

SUPRANATIONAL FEDERALISM

The World Citizens' Journal

For a dialogue between peoples, nations and civilizations



**THE ALTIERO SPINELLI INSTITUTE
FOR FEDERALIST STUDIES**

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"It's good to live where humanity reigns. Those who choose to reside in a place devoid of humanity lack wisdom. ... Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you." (Confucius, *The Analects*, 4.1; 15.24).

Nowadays young people wonder if they will have a future. A nuclear war between great powers can annihilate the population of entire continents. Moreover, all living organisms, including humanity, are threatened by an irreversible ecological crisis of the biosphere. The international political system created at the end of the Second World War is paralyzed by hostilities between large and small powers pursuing conflicting goals and interests. No world player proposes to stop the mad race towards a fatal international anarchy.

However, the federalists can act. About half of the world's population lives in federal states, but in these countries, federalism is conceived as a technique of administrative decentralization. On the contrary, in Europe, since the Schuman Declaration of 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) has been conceived as "the first step towards the European Federation." European and world federalists can act together for a just and peaceful international order, founded on democratically legitimized supranational institutions.

International pacification is necessary to stop the environmental crisis, the arms race and war. The first step is to start a dialogue between all national peoples and civilizations on the future of the international order. The European Union, "by creating an area of freedom, security and justice," has established the European citizenship. Why not establish the same form of peaceful coexistence for the citizens of the world?

Submissions – The "Supranational Federalism" Journal is open to all citizens of the world who wish to develop arguments and observations on the international political process in the spirit indicated in the mission statement above. The contribution must be written in English. The Journal will be published every three months. Each contribution must not exceed the limit of 1,500 words and must be sent to the following address: supranational.federalism@gmail.com. We encourage young people to submit articles. Submission must include a short biography and a photo of the author. Please do not include footnotes, endnotes, or references; instead provide hyperlinks for any references you think would be helpful. We reserve the right to make editorial changes before publication.

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The figure on the front page - with twelve portraits that have been chosen as personalities who have indicated to future generations the founding values of a cosmopolitan civilization - is the work of the graphic designer Alice Lazzaro: alicelazzaroart@gmail.com

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Ideas for the World’s Citizens Corner

Published at the Request of the Editor

In memory of Jürgen Habermas

Imperial Technocracy and Democracy

Policy initiatives inspired by the MAGA program, adopted by President Trump, seem more geared toward dismantling existing multilateral institutions and traditional U.S. alliances, rather than creating a new post-Cold War international order. The Trump administration has introduced protectionist tariffs, weakened the UN, questioned NATO, drastically reduced U.S. aid to Ukraine, kidnapped the president of Venezuela, bombed Iran, rebuked the Pope for recalling that the Gospel preaches peace, not war. He is only cautious in his dealings with China, the emerging global power that he respects, because he fears it. These imperialist behaviors have an explanation. The MAGA movement was formed on the basis of an ideological core that is still poorly understood, which could compromise the future of democracy not only in the United States, but in the whole world.

The cultural leader of the ideology of imperial technocracy is Peter Thiel. Its influence is not only cultural. His support seems to have been decisive for the nomination of J. D. Vance as vice-president of the Trump administration. Thiel was born in 1967 in Germany, but later emigrated to South Africa and the United States. He graduated in philosophy and law. He founded *PayPal* in 1998, with Elon Musk, with the aim of creating an alternative currency to the dollar, to allow secure payments. The goal of replacing the dollar failed, but *PayPal* was remarkably successful as a secure online payment system. In 2003, Thiel, now very wealthy, founded *Palantir*, a leading company in data analysis and digital security. This platform allowed him to obtain important orders from the CIA and the Pentagon. After the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001, Thiel offered the U.S. government a system for collecting personal data that exploited information obtained from a vast base of data. Thanks to this platform, the Obama administration was able to locate Osama bin Laden's hideout in Pakistan. The same technology was offered by *Palantir* to the Israeli government, which could thus identify its adversaries individually, in Palestine and in enemy countries, such as Iran. On this basis, Israel carried out deadly personal attacks.

In 2014, Thiel published "From Zero to One", a summary of some academic lectures in which he denounced the inconsistency of the traditional economic doctrine based on the concept of competition, to defend a new doctrine of monopoly. It is a set of principles on which the fortunes of US start-ups have been created. The new entrepreneur-monopolist must be able to identify an activity in which he can obtain an absolute competitive advantage, thus conquering the global market, as PayPal has done. Thiel later offered a \$100,000 scholarship to many young people to create new start-ups. It is a recruitment policy that he calls "desertion": an invitation to abandon traditional universities where "woke" thinking dominates and adopt the new perspective of revolutionary thinking, based on new information technologies, now at the stage of artificial intelligence.

Once his fame and political influence had been consolidated, also thanks to huge earnings, Thiel developed a second chapter of technocratic and imperialist ideology. According to Thiel, the historical process, from the origins of humanity to the present day, is based on lines of development described by historians Dale Davidson and Rees-Mogg in a 1997 study. In this work, the development and decline of Western civilization are analyzed. Civilization is the control and suppression of violence between individuals and states, but in contemporary politics there are clear signs that violence is resurfacing. This is a revealing index of the crisis of politics. "There is much evidence that adherence to the civic myths of the twentieth-century nation-state is rapidly eroding. The death of Communism is merely the most striking example. As we explore in detail, the collapse of morality and growing corruption among leaders of Western governments are not random developments. They are evidence that the potential of the nation-state is exhausted. Even many of

its leaders no longer believe the platitude they mouth. Nor are they believed by others" (Dale Davidson, Rees-Mogg, p. 15). The nation state will be replaced by a global network of individual relationships thanks to new information technologies, created by global centers. National sovereignty will be privatized, and corporations will provide their services, including security, directly to sovereign individuals (p. 259).

In his political writings, Thiel refers to Carl Schmitt's doctrine on the friend-enemy distinction and René Girard's doctrine on the role of the "scapegoat" as a mechanism that appeases violence in a community through the sacrifice of a victim. On the basis of these theoretical assumptions, Thiel, in his geopolitical analyses, often relates the optimistic character of American citizens against the pessimistic attitude of European ones. Europe is a decadent cultural space of Western civilization. From an economic point of view, the US-Europe confrontation is inevitable because American IT companies cannot develop in Europe due to European competition regulation based on respect for human rights. Overall, it seems clear that only the USA, where the unqualified use of modern technologies such as AI is possible, can represent the political-economic model for the future of humanity.

