Introduction

Europe's Lifelong Companion? The Debate on the Future of Europe

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The discussion of the "future of Europe" has become the European Union's lifelong companion. It has evolved in successive phases. The current one has been shaped by the 2008 financial crisis and the "great recession" which it had provoked, as well as a number of more recent developments such as those created by USA policies. The great recession caused havoc everywhere, and brought to the surface several issues which had been simmering for many years. No member state was immune to its effects, but some suffered more than others. The southern EU countries, particularly Greece, saw their financial systems shaken to the foundations: economies contracting; public debt soaring; unemployment, especially among the young, rising to historic proportions; poverty and hardships becoming the new norm for sections of their societies. The fundamental financial support provided by the European Union during the financial crises came with strings, which some saw as being too stringent, not fairly applied to all countries, and restraining the room for manoeuvring to support the most vulnerable. This led to public anger, governments were dethroned and newer, often fringe parties, came to the fore. Populism grew rapidly and Euroscepticism increased.

In 2015, as the European economy began to grow slowly and better times appeared on the horizon, a crisis erupted among the EU member states on who should take responsibility for under a million Syrian refugees who moved westwards through Turkey in search of safety and a better life. Just when it seemed that spring was finally about to displace the long winter of economic gloom that hung over the EU since 2008 and which had almost capsized the monetary union, a major political crisis erupted once more in Europe. Internal disagreement on the management of migration predate 2015, but the events of that year gave it a fresh impetus. The situation has changed very little since then and the reform of Dublin 3 has not been completed. The legacy of the agreement struck with Turkey was questioned by many, as the EU conveniently sidestepped its duty to uphold fundamental human rights so as not to address internal discord on migration. The handling of migration is one of the most enduring problems which the EU has had to face.

Political upheavals are part of the tissue of any polity, not least the EU. Crises have a way of shaping and moulding institutions, though not always in a positive way. In the midst of the changes just summarised, the EU experienced a few positives as

well. BREXIT did not provoke the predicted rush to the exit; Eurosceptic parties did not make substantive gains in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, and voter turnout increased. Several new initiatives such as the launching of a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the proposal to establish a European Defence Fund (EDF) signalled a new vitality in the development of European defence. They are the first steps toward the emergence of a European defence identity, which for the time being remains vague. Furthermore, the process of EU enlargement continues, with some expected delays and perhaps politically naïve postponements, however there are little doubts that the trajectory converges toward new member states joining the EU; it is rather a question of whether it happens in the middle or long run.

However, a new global recession has appeared on Europe's radar which could herald a period in which public sentiment will turn against the EU making reform more difficult. The new Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen wants to make Europe the first green continent by 2050 and fit for the digital age. The new Commission leader has reasserted Europe's unwavering faith in multilateralism. The EU does not seem to be discouraged by the negative turns in trans-Atlantic relations, the slow pace of negotiations in Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) nor by the Trump Administration's behaviour in the Middle East, the Gulf and his (and only his) tariff wars which are mostly responsible for the bad turn in the global economy. It offers responsible leadership in world politics in coalition with other states. Ambition is the kind of enhancer which the EU needs in this hour though we should be wary not to fall victims to our own rhetoric.

Public support for the EU is buoyant, and this has both positive and negative aspects. Public support is needed to carry out reforms; but the level of support also shows the strength of public expectations. If Europe disappoints its citizens, the backlash is likely to be swift and severe. We need to understand what Europeans fear most in order to know what they want most. The survey results of a Special Eurobarometer (2018) show that 61% of Europeans are optimistic about the future of the EU but more than a third (34%) remain pessimistic. Seven EU member states show levels of optimism below the EU average. These are Britain (which is leaving), the Czech Republic and Hungary, as well as four southern EU member states namely Italy, Cyprus, France and Greece. Without doubt these states constitute the front-line where the battle for the future of Europe has to be fought and won. However, it is myopic to think that the future of Europe concerns only them. EU reforms need to lead to substantive improvements for all European citizens because that is what Europeans expect. The EU cannot wriggle out of this without risking a lethal backlash. Hence the next five years are critical, during which the EU needs to achieve a fundamental change in the lives of people or risk the return of its opponents with greater vigour and purpose.

