

>> **European integration: a complex road between supranational and Intergovernmental Institutions**

Madrid >> 06 >> 2014

On 27 May, 48 hours after the European Parliament elections, David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, declared on his arrival at the European Council meeting in Brussels, in reference to the city symbol of EU supranationality, that “Brussels is too big, too bossy, too interfering”.

It is clear that these statements were made in a context in which the three main British political parties had been

severely wounded by electoral results. The current British government, the Conservative party, was among them. On the contrary, the results were extremely positive for UKIP, a party that openly advocates for the UK to leave the EU.

Regarding the other Member States of the EU, the European elections showed, more clearly in certain countries than others, that people were both unsatisfied with the management of the discomfort caused by the global crisis that has hit Europe for the last years and the austerity policies designed and implemented, on behalf of the EU, by national institutions.

Precisely, this is where the cornerstone of a complex reality lies, derived from a no less complicated EU institutional architecture that creates a “mix” of power between supranational and intergovernmental institutions.

It should always be taken into account that the beginning of the European integration process arises from the horrors of an armed conflict: war. Both World Wars took place in Europe.

100 years ago WWI started and it has only been 69 years since WWII ended. Not enough time has passed as to look down on what has been achieved through the European integration process and even less understandable is the position of certain people think that this process has already been amortized.

In the embers of WWII, an idea started to flourish as a collective point of convergence: “never again”. Europe shall never again become a field of hate, of irreconcilable differences that need to be settled through reciprocal destruction between humans. Europe shall remain neither a utopia, nor, as described by Chancellor Bismarck, a mere geographical concept.

On 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister, made a historic declaration, from which the following fragments should be pointed out: “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity. The French Government proposes that Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole be placed under a common High Authority, within the framework or an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe. The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible”.

The European integration process had been launched. This project was based on a key idea: in order to build a lasting peace it was necessary to start forcing European



countries to cooperate on specific and fundamental issues. It is true that, initially, two sectors were essential in this process: the coal and steel sectors, seeking to create common foundations of economic development and forget, as the Schuman Declaration stated, the manufacture of weapons of which France and Germany had been the first victims.

On April 16, Daniel Cohn-Bendit made his last speech as a Member of the European Parliament. Among other things, he stated: *"I was conceived at the end of WWII. Imagine that the same day I was born (04/04/1945) I told my parents that in 50 years there would be no borders between France and Germany and that the Rhine River would be shared. My father would have told my mother that they had two problems: the child had started talking too soon and he was just talking nonsense"*.

Who could imagine that the modest European Coal and Steel Community, ECSC, founded by six countries seeking to moderate German militarism, would lead to the current EU with unimaginable transfers of sovereignty (such as the common European currency) from Member States to supranational Institutions.

Since 1951, when the Treaty of Paris founded the ECSC and EURATOM (European Atomic Energy Community) and 1957, with the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community, there have been 5 major modifications in the Treaties, the last one taking place in 2008: the Treaty of Lisbon. Treaties define EU regulations, together with Community acquis, which currently contains over 95,000 rules.

Throughout this time, Europe has expanded and deepened. This means, it has become both more horizontal and vertical. European integration, which started with 6 countries in 1951, currently accounts for 28 countries, a figure that will probably be expanded in the future with the acceptance of some of the countries that have applied for membership (Turkey, Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro and Serbia).

It is difficult to welcome new members and, at the same time, deepen integration. Likely, it is a complex task satisfying those who ask for more power in Europe and those who seek the opposite. The best example of this dichotomy, this dialectic, is what Brussels symbolizes to capitals of Member States. Anyone who thinks that the EU is merely Brussels ignores the deep interconnection that the European integration process has created among its members.

"Nowadays, there are 28 nations intensely working together and what happens in every single one of these countries matters hugely to the others"

Nowadays, there are 28 nations intensely working together and what happens in every single one of these countries matters hugely to the others. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, already stated this fact on 29 May when he received the Charlemagne Prize: *"these years of hard work together have made it clear: European policy is domestic policy"*.

Undoubtedly, the crisis Europeans have been enduring for the past 6 years has clearly had an influence on its management by Institutions, to the point of even questioning the legitimacy of certain decisions.

Should the Barroso Commission have been more independent of the Council? Should the 28 Member States have pointed out in the Council that European integration affects more than two or three countries? Should the European Parliament have assumed a greater leadership pushing its democratic legitimacy to the limit? Should the European Central Bank have been more pragmatic in its actions?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to face a banking and debt crisis of very significant quantitative and qualitative scope within the limits of the current Treaty and, in particular, within the small size of the EU budget. The only possible solution was to do it through intergovernmentalism.

It is true that, thanks to the crisis, the Commission has increased its monitoring power on budgets and economic policies of the Member States of the EU; Parliament has played an important role in the creation of new surveillance mechanisms and the European Central Bank has become the supervisor of the banks within the Eurozone.

It is also true that these developments have taken place in a context of decision within the sphere of responsibility of the Heads of Government of Member States.

This raises the need to deepen the European integration process. On one hand, around the countries within the Eurozone, its real hard core. On the other, by reforming the Treaty in order to provide more transparency and proximity to some decisions that are taken for and by European citizens but without the citizens themselves who, ultimately, are the main actors of the integration process. Without them, it will be impossible to continue developing a process that has given Europe years of peace, growth and social welfare unprecedented in history.



>> **José Isaías Rodríguez** Vice-President of European Affairs in LLORENTE & CUENCA. He is the Vice-President of the Employers' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and a member of the Advisory Council of the European Training Foundation (ETF). He is an outstanding professional with a profound knowledge of Europe and the relations of Spanish companies with the European administration. He began his career as Deputy Director of the Department of European Communities in the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations (CEOE). For 25 years, since the entry of Spain into the European Union and, he has been the Director of the CEOE's Delegation in Brussels, where he represented the interests of Spanish companies in the European Institutions and in BUSINESSEUROPE (Confederation of European Business formed by 41 organizations from 36 European countries). Later, he was the Deputy Secretary-General of the CEOE for two years. He is a graduate in Economics and Business Studies in the University of Seville, Master's degree in European Studies in the Catholic University of Louvain and graduated in European Studies in the Diplomatic School, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

d+i LLORENTE & CUENCA

d+i is the LLORENTE & CUENCA Ideas, Analysis and Trends Centre.

Because we have a new macroeconomic and social script. And communication is not lagging behind. It is progressing.

d+i is a global combination of relations and exchange of knowledge that identifies, focuses and transmits new communication patterns from an independent position.

d+i is a constant flow of ideas moving ahead of new trends in information and business management.

d+i LLORENTE & CUENCA exists because reality is not black or white

www.dmasillorenteycuenca.com