The third chapter of Thiel's technocratic-imperial ideology is dedicated to the relationship between politics, science and religion. The contemporary world is threatened by serious existential crises, which lead to the rejection of scientific progress and fuel violent reactions against institutions. There are dangers denounced by environmentalists, who call for interventions to defend nature. There are risks caused by the danger of a nuclear war between great powers. Artificial intelligence, according to some conservative and reactionary forces, the "Luddites", will not be the adequate answer to address these risks, indeed it could be used to promote a global catastrophe. These senseless fears will provoke the call for a world government. A world government would be necessary for the protection of life but would lead to an authoritarian world power. This is why "the antichrist like Elizer Yudkowsky, Nick Bostrom and Greta Thunberg argue for world government to stop science, the antichrist has somehow become anti-science" (*The Guardian*, 10 October 2025). Ultimately, the antichrist, according to Thiel, is the world government.

These statements about the antichrist can raise an infinite number of criticisms and counter-criticisms. Theology offers numerous footholds for learned disputes. It is not necessary to go into this quagmire. It is necessary, however, to denounce some errors that lurk in Thiel's economic-political theses. It is not true that competition leads to a zero rate of profit. In an economy that produces a surplus, over and above wages, there will be a general positive rate of profit, although lower than a monopoly rate of profit. The European Union's economic policy is correct: competition must be regulated by a public authority. The federalists - who share Thiel's criticism of the nation state, but for reasons opposite to his own - denounce the thesis concerning the arrival of an antichrist, a fanciful suggestion, perhaps exploited by Trump to criticize the Christianity of Pope Leo XIV. Trump's government would be made up of apostles. U.S. Christianity could replace Vatican Christianity.

This theological-political interpretation of international relations has no foundation. It is suggested that those who criticize war and ask for peace favor the apocalypse, a world catastrophe. On the contrary, it must be admitted, as the federalists maintain, that the nation state, now in crisis, was a crucial stage in the history of human emancipation and civilization. After the French Revolution and the overcoming of the monarchical principle, it was acknowledged that the various declarations of citizens' rights and the creation of democratic constitutions allowed for the full pacification of national peoples. Citizens of a nation-state enjoy the right to life and other fundamental rights that are violated only when the nefarious principle of national sovereignty allows governments to go to war against other states. In these situations, the right to life and

personal security is forgotten. The nation state asks its citizens to kill the enemy by risking their lives for the defense of the homeland.

Today it is necessary to overcome the division of humanity into sovereign nation states, but not through the creation of an imperial technocracy, at the top of which there will obviously be the US government. Thiel deliberately ignores the fact that the United States of America is a federation, that is, a state of states, therefore a constitutional union of democratic states (today 50) peacefully united by a democratic government: It is a democratic government responsible to the House of Representatives and the House of States. The European Union is not yet a federal government of states, but after the direct election of the European Parliament and the creation of the monetary union it has become an imperfect federation. If it is completed with the establishment of a European defence, it could actively contribute to the creation of a democratic and peaceful world order. The creation of an imperial technocracy, as Thiel would like, can be opposed as long as all democratic parties and forces, in Europe, the USA, India, Brazil, etc., unite in a supranational movement to initiate a democratic reform of the United Nations. The United Nations is now in crisis and rendered powerless by the anti-democratic and imperialist forces that use modern information technologies to dominate the citizens of the world. Democracy in the world can be saved by a well-organized movement of public opinion for a democratic world federation. Democrats from all over the world unite!

The Sunrise Scenario

How a Climate Community Can Create a World Federation of Nations

by Titus Alexander

History shows that states pool sovereignty in the face of a common adversary or shared interests such as greater security, increased trade or better government. The unification of Britain, American states, Germany and many other countries followed this pattern. Nations have also strengthened global governance following a major crisis. Two World Wars were catalysts for states to pool some national sovereignty through international institutions. Since 1945 governments created thousands of international organisations to manage almost every policy area. This system of world government is fragmented, unequal, often ineffective, and lacking democratic accountability. A few countries have much more power than others. But as the global balance of power shifts the system is becoming more unstable, as before the first two world wars.

Today, humanity faces an even greater existential threat: *the climate crisis*. Despite over thirty years of international negotiations, global temperatures and greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at a dangerous rate. While domestic actions are vital, they cannot address a challenge that respects no frontiers. A more robust mechanism for global cooperation is urgently needed.

If history is a precedent, this will not happen until climate change devastates powerful states. But far-sighted leaders can take bold steps to create better systems of inter-state governance, as in the creation of the USA and European Union. This is not easy, as America's brutal civil war showed. But the painstaking evolution of the EU shows how a small group of countries can create a form of federal government to unite widely unequal countries, starting by managing critical resources such as coal and steel.

The Limits of Consensus

Our current institution for preventing a climate crisis, the UNFCCC, is too slow and unwieldy. Because it relies on consensus among nearly 200 countries, the process is easily blocked or undermined by a few nations and fossil fuel interests. Some argue we could overcome these obstacles by creating an authority with power to impose binding decisions on obstructive countries. But the American civil war and failures of many other international agreements shows that this is wishful thinking.

To escape this deadlock, we must look to a proven model of *leadership by the like-minded*: the creation of the European Union.

In 1951, just six countries—France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux nations—pioneered the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). They did not wait for the whole of Europe to agree. Instead, they formed a *legally binding community of equals* that successfully bound former enemies together within a shared political framework and pooled elements of sovereignty in the common interest. This small "Coalition of the Willing" laid the foundation for a deeper union that grew to include twenty-seven nations. A global "Climate Community" can follow this path by starting small and building momentum that eventually brings the rest of the world into a global federation of states.

Architecture of the Climate Community

A successful Climate Community must be founded on *equity, solidarity, and shared responsibility*. It requires at least one major emitter (such as the UK, Canada, China or the EU) to partner with several low-emitting nations (such as Brazil, India, Nigeria, or small island states) to form a North-South alliance. This coalition would be governed by a high-level executive and a binding disputes mechanism to ensure all members fulfill their commitments, with a parliamentary assembly to ensure accountability to citizens.