The 2018 Special Eurobarometer indicates what kind of changes Europeans want. They are not preoccupied with institutional reform, important as these are, but with the key problems of daily life, the way they live, their existence. The survey asked

respondents to name three preferences from a list of policies that would best describe their ideal future for the EU. Equal wages for the same job across the EU came first cited by 38 percent of respondents, followed by a high level of security and a minimum guaranteed healthcare which came joint second with 32 percent. Next came fair and equal access to education, a guaranteed minimum pension, gender equality, renewable energy and reduction in food waste. "A real government for the whole union" came last with just 16 percent. It appears as if the key areas where Europeans would like Europe to focus its attention on, are domains where the member states still have retained the power to legislate, and where the process of Europeanisation has been slower. Furthermore, these are all issues on which, as experience has more than once shown, a determined political opposition can make noticeable gains in public support. It does not require a lot of effort to convince citizens particularly in hard times, that wage inequality, insecurity, inadequate healthcare systems, low pensions, gender inequality and food wastage are all the fault of the EU. They have been programmed to believe this because "blaming it on the EU" has been a favoured tactic used by many governments to cover up their policy failures. Knowledge of this predisposition lends urgency to reform.

The reform of the EU institutions remains crucial but should not be pursued at the expense of those policies whose improvement will make more Europeans feel comfortable in the EU. The EU faces a future in which demographically it will be among the oldest and the smallest of the world's big players. Its relative importance in the field of technology is declining as new players such as China and India have entered the arena. Notwithstanding, it remains a community of democratic states where innovation and learning still provide it with the factors which it needs most to remain ahead of the game. This is not a time for individual member states to abandon the flock in search of unilateral advantages – which will probably remain as elusive as the search for Nessie. It is a time for European collective action.

This book does not cover all the issues on the future of Europe, but it focuses on some of the more important ones. The Institute for European Studies adopted this theme for this year's annual publication because the subject is topical and relevant both for the EU and Malta. The authors come from different disciplines, and their task was not confined to writing what some would consider to be "dry" academic pieces, but chapters which are accessible to all. Hence, they were asked not to shy away from treading into the domain of normative perspectives that lie at the basis of this discussion or to paint their images of future European scenarios. These chapters can be grouped under four broad headings:

1. Remodelling the European Union
2. Europe in the World
3. Security Challenges
4. Europe and migration.

When the Institute issued the call for expressions of interest for contributions to this volume, the gamble that was being taken – which is normal in such projects – was clear: the call could pass unnoticed or attract proposals which would be difficult to sew together into a coherent piece. In the end not only did the worst-case scenario fail to materialise, but we received various contributions of very good quality from which we selected thirteen.

In the foreword, Giles Merritt makes a strong plea that what Europeans should be worrying about most are the societal shifts that are taking place in our societies: "Observers of the EU scene may highlight the intricacies of its institutional developments, its successive enlargements and its regulatory outreach, but these are of far less consequence than the societal shifts within the member states. The focus of the EU – the 'Eurocrats' of the commission and the MEPs – is correctly on detail, but it is nevertheless time to readjust that focus and bring the big picture into sharper definition".

Remodelling the European Union

Sergio Fabbrini refers to the 'holy' alliance between populism and nationalism which has led to the re-affirmation of the principle of national sovereignty or sovereignism in the EU. National governments have gradually assumed more power in EU policy-making, but this has not led to appreciable improvements. Notwithstanding this, "the opinion persists that the divisions between states can be managed through ordinary negotiation within the intergovernmental governance regime". For Fabbrini, the solution lies in decoupling or carving out the political union from the current institutional framework to create a pluralistic Europe based on a political pact – a federation – between the core countries of the Eurozone, which would become the fulcrum for managing other crucial core state policies, and an economic pact between the latter and the other countries which are part of, or want only to be in, the single market.

The chapter by Dimitris N. Chryssochoou then approaches the argument from a unique angle. His main aim is to find out whether a conceptual image of the whole can be drawn – a portrait of 'European "politeia"', which also sketches out some potential end states. He discusses the notion of the EU as a 'Republic of Europeans' as expressed by Kostas A. Lavdas and Chryssochoou himself in 2011; namely a civic-oriented union of diverse but fellow-Europeans who can be taken as 'symbiotes' in Althusius' sense, meaning: 'participants or partners in a common life'. In sum, can there be a union in and through which established liberal polities transform themselves into an embracing 'politeia'?

