actor and a balancing factor. On the other hand, given the role of that part of the world concerning issues of energy and climate, European interests are best served by pursuing its convictions (e.g., the Copenhagen meeting at the end of 2009). Likewise, the increasing role of several Asian states (and Middle Eastern states) in crisis interventions and in the development of Africa justify the holding of regular consultations with the EU.

In its neighborhood, the cause is heard; the EU acts like an intense, absorbent power.⁸ Elsewhere in the world, the EU's unique experience of contractual alliances among democratic nation-states, combined with a lucid synthesis of its interests and principles, should enable it to find its emissive power.



8. These two references to physics, absorption and emission, were borrowed from Paul Valéry (1957).

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