The Engine of Change: The Global Carbon Incentive Fund

To drive this transition, the community needs a powerful funding mechanism. The *Global Carbon Incentive Fund (GCIF)*, proposed by Professor Raghuram Rajan, offers a self-financing and economically powerful solution. Under this system, any country emitting more than the global per capita average carbon emissions would pay a levy into the fund, while those emitting below the average would receive a payout.

This levy is calculated by multiplying a country's excess per capita emissions—those above the global average—by its total population and an agreed carbon tariff based on a scientifically grounded price per ton of CO₂. This would be set at a level required to stabilize the climate and designed to increase in predictable stages to provide industry and governments with a clear investment horizon

Significantly, Rajan's framework preserves national sovereignty: participating nations retain the freedom to determine how to raise the funds for their levy—through domestic carbon taxes, cap-and-trade systems, or individual carbon accounts—while recipient nations have full discretion over how to invest these predictable revenues for their own green transitions. This system automatically eliminates any incentive for countries to subsidise fossil fuels, driving decarbonisation. The benefits of the GCIF are manifold:

- *Powerful Incentives:* High emitters are motivated to cut carbon to reduce their levy payments, while low emitters gain income to invest in sustainable development.
- *Predictability:* Unlike many aid-based schemes, the GCIF provides a reliable source of funds for climate adaptation and green technology.
- *Political Feasibility:* While a global levy is currently difficult to implement, a small coalition can pioneer it immediately, creating a "sunrise scenario" where the economic benefits of participation become obvious to outsiders.

Illustration of carbon levy or gain under different tariffs

The following table illustrates tariffs of \$10, \$30, and \$60 per tonne of carbon dioxide ([source: Global Carbon Atlas](#) 2018 consumption-based figures),

Country & Population	Consumption-based annual CO ₂ emissions	Annual tariff per tonne CO ₂ : \$10	Annual tariff per tonne CO ₂ : \$30	Annual tariff per tonne CO ₂ : \$60
World average	4.8 t CO ₂ /person			
Canada 38m	15.4 tonnes pa	\$5.6 LEVY a year	\$17 LEVY	\$33 LEVY
China 1.43 bn	6.3 tones pa	\$21 bn LEVY	\$64 bn LEVY	\$128 bn LEVY

India 1.35 bn	1.7 tonnes pa	\$42 bn GAIN pa	\$126 bn GAIN	\$251 bn GAIN
Nigeria 196m	0.7 tonnes pa	\$8 bn GAIN	\$24 bn GAIN	\$48bn GAIN
African Union 1.4bn	1 tonne pa	\$10 bn pa GAIN pa	\$29 bn GAIN per year	\$58 bn GAIN per year
Egypt 105m	2.26 tonnes/year	\$3.1bn pa GAIN	\$13bn GAIN	\$25bn GAIN pa
EU 448m	6.7 tonnes	\$8.5 bn LEVY	\$26 bn LEVY	\$51 bn LEVY
USA 327m	18 tonnes pa	\$43 bn LEVY	\$129 bn LEVY pa	\$258bn LEVY
UK 67m	8 tonnes pa	\$2 bn LEVY	\$6 bn LEVY	\$13 bn LEVY

These figures are purely indicative, based on 2018 data, but they show roughly how resources could flow. Tariffs could be phased in or raised more rapidly if CO2 emissions do not fall fast enough.

Response to objections: the ‘free-rider problem’

One objection is that countries outside the climate community would free-ride on CO2 reductions by the pioneers and continue to benefit from using fossil fuels, giving them competitive advantages in world markets. This is a seductive but flawed argument for inaction. Similar arguments were used against the abolition of slavery, legislation to improve working conditions and the establishment of a welfare state.

There are several responses to this objection:

1. Accelerated transition to a low-carbon economy has many benefits, as China is discovering, including reduced vulnerability to oil price rises, rising exports of low-carbon technologies, and lower energy costs.
2. Fossil-fuel producers are likely to be subject to litigation for damages, as producers of tobacco, asbestos and other toxic products have been.
3. Countries outside the climate-community can be charged a carbon-import tax equivalent to the levy.

As climate damages accelerate, fossil fuels will be increasingly seen as liabilities and stranded assets. Countries that are slow to act may suddenly be forced to drastically cut the use of fossil fuels as extreme weather events hammer them.

Roadmap to A World Federation

Three things make a climate community a powerful strategy towards world federation:

1. It addresses an existential crisis most countries want to solve.
2. It has economic incentives that drive change.
3. It has the potential to grow until most countries of the world are members.

At its core is a North-South alliance with a legally binding framework, a joint executive, and democratic oversight with a disputes mechanism. Like the EU, it starts small with a big goal. As a microcosm of the world, a small group of countries can solve problems quickly and demonstrate its benefits. As well as rapidly cutting greenhouse gas emissions, it can increase economic equality, prosperity and sustainable development among rich and poor member countries, so that other countries will want to join.

The most important step is for a civic organisation, politician or civil servant to persuade one government to devote diplomatic effort and resources to persuading at least five other countries to establish a 'Global Climate Federation'. Founder members will have first mover advantages in creating the ground rules.

The next step would be:

1. *Outreach*: Engaging leaders of potential member nations.
2. *Strategic Planning*: Agreeing on terms of reference and a timetable.
3. *Treaty Negotiation*: Formulating a legally binding agreement that includes a carbon levy or emissions market and judicial oversight.
4. *Launch*: Aiming for a formal ratification and launch at COP32 in Addis Ababa.

As more nations join to reap the first-mover advantages of the zero-carbon economy, this Climate Community would naturally evolve from a coalition of the willing into a global federal structure capable of governing the commons for the benefit of all humanity. By starting with a small group of committed nations, we can finally transition to a **World Federation of Nations**.

Further information

[Climate Community revised 2\(e\).pdf](#) - by Chris Layton

[A Global Incentive Scheme to Reduce Carbon Emissions Rajan.pdf](#)

[COP30 - North-South Climate Coalition Briefing .docx](#)



Titus Alexander has been described as a one-man think tank and practical radical. He works on a wide range of issues, from animal welfare, community development, family learning, schools and self-esteem to climate change, democratic reform and global governan

“Federal Bridges” – The Need for a United front for Peace in the Middle East

by Yair Gorni

At a time when the Israeli–Palestinian conflict appears trapped between a deteriorating status quo and increasingly extreme alternatives; it becomes necessary to return to first principles and re-examine the range of solutions that have historically been considered viable. Rather than viewing peace as a binary choice between separation and unity, this article argues that a more nuanced approach—grounded in shared sovereignty, regional integration, and gradual institutional cooperation—offers a realistic pathway forward. By revisiting past proposals and situating them within contemporary realities, we can begin to outline a framework capable of transforming conflict into a sustainable and inclusive political order.

