



Sylvie Goulard – *A European response to David Cameron: Look to the Future*

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Introduction

David Cameron's speech on the future of Europe, made on 23 January 2013, raises questions which many Europeans are asking themselves: what purpose does the European Union serve in 2013? Should sovereignty be shared or would the Member States be better off working individually? Is the EU more than a market? Does democracy exist outside of national frameworks?

This debate is therefore a welcome one, provided that one truly wishes to enlighten public opinion about the complexity of Europe rather than hoping to pander to national instincts. In the book which Mario Monti and myself published at the end of 2012, *'Democracy in Europe. Look to the Future'*¹, we make an assessment which is quite similar to that of the British Prime Minister: **relations between the European Union and Member States must be reviewed in order for Europeans to revive prosperity and growth within a modernised democratic framework**². However, our responses are profoundly different to David Cameron's, who omits several points which are very important from a European point of view.

The present note takes up the six key elements in this debate, referring to the relevant different chapters in the book for those readers wishing to learn more.

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¹ French version published by Flammarion (*De la démocratie en Europe - Voir plus loin*), Italian version by RCS (*La democrazia in Europa, Guardare lontano*). This book presents the authors' personal views.

² See, in particular, the introduction of *Democracy in Europe*, page 13 and following pages

1. Is Europe just a market?

By asking ‘why can’t we [the British] just have what we voted to join – a common market?’ **the British Prime Minister is playing with history**: neither the pooling of coal and steel in 1950, nor the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, in an attempt to make up for the failure of the European Defence Community, were concerned only with the creation of a common market. The project was political in nature and even, according to Chancellor Adenauer, ‘moral’.³ (Please see the Conclusion for other extracts of declarations from the period).

At the start of the 70’s, when Great Britain joined the EEC and made a first attempt (so early on...) to renegotiate the terms of their membership, **the nature of the European project was not clearly explained to the British people**; yet who bears the responsibility for this misunderstanding if not, at least in part, the British leaders themselves, including the Conservatives who were in favour of the United Kingdom being part of the European Community at the time (e.g. Mrs Thatcher)?

Far from trying to clear up the misunderstanding which has endured for 40 years, David Cameron perpetuates this ‘sin of omission’, by forgetting to mention that:

- **All successive European treaties have been negotiated and signed by British governments and have been regularly ratified by the Parliament at Westminster.** The European Social Charter was accepted by the Prime Minister Tony Blair. No one has forced anything on the United Kingdom on the sly; they have made commitments to their partners and cannot now decide on a unilateral retraction.
- The United Kingdom has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of EU enlargement to include countries in central and eastern Europe; yet one of the conditions of their adhesion was the obligation to swiftly accept all rules within EU law (**‘the *acquis communautaire*’**) and a commitment to join the economic and monetary union.⁴

2. Should we strengthen the single market?

As for David Cameron, the strengthening of the single market is, for Mario Monti and myself, absolutely crucial, particularly the service sector and digital economy.⁵ This is a way of reviving growth and creating jobs.

Yet David Cameron does not say that, although greatly needed, the market is ‘more unpopular than ever’, to quote Mario Monti.⁶ In order to ensure that increased easing of trade restrictions and wider opening of borders are accepted, we must be able to predict where populations will be reticent: a

³ In his memoirs Jean Monnet recounts the words of the chancellor “the French proposition (Schuman) is essentially political in its inspiration. It even has what can be called a moral aspect.” (Fayard, page 365)

⁴ Amongst the Copenhagen criteria, dating from 1993, there is notably “the ability of a candidate country take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.”

⁵ See Chapter 3, Democracy for the people, particularly page 125 and following, A new strategy for the single market

⁶ Report to President Barroso, 9 May 2010, “A new strategy for the single market At the service of Europe's economy and society” whose central theory is expounded in the book

limited dose of fiscal harmonisation, as well as the implementation of certain safeguards, would help to make strengthening efforts more likely to succeed.

On a more general note, the Treaty of Rome had the essential objective of ‘constant improvements of the living and working conditions of [European] peoples.’

It is for this reason, in *Democracy in Europe*, that we call both for competitiveness to be reinforced and for the continued fight against rising inequality in European countries, which is so roundly criticised by the OECD.⁷ Article 3.3 of the Treaty of the EU⁸ states that Europeans have already jointly selected a model for society: the ‘social market economy’. This is a concept originating in post-war Germany which aims to combine entrepreneurial freedom, a market-based system and a framework within which public authorities guarantee regulation of economic activity (especially controlling competition) and ensure that social requirements are met (education, training, social protection, role of trade unions). Although the general public (and clearly, some leaders), may not be very aware of this, it is a concept which is an integral part of positive European law, which is also applicable in the United Kingdom.