Jean Claude Cachia analyses the outgoing President Jean-Claude Juncker's vision of the future of Europe by reference to his state of the union speeches between 2015–18. Juncker's vision of the future of Europe was underscored by the need to secure the European project by bringing it closer to its people, which required the EU to tackle

further reforms including establishing one President for both the Council and the Commission and transforming the EU into a 'quasi' federal state.

Mark Harwood assesses the reaction of the European Parliament (EP) and its political groups to the debate on the Future of Europe. The political groups within the parliament changed as did the political balance between them, impacting the Future of Europe debate in the chamber. Ultimately, the Future of Europe debate was propelled by the distinct impression that the EU citizens had lost faith in the European Union, and no institution was better placed to discuss this than the EP since it is the only directly elected institution and the only EU institution where a wide range of European political beliefs are represented. Harwood's analysis focuses upon the EP groups in the 2014–19 legislature.

Harwood shows that the majority of MEPs favoured the concept of 'more Europe', with greater powers for the European Parliament, a diminished role for the member states via restrictions of their veto and the recognition of the Commission as the Union's government with the Council and the EP as the Union's legislative branches. It was clear, he concluded, that in discussing the Future of the Union, the mainstream groups were largely in favour of 'more Europe' while the peripheral groups were heavily opposed; both those on the left and on the right.

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

The first chapter in this section was written by Richard Pomfret and focuses on the evolution of EU trade policy, especially since the adoption of the 2015 "Trade for All" strategy. This strategy confirmed the abandonment by the EU of using trade policy as foreign policy. It also meant that the main objective was to open the EU to trade in support of participation in global value chains. Pomfret analyses the hierarchy of the EU's trading arrangements, the 'pyramid of preferences' which it gives rise to, as well as the evolving trade policy.

As to the future, given that the USA withdrew from its leadership position in promoting the liberal multilateral trading system, the EU has acknowledged that it has to become more proactive. This may encounter some internal tensions, as several member countries have strong illiberal political parties that are explicitly critical of globalization. However, there are strong countervailing forces, especially in Eastern Europe, in countries such as Poland and Hungary, where concerns over political constraints emanating from Brussels coexist with recognition that a positive economic development since the end of central planning has been due to their ability to participate in global value chains.

Bichara Khader looks at the EU's relations with the Arab world especially after the Arab Spring. His candid assessment is that European policies, towards the Arab and Mediterranean countries, since 1957, pursued the same objectives: energy, market, security. Other objectives such as conflict resolution, human rights, and democracy promotion have often been mentioned in the official EU documents but the

discrepancy between rhetoric and deeds has been marked. The European role in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been marginal, declaratory, often hesitant, and incoherent. Although all agreements between the EU and Mediterranean and Arab countries include a Human Rights clause based on the respect of democratic principles, the EU has always pursued good relations with authoritarian Arab regimes, which often paid lip service to reform and never engaged in real democratisation.

Khader observes that although the Arab Spring prompted the EU to launch new policy initiatives, there is no clear reference in the policy documents to the Arab World, Arab Youth or Arab Identity which is not a trivial omission. Instead, reference is made to "Southern neighbourhood" or "Southern Mediterranean", but Yemen and Bahrain do not form part of these. He describes the 2016 EU Global Strategy's objectives as a "remarkable exercise in fantasy". He welcomes the renewal of the dialogue between the EU and the League of Arab States.

SECURITY CHALLENGES

Four chapters cover some of the security challenges facing the Union: two focus on cyber security and two on defence. The chapter by Valentina Cassar refers to the changes that have taken place in the USA since the start of the Trump Administration, and its insistence that Europe should take its fair share of the defence burden. The recent efforts at strengthening the EU's "security and defence" dimension are by no means new, but Europe has still to define its strategic outlook. She argues that the future of European security and defence remains embedded within the framework of NATO. The EU knows that it will never achieve complete strategic autonomy and so its main objective is to keep the USA committed to the defence of Europe.