In contemporary Israel, the shattered political peace camp is far from monolithic. It is broadly divided into three principal currents. The first are the Two-States, represented by frameworks such as the Geneva Initiative, who advocate ending the occupation through a negotiated partition into two sovereign states. The second are the Federalists, like our own movement Atid-Fed, who argue that long-term stability requires shared institutions and gradual integration alongside sovereignty. The third are the Regionalists, associated with trends emerging from the Abraham Accords and broader “Abrahamic” thinking, who believe that Israeli–Palestinian peace is unlikely to succeed in isolation and must be embedded within a wider regional framework of normalization and cooperation. While these approaches often appear to compete, they in fact reflect different emphases on sovereignty, interdependence, and regional context.

If we look at the solutions from the early history of the conflict, we can see that most peace initiatives shared a common principle: the simultaneous rejection of a unitary state and of full separation. The various plans proposed—by Zionists, by the British, and by elements within the Palestinian-Arab leadership that opposed the rigid unitary line of Hajj Amin al-Husseini—generally revolved around two principal frameworks that followed this logic.

For example, the 1937 Peel Commission proposed partitioning the land into two states, yet envisioned them as linked through economic and security arrangements, and linked to a greater regional alliance, therefore was not based on full separation. By contrast, the 1945 Morrison–Grady Plan formally proposed a single political framework, but one divided into three cantons: a Jewish canton along the coastal plain and northern valleys; an Arab canton in the Galilee, southern coastal areas, and the expanded Judea and Samaria highlands; and a non-contiguous shared canton including Jerusalem and the Negev; therefore, was clearly un-unitary.

Similarly, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) presented two alternatives: a majority plan for two independent states, and a minority plan for a federal state composed of a Jewish canton and an Arab canton. Yet even the “two states” majority option included clear confederal elements—economic union, freedom of movement, and joint management of key areas such as Jerusalem—while the minority “federal state” plan was still grounded in a dual-national structure.

This pattern is also evident in the most advanced rounds of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations in recent decades. Proposals discussed under leaders such as Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert with Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas, as well as in civil society frameworks like the Geneva Initiative, were never based on full separation. On the contrary, they consistently incorporated mechanisms of cooperation—joint water management, coordinated airspace, security arrangements, and elements of economic integration and movement—often framed within the broader vision of a “New Middle East,” associated with Shimon Peres. This logic was further echoed at the regional level in initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative. Together, these elements reflect a continued recognition that even a two-state framework must rest on structured interdependence rather than strict disengagement.

These solutions share a clear common denominator: *full recognition of the right to self-determination of both peoples, alongside a dual rejection—both of a unitary state and of complete separation. Instead, they consistently sought to balance sovereignty with interdependence. This principle must serve as a foundational guideline for any movement seeking to advance genuine peace.*

Any attempt to impose a unitary state by force is likely in practice to result in an ethnocratic regime dominated by one side—akin to French Algeria or apartheid South Africa—alternatively a theocratic regime, as seen in Iran or Afghanistan, or simply a military dictator by one of the two groups over the other. At the same time, the historical record demonstrates that full separation was never considered viable either. Even attempts to establish a formally “equal civic state” based on post-colonial models, without a shared social and political infrastructure—as demonstrated by Cyprus prior to 1974, Somalia prior to 1969, or Lebanon today—are likely to lead to intensified conflict, institutional paralysis, and prolonged violence.

At the same time, the historical and geographic reality of the land helps explain why full separation has consistently proven unworkable. Unlike the relatively clear strategic boundaries that underpin peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors—such as the Sinai desert between Israel and Egypt or the Jordan River between Israel and Jordan—this is a single, continuous space with no natural features capable of sustaining a meaningful division. Cities, infrastructure, and populations are deeply interwoven, and perhaps more importantly, both peoples maintain an intimate historical, cultural, and religious attachment to the entirety of the land.

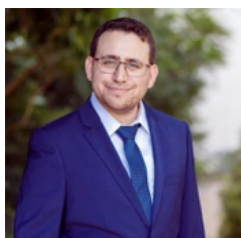
For Israeli-Jews and Palestinian-Arabs alike, the landscape is not merely territory but a lived and remembered homeland, one they aspire to access, move through, and experience freely. As a result, any attempt to impose rigid separation without mechanisms of connection risks colliding with these deeply rooted attachments, generating friction rather than stability. This is precisely why most serious proposals have sought to reconcile sovereignty with freedom of movement and shared access, allowing each people to preserve its national and religious identity while acknowledging the indivisible character of the land they inhabit.

This logic also points to the need to expand the regional dimension of peace beyond its historical scope. Frameworks such as the Gulf Cooperation Council demonstrate that regional coordination in areas like economics, security, and mobility is both possible and sustainable over time. A future Israeli–Palestinian political arrangement—whether confederal or federal in nature—could serve as a nucleus for a broader regional architecture, gradually extending cooperation across the Levant and beyond. After all, the conflict has never been purely local; its dynamics, alliances, and consequences have always been regional, which is why nearly all major peace initiatives have taken the wider Middle Eastern context into account. Yet unlike earlier models such as Pan-Arabism, this emerging framework must be consciously inclusive. It must recognize not only Arab and Muslim identities but also the rights and presence of non-Arab and non-Muslim communities—Jews, Kurds, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Circassians, Turkmen, Armenians, Maronites, Yezidis and others. In doing so, it would mark a clear departure from homogenizing and often exclusionary ideologies associated with movements like the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, and instead offer a federal vision in which the Middle East's diversity becomes a source of strength rather than division.