3. You spoke about ‘fairness’?

The British Prime Minister is asking for fair treatment by European partners. Point taken. We are wholly in favour of the United Kingdom remaining in the EU, which assumes that she feels comfortable there. Yet the partners also **have the right to ask London to show less indulgence in anti-European excesses which border on what we could call, with Goethe, the 'spirit of negation'.**

David Cameron has not said a word about the extent of misinformation spread by the English tabloid press, nor about the impact which certain British decisions have had on mentalities. Can we really be surprised at this withdrawal when foreign language teaching is so marginalised in the curriculum? Or when the resources used by students in some cases present a far from balanced point of view⁹?

In *Democracy in Europe*, we dedicate a whole chapter to the **importance of public spirit**: in order to make progress together in Europe, we have to give our children a culture free from national prejudices, more open, with a greater emphasis on foreign language learning. The EU is lacking well-reasoned education about Europe, illustrating to what extent artificial barriers were erected in the 19th Century during eras of nationalist propaganda.¹⁰

Mr Cameron gains credit for himself when he clarifies for example the confusion present in his country, and in others, between the European Union's decisions and those of the European Court of Human Rights (independent of the EU). However, by forcing Conservative MEPs to leave the EPP

⁷ See Chapter 3, Democracy for the people, constant improvement of living and working, page 100 and following

⁸ See Chapter 3, Democracy for the people, Equality of economic and social conditions page 111 and following.

⁹ As an example, please see the fears concerning an A-level history textbook:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2013/feb/12/alevel-history-britain-euro-sceptic-textbooks?INTCMP=SRCH>

¹⁰ See particularly Chapter 4, Public spirit, page 139 and following

group, he has cut them off from moderate European circles. Part of the most resolute back benchers' convictions doubtlessly come from their lack of European 'socialisation'.

4. Can the balance of competences between Member States and the EU be revised?

This request has already been put forward many times, in many different countries. It is not by phrasing the question unilaterally that it will be granted.

First of all, it is all too easy to sit in your corner and make a list of all the competences to be repatriated in order to satisfy the national public opinion. However, with almost 30 partners, this exercise is destined to come to a sudden halt since what one partner wants rarely coincides with the others. As we have already mentioned, the EU was built on the notion of an 'acquis communautaire', strictly maintained throughout the process of enlargement, which David Cameron failed to mention even once.

Next, a selective approach ('I will take back whatever suits me') is a far cry from making a comprehensive attempt to serve the greater good ('At which level should we exercise competences in order to work together more efficiently?'). If we continue down this second path, the results would no doubt be very different from those which Mr Cameron hopes to see.

The aforementioned claimed that 'Britain could make her own way in the world, outside the EU.' In reality, irrespective of his claims, cooperation between fiercely sovereign states is no longer enough to counter ongoing issues: as illustrated by the powerlessness of the G20 and most of the UN bodies. This gives rise to a strange paradox: instead of strengthening national sovereignty, British Conservatives' defence of sovereignty is very likely to result in them playing a more minor role on the global stage. It is almost certainly no coincidence that certain eurosceptics in Great Britain see potential models in countries like Norway or Switzerland. These countries are highly respectable but they have chosen to have a limited influence. The fact that the Prime Minister of Great Britain, formerly the world's greatest power, felt that he had to give a special response to the supporters of this view as part of his speech, speaks volumes about the current mindset on the other side of the Channel.

Incidentally, it seems the American authorities have made the British think twice about leaving the EU, which will be the inevitable outcome if they get tangled up in the idea of a (highly unlikely) unilateral renegotiation.

Furthermore, it is probably possible to stay wealthy by remaining indifferent to the world's problems, for a certain period of time. Yet will the EU be able to reign in its ambitions in this way? In our opinion, this approach is neither moral nor wise: tolerating climate change, human rights' violations or terrorist plots on our very doorstep would jeopardise our future.

In *Democracy in Europe* on the other hand, we approach the issue from the assumption that in a globalised world, this union of Europeans is indispensable in order to defend their values and interests.¹¹ The main *raison d'être* of the EU, in the future, is to contribute to building a new form of supranational democracy. It is a prerequisite in order to be able to continue playing an active role in the fight against poverty and extremism, for the conservation of our planet and maintaining peace. The EU winning the Nobel Peace Prize vouches for the fact that there are 'expectations of Europe' (including in Oslo...).

¹¹ See chapter 5, The political regime, building a better world, page 167 and following

5. Can the European Union be organised in a flexible way, to accommodate the diversity of its 27 members?

It cannot be denied that the EU needs to be organised in a more flexible way which can accommodate the diversity of its members. However, when the British Prime Minister claims in 2013 that 'we are a family of democratic nations, all members of one European Union, whose essential foundation is the single market rather than the single currency,' he sidesteps not only the treaties but also reality. Is pragmatism changing sides?