The chapter by Roderick Pace looks at the Parliamentary dimension of the EU's evolving defence policy. The writer argues that since the EU is a union of democratic states, parliamentary scrutiny of the EU's Common Foreign and Security and Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP-CSDP) is necessary. The European Parliament cannot achieve scrutiny on its own but needs to cooperate strongly with national parliaments (inter-parliamentary cooperation) who are the only ones capable of scrutinizing what their national governments are doing and agreeing to in Council. Yet not all the national parliaments have shown a similar readiness to do this, and some lack the necessary resources.

Pace argues that military power can strengthen the EU's traditional 'civilian power' characteristics and its ability to promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Union cannot participate in peace-keeping and peace-making missions, conflict prevention and conflict management, without its own military assets and strategic autonomy. Military force can be used for civilian ends. At the same time, the meaning of strategic autonomy and 'principled pragmatism' touted in the EU Global Strategy are scantly defined and it is not clear how they will be interpreted. A lot is happening and is likely to happen in the CFSP-CSDP, and the role of parliaments

becomes crucial not only in exercising oversight but also in developing policy while ensuring that the Union's traditional approaches in foreign policy are adapted to our times and preserved as guiding stars of the EU in world politics.

The other two chapters in this section, written by Agnes Kasper and Vlad Alex Vernygora, focus on cybersecurity; a topic that has reached the top of European security agenda in the last decade. In the first chapter dealing with cybersecurity governance, Agnes Kasper argues that while the 2013 Cybersecurity Strategy focused almost exclusively on the importance of cybersecurity for the proper functioning of the single market, the 2017 version extended its purview to the analysis of malicious cyber activities that threaten the political integrity of member states and the EU as a whole. This shift in coverage of the two strategies bears testimony to the changes that have taken place in recent years following increasing signs of external cyber meddling in the internal affairs of states. Cybersecurity is indicative of the many different threats to which the individual citizen is exposed. The EU's cybersecurity strategy has to protect the same core rights and values as in the physical world.

The last article by Agnes Kasper and Vlad Alex Vernygora calls for the establishment of a 'Cyber Maastricht', a model of which could be constructed on three pillars: Resilience, Deterrence, and Defence and International Relations/IR. The most important thing is the nature of the elements and interrelations between the proposed pillars as foundations for identifying new governance mechanisms and institutions.

Cyber-defence is part of the EU's broader cybersecurity policy, but it is still unclear how it fits into the concept of strategic autonomy and security union, whether strategic autonomy includes EU level operational capabilities, and if in the affirmative, what kind. Currently, there are initiatives to boost operational capabilities of member states and foster cyber-defence innovation in the EU (for example in the framework of PESCO and the European Defence Fund).

EUROPE AND MIGRATION

Amelia Martha Matera traces developments from the Dublin III to the stalled Dublin IV Regulation whose most important provisions stipulate that the country where refugees enter the EU to seek international protection is responsible for their asylum application. This implies that EU member states, which consistently receive large numbers of refugees, are forced to process them and are at a disadvantage compared to those which receive none or few. The solution is to find a burden sharing formula to which some member states are holding up. Hence the passage to the approval of Dublin IV has been blocked. Expert opinion on the effects of Dublin IV is mixed: some doubt whether the proposed changes can fix the problem.

The last chapter written, by Nadia Petroni, assesses EU policy on irregular migration and its incoherence. One of the major obstacles in formulating a coherent policy is the variety of policy preferences across the EU and fragmentation. One of

the reasons for this fragmentation is that at the national-level policy approaches are deeply rooted in historical legacies as well as political, economic and social factors, including issues of religion and cultural identity. Moreover, the asymmetrical impact of irregular migration on the EU member states, mainly due to geographic location, has significantly influenced their approaches. Following the influx of irregular migrants in 2015, the Commission and European Parliament's stance changed from promoting the rights of asylum seekers to satisfying political interest in the Council.

This book represents the second volume in the Institute's annual publication series; a series which began in 2018 with our assessment of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU. As a teaching and research Institute within the University of Malta, these publications are a means of contributing to our research aims and the body of knowledge on Europe, Malta, and the Mediterranean. This volume aims to provide an engaging and informed discussion of a topic which has always and continues to dominate European studies. We would like to express our thanks to all those who contributed to this volume, especially the anonymous reviewers and the type editor.