In this context, the concept of “federal bridges” emerges not merely as a technical arrangement, but as a strategic doctrine for peace-building at both the local and regional levels. Rather than forcing an immediate and fragile resolution, these bridges create a gradual process of alignment—linking Israeli and Palestinian societies, while simultaneously opening pathways for integration with the wider Middle East. By embedding cooperation in essential domains such as security, economy, infrastructure, and governance, they transform the relationship from one of zero-sum competition into one of structured interdependence that can extend outward into regional frameworks. In doing so, they serve as a safeguard against the destructive dynamics that have historically driven the conflict, ensuring that neither side can “devour” the other without simultaneously destabilizing a broader network of shared interests. Instead of separation that breeds hostility or forced unity that breeds domination, federal bridges cultivate a middle path: a layered

system of cooperation that begins locally and scales regionally. This creates not only a united front for Israeli–Palestinian peace, but also a foundation for wider regional stability—one resilient enough to contain tensions, flexible enough to evolve, and capable of transforming rivalry into sustained cooperation across the Middle East. In this way, we replace exclusionary ultra-nationalist visions—whether in the form of Pan-Arabism or maximalist interpretations of Zionism—with a model grounded in unity through diversity across the entire Middle East.

Ultimately, the path forward does not lie in choosing between rigid separation and forced unity, but in constructing a flexible and evolving framework that reflects the realities of the land and the region. The idea of “federal bridges” offers precisely such a pathway: one that preserves national self-determination while embedding it within structures of cooperation, interdependence, and regional integration. By building these connections gradually—on the ground, in institutions, and across borders—we can move beyond zero-sum thinking and toward a shared political horizon. In doing so, peace is no longer treated as a distant end-state, but as a continuous process of partnership, resilience, and mutual recognition across the Middle East.



Yair Gorni is a researcher of nationalism and ethnic conflict in Europe and the Middle East, and a PhD candidate in Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on federalism, nationalism, and models of national autonomy in divided and post-imperial societies. He is also a policy officer of the Israeli Federal Future Movement, where he works on developing federal and confederal frameworks for conflict resolution.

Europe's Federalism Imperative

by Rostand Idriss, Tchana Tchamba and Catherine Vieilledent

For the sake of the future of Europe and Europeans, showing the slightest sign of hesitation or political timidity would amount to a dangerous abdication of responsibility.

In her speech to EU ambassadors on 9 March 2026, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, called for a radical shift in Europe's geopolitical self-perception: "Europe can no longer be the guardian of the traditional world order." She was right to underline the magnitude of the historical turning point confronting Europe. Yet the challenge before us goes far beyond a rhetorical adjustment. It requires a genuine structural transformation capable of ensuring Europe's political endurance and strategic relevance within an increasingly unstable international system.

The gradual erosion of the rules-based international order reveals not only the fragility of the geopolitical environment surrounding Europe, but also the profound inadequacy of the current European institutional framework. For too long, Europe has attempted to project influence abroad while lacking the political instruments necessary to exercise power coherently and democratically. This contradiction is not new. It has accompanied the European project since its inception and now appears with unprecedented clarity.

The upheavals reshaping the international order may therefore represent one of the last opportunities for Europeans to recognise the structural limits of the current model and to overcome them before Europe risks strategic marginalisation.

The roots of Europe's geopolitical weakness

The deep-rooted causes of the present situation can be traced back to the origins of the European integration project itself. Conceived during the Second World War by resistance movements and federalist thinkers as a political project aimed at transcending nationalism, the idea of a European federation was progressively diluted after the Congress of Europe in The Hague in 1948, where intergovernmental logic ultimately prevailed over genuinely federal ambitions.

Two years later, in 1950, the Schuman Declaration and the European Coal and Steel Community introduced a supranational method that represented a historic innovation. Yet the model remained primarily functional and technocratic in nature. The construction of Europe progressively focused on economic integration and sectoral cooperation without fully resolving the political question at its core: who governs Europe, in whose name, and with what democratic legitimacy?

The European institutions that emerged from this process undoubtedly contributed to peace, economic interdependence and legal integration across the continent. However, they were built upon treaties negotiated between national governments rather than upon the direct political sovereignty of European citizens. Even after the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament, the Union continued to evolve as a hybrid political entity, combining supranational mechanisms with persistent intergovernmental constraints.

This ambiguity now weakens Europe's capacity to act decisively in a world increasingly structured by power politics.

Europe can no longer remain a passive geopolitical actor

Europeans cannot resign themselves to the erosion of the international rule-based order. On the contrary, they must actively defend it. But such a defence cannot remain purely declaratory.

The belief that economic interdependence alone would guarantee peace and stability has proven insufficient. Globalisation created prosperity, but it also fostered strategic dependencies that Europe is now struggling to manage in areas as fundamental as energy, defence, technology and industrial production.

Europe must therefore move from being a passive beneficiary of globalisation to becoming an autonomous geopolitical actor capable of defending its interests, values and security. This transformation does not imply abandoning alliances, nor rejecting multilateralism. But it does require Europeans to acknowledge that lasting geopolitical credibility depends upon political unity, democratic legitimacy and strategic capacity.

A rules-based international order can only survive if those rules are effectively grounded in the rule of law rather than in the unilateral power of the strongest actors.

At the same time, defending peace and international law also requires the capacity for collective protection and deterrence. Europe cannot aspire to strategic sovereignty while remaining politically fragmented in matters of defence and foreign policy.

Democratic legitimacy as the foundation of European sovereignty

The current historical moment demonstrates that Europe does not simply need additional sectoral integrations or ad hoc coordination mechanisms. It requires a genuine political foundation. A European political constitution is necessary to clarify competences, strengthen democratic legitimacy and overcome the structural ambiguities of the present framework. Europe cannot continue functioning efficiently under a system where unanimity among member states frequently paralyses collective action on strategic issues.

The development of a truly democratic European political order implies strengthening the role of the European Parliament, fostering a genuine European public debate and recognising the existence of a European civic and political destiny shared by its citizens.

Only institutions endowed with clear democratic legitimacy will be capable of exercising sovereign prerogatives at the European level in a manner that is both effective and accountable.

This includes, in particular:

- a coherent European foreign policy;
- integrated defence capabilities and command structures;
- coordinated industrial and technological strategies;
- and common instruments capable of protecting Europe's economic and political autonomy.

Federalism as a functional necessity

Federalism should not be understood as an abstract ideological aspiration or a purely theoretical debate. It increasingly appears as a functional necessity imposed by geopolitical realities.

The fragmentation of sovereignty among European states no longer allows Europe to respond adequately to contemporary challenges, whether in security, technological competition, energy transition, migration or international governance.