In fact, the EU Treaty - signed and ratified by Great Britain - states, without any ambiguity, in Article 3.4, that 'The Union shall establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro'. Protocol n°14 on the Euro Group also states that this informal forum is organised 'pending the euro becoming the currency of all Member States of the Union'. **There should be no confusion between the rule (the Euro) and the exception (an exemption which applies to only two countries, the United Kingdom and Denmark).**

The dividing line does not fall between '17 members which are part of the Eurozone and 10 which are not', as David Cameron claims, but rather between 25 out of 27 states (soon 26 out of 28) who have all, including the central European countries and Sweden, committed to joining the single currency. Doubtless, the crisis has tainted the Euro's image. Nonetheless, Slovenia, Slovakia and Estonia are already members. Latvia is starting its accession procedure and no less a country than Poland is determined to join.

The EU's centre of gravity is and shall increasingly be the Eurozone. Soon, almost all European citizens will share the same currency and will have to create the necessary policies together to ensure their prosperity. It is difficult to understand why, in a democracy, the vast majority should have to make concessions to a tiny stubborn minority. **There is nothing to be renegotiated 'in exchange' for strengthening the Eurozone, whose successes include the aims outlined in their treaties, agreed on by all 27.** The British Prime Minister confirms himself that it is in everybody's best interests for the Euro to have good governance in order to be truly successful.

For all those countries linked by their shared currency, the idea of 'ever closer union', as rejected by the British Prime Minister, not only makes sense but seems an urgent necessity.

Furthermore, the fact that belonging to the Euro or to Schengen has been able to be subjected to derogations should not conceal the fact that, at some point, one must ask what place is deserved, in the collegiate institutions (EP, Commission, Court), by a country which collects derogations. Flexibility or 'differentiation' have their limits

6. How can democracy be improved?

For the British Prime Minister, as for many politicians of our time, there is only one 'true' source of democratic legitimacy/'accountability': national parliaments. This approach, well-suited for appealing to national ministers and public opinions which make up their clientele, in reality ignores several important points from a European point of view.

In order to be effective, the control of European institutions can not be guaranteed through the juxtaposition of each National Parliament surveilling their member of the European Council¹²; there

¹² See Chapter 5, The Political Regime, the Respective Role of the European Parliament and National Parliaments, page 184 and following

is the risk that each individual parliament only considers its own viewpoint and allows national interests to prevail over the common interest.

Mr Cameron's complete silence concerning the European Parliament, elected through universal suffrage since 1979, is very telling. For all that the Prime Minister makes the internal market out to be the cornerstone of the EU; he completely fails to mention the body instrumental in shaping regulation and controlling the European Commission's application of it (Commissioners' hearings, monitoring policies, option to censure). It is hard to see in what way a return to the pre-1979 situation could be deemed progress.¹³

Thus David Cameron fails to touch on one of the most sensitive current issues: democratic control of the European Council. This is now the main EU executive. We have seen the role which it can play, in the light of the economic crisis, impacting on the fate of Greece for example, and we have been witness to the ensuing mounting tensions between European peoples which opaque decision making procedures, and the role of the 'creditor' Member States, with Germany in first place, generate. And yet, if each of its members is individually (more or less well) monitored, as a Head of Government or Head of National State, sometimes to the point of dangerously restricting the negotiating mandate, at the national level, then no-one controls, at the appropriate level, its collective action. This is the black hole of European democracy.

In *Democracy in Europe* we have endeavoured to tackle this thorny issue. Our analysis of the dangers linked to the current functioning of the European Council is similar to that of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas when he denounces the federalism based only on executive powers - Exekutivföderalismus.¹⁴ The current paradox lies in the fact that most critics of the EU claim on the one hand that it is not in line with the canons of parliamentary democracy, whilst still rejecting changing the EU into the federal entity which is the only hope of saving it from makeshift intergovernmental activity.

On the contrary, in *Democracy in Europe* we wanted to include all the different democratic levels within one reflexion, without following the current trend which consists of denouncing the European 'democratic deficit' (the speck?) without seeing the problems (the plank?) evident on a national level¹⁵. For example, the fact that the House of Lords is not democratically elected makes some of the English criticisms levelled at the democratic deficit of 'Brussels' rather less valid...

An objective evaluation of the performances of governments and national parliaments, taking stock of their short-comings as well as their merits, would not be superfluous. It is the continued passing of unbalanced national budget votes (by both the French and British Parliaments for example) which has fuelled the crisis. Not to mention the short-comings of actions in Member States in the area of 'structural reforms' or financial supervision, which have rarely upset national MPs.