The question confronting Europeans today is therefore not whether deeper political integration is desirable in principle, but whether Europe can preserve its freedom of action, democratic model and strategic relevance without it.

Europe's geopolitical awakening will remain incomplete as long as it is not accompanied by a transformation of its political architecture.

A sovereign Europe requires democratically legitimate institutions capable of acting effectively in the common interest of its citizens. Without such a transformation, Europe risks remaining economically influential yet politically constrained a major market rather than a genuine political power.

The debate on federalism is therefore no longer merely institutional. It has become inseparable from the question of Europe's capacity to endure as a political and civilisational actor in the twenty-first century.



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Europe's Geopolitical Turn and the Federalist Goal

by François Mennerat

For the sake of the future of Europe and Europeans, showing the slightest sign of shyness or pusillanimity would merely be a form of cowardice.

In her speech to the EU ambassadors on 9 March 2026, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, calls for a radical shift in Europe's geopolitical self-perception: *“Europe can no longer be the guardian of the traditional world order”*, she rightly stated, without, however, explicitly naming the key players in the current deadly dynamic. Indeed, Europe needs much more than a mere rhetorical adjustment, but a genuine structural transformation designed to make it endure within the international system. The President of the European Commission's somehow resigned attitude to the erosion of the rules-based order bodes ill for the willingness – or indeed the commitment – to understand the nature, depth and urgency of the institutional reforms needed to remedy the general inadequacy of the current European framework, which confers neither political status nor real power on a supposedly united Europe. This inadequacy may be worsening, but it has unfortunately existed for over seventy years. The sudden upheavals in the state of the world we live in may be nothing more than the last opportunity we have to realise this, before the crush of European civilisation.

A radical shift in Europe's own geopolitical self-perception, certainly. But above all, a move to produce a radical shift in how the world's nations perceive Europe, implying a profound structural transformation that completely changes the nature of European institutions.

Causes of the current situation date back to the beginning of the European unity project. In fact, the deep-rooted causes of the situation in which the project for European unity finds itself today can be traced back to its very beginnings. Formulated during the Second World War, after centuries of hesitant gestation, the concept of a European federation, developed by the European resistance movements against fascism and Nazism, is perniciously sidelined as early as the Congress of Europe in The Hague in 1948, under the influence of Churchill and the anti-federalists who ensure that an alliance of European States takes precedence over a union of the peoples.

Two years later, Jean Monnet inspires the “Community method”, of which Robert Schuman declares on 9 May 1950 it would form the basis of a European federation. However, leaving the peoples aside, the European Coal and Steel Community aims solely at organising the supranational management of the raw materials needed for the weapons industry, but its structure is unfortunately henceforth regarded as the archetype for European supranational institutions, regardless of the field which they are responsible for.

Still lacking democratic legitimacy, those institutions are based solely on international treaties between national governments, and it took 29 years for the parliamentary assembly they shared to be elected by direct universal suffrage, without, however, being fully recognised as representing a European demos made up of citizens sharing a common destiny, rather than national political bodies.

It is difficult for institutions and their members to strike the right balance. Thus, for example, the behaviour of the current President of the European Commission combines, on the one hand, a lack of vision and inspiration – as evidenced by several of her “State of the Union” addresses, including that of 10 September 2025, which was described as “soulless and lacking in vision” – and, on the other hand, a notorious hyper-authoritarianism previously denounced by Michel Barnier, the EU's

Brexit negotiator, and now described by many of her colleagues and counterparts as a “power grab”—an accusation echoed on 20 April 2026 in exactly the same terms by Charles Michel, former President of the European Council and former Prime Minister of Belgium, in an interview with *The Brussels Times*.

Insofar, however, as the intergovernmental treaties confer upon her office, at its core, only a technocratic character without any real political accountability, it is difficult for Ursula von der Leyen to strike the right tone. Added to this is the undue influence exerted on her by both the German government and the (German) political party of which, as a German citizen, she is a member—the same party as that of the current German Federal Chancellor. During her previous term, the so-called “Sofagate” episode on 6 April 2021 saw her at a loss against Charles Michel, President of the European Council (of Heads of State and Governments), in a dispute over precedence that is insoluble within the current institutional framework. Indeed, the current European framework suffers from a general serious inadequacy and needs to be entirely reshuffled.

Never compromise on the rule of law. We Europeans must not, and cannot, resign ourselves to the erosion of the rules-based order; we must defend it tooth and nail. But since interdependence between countries is clearly no longer a guarantee of security – it seems to have been so far nothing more than a soporific mirage that led us to let our guard down – Europe must therefore swiftly move from being a passive beneficiary of globalisation to becoming an active geopolitical player. We are not ‘on the path to vassalage’; we have accepted this status since 1949 and the North Atlantic Treaty, which ratified the Yalta agreements – agreements which, incidentally, have never been denounced – hence, among other causes, the current turmoil. We have been allies of the United States, and they have benefited greatly from this. They have protected us, but when do we feel that they have truly and fully been on our side?

A rule-based system means that these rules must, without fail, be those of the rule of law and not those of the strongest, as in the bloodiest Westerns or in the sham negotiations with Trump. This is not at odds with the need to courageously prepare for battle should we need to defend ourselves against thick-skulled brutes. This implies a democratically elected federal government, with full democratic legitimacy, based on a political constitution (and not an ‘economic’ one), a constitution democratically adopted by the peoples who so desire, and not by politicians from the nation States.

Democratically legitimate and fully democratic European institutions alone can cope with Europe's current and future challenges. At this stage, it is certainly no longer a European Union, nor a string of sectoral unions, each with questionable democratic legitimacy – a health union, a political union, a defence union, etc. – that Europe and Europeans need. A European democratic political constitution is needed to clarify competences, strengthen democratic legitimacy and move Europe (rather than simply the ‘EU’, which is nothing more than an expanded Common Market) away from its current hybrid structure. A constitution that embeds in all domains simple, qualified, or super qualified, majority voting of citizens’ representatives, not unanimity of member States delegates, and without which, effective action remains impossible.

It is only on the solid foundation of democratic legitimacy, that is to say, a strong European Parliament representing the European demos, a European political debate and the inherent involvement of civil society, that it will be possible to establish, amongst sovereign prerogatives and the powers deriving therefrom. In particular, a supranational European defence system comprising an integrated

command structure, a single European system for the procurement of military equipment and armaments, and a coordinated industrial policy.

Federalism is not an ideological choice fuelling endless fruitless debates -- it is a functional necessity. Chanting, again, again and again “*Federazione europea su.bi.to*” is useless and boring if we, federalists, do not detail, plainly, assertively, what we mean and what we really want.



Born 1944, French citizenship. Medical Doctorate, initial clinical practice as rural GP. Master and PhD in health systems management. Medical adviser with public and private health insurance bodies. Participation in European R&D projects and in Standard development with CEN (European Standardisation Committee). Chaired several working groups and extensively travelled Europe-wide.

Ideas for the World Citizen's Corner

Published at the Request of the Editor

In memory of Jürgen Habermas

Jürgen Habermas, one of the greatest philosophers of our time, died on March 14, 2026. On this occasion, the major national and international newspapers have published articles to recall his numerous contributions to philosophy, to the methodology of social sciences, to international politics and to European unification. Here we want to mention him only for one specific aspect: his contribution to the debate on the need for a federal constitution for Europe. In the course of his life, Habermas spoke numerous times on the occasion of the crisis of the process of European integration, on its possible developments in a federal sense and on the relations between European unification and international politics, for which he tirelessly expressed himself in defense of the Kantian perspective of perpetual peace, that is to say, to show that peace between nations is possible and necessary in the sense specified by Kant: abolishing war through the creation of a world federation that includes all the inhabitants of the planet, the citizens of the world. Today this political objective cannot be considered a utopia; it is a necessity: the proliferation of nuclear weapons is unstoppable and the future of the human species cannot be left to the arbitrariness of power politics.

An extensive summary of Habermas' thought has recently been published in an all-inclusive interview with him in the volume "Es musste etwas besser werden" edited by Stefan Müller-Doohm and Roman Yos (Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin, 2024). Here we have chosen one of his speeches on the occasion of the debate on the European Constitution, an action initiated by the European federalists in the last years of the Nineteenth century, which led, in a first phase, to the popular demonstration in Nice, in 2000, on the occasion of the European Council. Shortly afterwards, thanks to a position taken by the European Parliament, stimulated by the federalist intergroup, and the Laeken European Council (2001), a European Convention was convened in 2003. The Convention, composed of MEPs and national parliamentarians, as well as representatives of national governments, approved a draft European Constitution of 59 articles. However, as had already happened with other constituent initiatives, such as the Spinelli project approved by the European Parliament, the Council of Heads of State and Government then managed to make the federal draft constitution fail and replace it with a Treaty (the Treaty of Lisbon).

Here we publish Habermas' speech on the occasion of the European constituent debate of those years. This article was originally published in 2001 and republished in the volume: "The Shape of the New Europe", edited by R. Rogowski and C. Turner (Cambridge University Press, 2006). The original text was very long, so it was necessary to choose only a few extracts, which nevertheless can show how Habermas participated in the debate on the drafting of a European constitution, as a philosopher, as a European citizen and as a federalist. From these excerpts, there is a statement that is worth underlining because it clearly indicates the foundation for a true democratic reform of the European Union: "The prerequisite of a democratic constituted EU ... would have to begin with a single European referendum, arousing a Europe-wide constitutional debate, which would in itself represent a unique opportunity for transnational communication, and would have the potential for self-fulfilling prophecy".

In the following years, Habermas intervened many times on European and international problems. We point out: "The Crisis of the European Union. A response" (Polity Press, 2012) and his latest articles on the crisis of the international order and the weak reaction response of the European Union published in "Süddeutsche Zeitung" of 2025-26.

Why Europe Needs a Constitution

By Jürgen Habermas

There is a remarkable contrast between the expectations and demands of those who pushed for European unification immediately after the Second World War, and those who contemplate the continuation of this project today at the very least, a striking difference in rhetoric and ostensible aim. While the first generation advocates of European integration did not hesitate to speak of the project they had in mind as a “United States of Europe,” evoking the example of the USA, current discussion has moved away from the model of a federal state, avoiding even the term federation. Larry Siedentop’s recent book *Democracy in Europe* expresses a more cautious mood: “A great constitutional debate need not involve a prior commitment to federalism as the most desirable outcome in Europe. It may reveal that Europe is in the process of inventing a new political form, something more than a confederation but less than a federation - an association of sovereign states which pool their sovereignty only in very restricted areas to varying degrees, an association which does not seek to have the coercive power to act directly on individuals in the fashion of nation states.”

Does this shift in climate reflect a sound realism, born of a learning process of over four decades, or is it rather the sign of a mood of hesitance, if not outright defeatism? Siedentop misses the mark when he complains of the lack of any profound or inspired constitutional debate on the fate of Europe, capable of seizing the imagination of its peoples. For our situation today is not comparable to that of either the Federalists or the delegates to the Assemblée Nationale. At the end of the eighteenth century, in Philadelphia and Paris, the Founding Fathers and the French Revolutionaries were engaged in an extraordinary undertaking, without historical precedent. More than two hundred years later, we are not merely heirs to a long-established practice of constitution-making; in a sense, the constitutional question does not provide the key to the main problem we have to solve. For the challenge before us is not to invent anything but to conserve the great democratic achievements of the European nation-state, beyond its own limits. These achievements include not only formal guarantees of civil rights, but levels of social welfare, education and leisure that are the precondition of both an effective private autonomy and of democratic citizenship. This means that constitutional debates over the future of Europe are now increasingly the province of highly specialised discourses among economists, sociologists and political scientists, rather than the domain of constitutional lawyers and political philosophers. On the other hand, we should not underestimate the symbolic weight of the sheer fact that a constitutional debate is now publicly under way. As a political collectivity, Europe cannot take hold in the consciousness of its citizens simply in the shape of a common currency. The intergovernmental arrangement at Maastricht lacks that power of symbolic crystallisation which only a political act of foundation can give.

An Ever-closer Union?