¹³ See Chapter 1, False ideas, the little-known virtues of the European Community approach, page 34 and following.

¹⁴ See Chapter 2, Democracy by the page 72 and following, in particular "monitoring leaders"

¹⁵ Chapter 1, False ideas, the little-known virtues of the European Community approach, page 28 and following, The hidden vices of national democracy, page 37 and following

Furthermore, when the British Prime Minister claims that 'there is not a single European demos', he is once again distorting the facts of history. He is forgetting that in Athens, in the 6th Century BC, it was by exercising their democratic rights that 'the demos' was gradually formed, unfettered by family or tribal ties, under Clisthenes. There was no pre-existing demos, which allowed for the creation of democracy.¹⁶

It is without a doubt here that we can see the extent to which David Cameron's speech shows his vision to be quite literally *conservative*: he is rejecting the idea that democracy can thrive on a different level to the one with which he is familiar and, by the by, draws his own legitimacy from. This speech demonstrates that national leaders, when trapped in a conflict of interest, generally tend to put their own interests above all others.

Crying crocodile tears all the while over populations' lack of European 'demos' or spirit, they pander to national instincts at every turn, which prevents it from developing. Hence the need to create a new European democracy. And to 'look to the future'.

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In conclusion. Leave the talking to those who constructed Europe in the 1950s, whose echo has died away. It is the best possible response to those who perpetuate false ideas.

Multiple declarations, speeches, documents bear witness to **the moral order of the project's ambitions**. The market is the means to achieving a higher vision.

Robert Schuman spoke, in the declaration of 9th May 1950, of '*the contribution which an organised and living Europe could bring to civilisation*'. Jean Monnet recalls in his memoirs, how he presented the pooling of coal and steel to Chancellor Adenauer: 'the French proposal is essentially political in its inspiration. It even includes a moral element.¹⁷'. Alcide de Gasperi intended to fight with all his strength against 'these factors of potential disintegration and decline, of mutual suspicion and moral decay¹⁸'. Paul-Henri Spaak made multiple declarations along the vein of 'constructing Europe, is first of all to sign up to a concept, to try to save a continent and a civilisation¹⁹'; or 'economic problems are important but constructing Europe requires more than fixing the price of wheat or regulating the fruit and vegetable market. In order to succeed it is essential to be enthusiastic, have faith and also the certainty that without this solution, Western Europe will not stop its already too visible decline.'²⁰

¹⁶ Chapter 2 Democracy by the people, bringing people together, page 85 and following.

¹⁷ Monnet's Memoires, Fayard 1975, page 365

¹⁸ Address made to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 10 December 1951

¹⁹ La pensée européenne et atlantique de Paul-Henri Spaak, Goemaere

²⁰ Great Britain and Europe, Le Soir, 17 January 1967

Invited to participate in negotiations which gave rise to the ECSC, Great Britain rejected any commitment to accept a supranational authority and asked - already, and already in vain - that the discussion was conducted 'on a different basis'.²¹

A few years later, during a discussion in the chamber in Brussels, on 14 June 1961, once again Spaak expressly declared²²: 'it is absolutely essential to remind Great Britain that her ultimate accession to the common market also entails accession to a political concept. It is important that our English friends clearly understand that alongside the economic effort, they will also be asked to contribute to a political effort.' (...)

It is essential that adhesion to the common market is a conscious choice. **Great Britain must realise - and I will say it straight away - that the situation could be serious if two, three or four countries enter into the common market with the notion that it is exclusively an economic organisation, with no political consequences. If not, far from being a step forward towards an organised and united Europe, it would be a potentially definitive brake on our efforts.' No comment.**

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Summary

Under the guise of clarification, David Cameron's speech prolongs the ambiguity which, since the 1970s, has distanced the British from Europe: the European Union is not simply a market and never has been, as seen in the works of the founding fathers.

Thus these words require a European response, which Sylvie Goulard and Mario Monti's book *Democracy in Europe: Look to the Future* could provide a framework for. The Single Market, a source of growth and employment, is essential but its current shortcomings require further efforts (in the field of taxation), and its abuses require safe-guards (in the social field). A redistribution of competencies between the Member States and the EU can not ignore the 'acquis communautaire' which is the sum of earlier mutual covenants. Nor must it be used to satisfy excessively force-fed anti-European opinions. The gravitational centre of the EU already is, and will increasingly be, the Euro zone. 25 of the 27 Member States have committed to adopt the single currency. The minority countries which have a derogation cannot impose their views on the great majority. The essence of the Euro zone is 'auto-determination'. At yet European democracy is as incomplete as national democracies are ill. *European* democracy needs to be recast.

²¹ Monnet's Memoires, page 368

²² Ibid, page 802