Why should we pursue the project of a constitution for Europe? Let me address this question from two angles: (1) immediate political goals; and (2) dilemmas stemming from virtually irreversible decisions of the past. If we consider the first, it is clear that while the original political aims of European integration have lost much of their relevance, they have since been replaced by an even more ambitious political agenda. The first generation of dedicated Euro-federalists set the process in train after the Second World War with two immediate purposes in mind: to put an end to the bloody history of warfare between European nations, and to contain the potentially threatening

power of a recovering post-fascist Germany. Though everybody believes that the first goal has already been achieved the relevance of peace-keeping issues survives in a different context. In the course of the Kosovo war, its participants became aware of subtle yet important differences in the way that the USA and the UK, on the one hand, and the continental nations of Europe on the other, justified this humanitarian intervention – the former resorting to maxims of traditional power politics, the latter appealing to more principled reasons for transforming classical international law into some sort of cosmopolitan order. This is a difference that exemplifies the rationale for developing an EU capable of speaking with one voice in matters of foreign and security policy, and bringing a stronger influence of its own to bear on NATO operations and United Nations (UN) decisions.

The second goal, the containment of a potentially dangerous Germany, may have lost its salience with the growing stability of democratic institutions and spread of liberal outlooks in the Federal Republic, even if the unification of the country has revived fears of some return to the self-assertive traditions of the German Reich.But even making allowances for the consciousness-raising impact of the euro, it seems clear that henceforward economic achievements can at best stabilise the status quo. Economic expectations alone can hardly mobilise political support for the much riskier and more far-reaching project of a political union - one that deserves the name.

Beyond a “Mere Market”

This further goal requires the legitimization of shared values. There is always a trade-off between the efficiency and legitimacy of an administration. But great political innovations, such as an unprecedented design for a state of nation-states, demand political mobilisation for normative goals. Constitution-making has hitherto been a response to situations of crisis. Where is such a challenge, we might ask, in today’s rather wealthy and peaceful societies of Western Europe? In Central and Eastern Europe, by contrast, transitional societies striving for inclusion and recognition within the EU do face a peculiar crisis of rapid modernisation - but their response to it has been a pronounced return to the nation-state, without much enthusiasm for a transfer of parts of their recently regained national sovereignty to Brussels. The current lack of motivation for political union, in either zone, makes the insufficiency of bare economic calculations all the more obvious. Economic justifications must at the very least be combined with ideas of a different kind - let us say, an interest in and affective attachment to a particular ethos: in other words, the attraction of a specific way of life. During the third quarter of the past century, Eric Hobsbawm’s “Golden Age”, the citizens of Western Europe were fortunate enough to develop a distinctive form of life based on, but not exhausted by, a glistening material infrastructure. Today, against perceived threats from globalisation, they are prepared to defend the core of a welfare state that is the backbone of a society still oriented towards social, political and cultural inclusion. This is the orientation that is capable of embedding economic arguments for an ever-closer union into a much broader vision. Of course, rapid economic growth was the basis for a welfare state that provided the framework for the regeneration of postwar European societies. But the most important outcome of this regeneration has been the production of ways of life that have allowed the wealth and national diversity of a multi-secular culture to become attractively renewed.

The economic advantages of European unification are valid as arguments for further construction of the EU only if they can appeal to a cultural power of attraction extending far beyond material gains alone. Threats to this form of life, and the desire to preserve it, are spurs to a vision of a Europe capable of responding inventively to current challenges. In his magnificent speech of 28 May 2001, the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, spoke of this “European way of life” as the content of a political project: “Up until recently, the primary focus of the European

endeavour was on setting up the economic and monetary Union. ... But now we must broaden our perspective if we want Europe to be more than just one more market in a sea of globalisation. Europe is, after all, more than a market. It bears within it a societal model, the result of its history, which is taking shape in the ever-closer ties being forged among European peoples.”

Globalisation and Social Solidarity

Economic globalisation, whether we interpret it as no more than an intensification of long-range trends or as an abrupt shift towards a new transnational configuration of capitalism, shares with all processes of accelerated modernisation some disquieting features. Rapid structural change distributes social costs more unequally, and increases status gaps between winners and losers, generally inflicting heavier burdens in the short run, and greater benefits only in the long term. The last wave of economic globalisation did not stem from any inherent evolution of the system: it was the product in large measure of successive General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) rounds - that is, of conscious political action. Democratic governments should therefore also have the chance, at least in principle, to counter the undesired social consequences of globalisation by complementary social and infrastructure policies. Such policies have to cope with the needs of two different groups.

Their purpose must be to bridge the time-gap for short-run losers by investing in human capital and temporary transfer payments, and to offer permanent compensation to long-run losers in - for example – the form of a basic income scheme or negative income tax. Since neither group is any longer in a strong veto position, the implementation of such designs is a difficult task. For the decision on whether or not to maintain an appropriate level of general social welfare largely depends on the degree of support for notions of distributive justice. But normative orientations move majorities of voters only to the extent that they can make a straightforward appeal to “strong” traditions inscribed in established political cultures. In Western Europe, or at any rate its continental nations, this assumption is not quite unfounded. Here the political tradition of the workers’ movement, the salience of Christian social doctrines and even a certain normative core of social liberalism still provide a formative background for social solidarity. In their public self-representation, Social and Christian Democratic parties in particular support inclusive systems on social security and a substantive conception of citizenship, which stresses what John Rawls calls “the fair value” of equality distributional rights.

No linear relation exists, it is observed, between economic globalisation and the decreasing autonomy of the national state; nor is there always an inverse relation between levels of social welfare and employment. Independently of growing global pressures from without, the state has anyway had to learn to play a less dominant role within national arenas, in its interactions with powerful social agents. National governments may be compelled to lower taxes on capital under the pressure of national competition, but they still seem to enjoy a range of options in policy areas that have an immediate impact on interdependent rates of unemployment and levels of social welfare.

Normative Appeals

Such arguments do not undermine, however, the general thesis that national governments, whatever their internal profiles, are increasingly entangled in transnational networks, and thereby become ever more dependent on asymmetrically negotiated outcomes. Whatever social policies they choose, they must adapt to constraints imposed by deregulated markets, in particular global financial markets. That means lower taxes and fiscal limits, which compel them to accept increasing inequalities in the distribution of the gross national product (GDP).

A European constitution would enhance the capacity of the member states of the EU to act jointly, without prejudicing the particular course and content of what policies it might adopt. It would constitute a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for the kind of policies some of us are inclined to advocate. To the extent that European nations seek a certain re-regulation of the global economy, to counterbalance its undesired economic, social and cultural consequences, they have a reason for building a stronger EU with greater international influence.

With a view to the future of a highly stratified world society, we Europeans have a legitimate interest in getting our voice heard in an international concert that is at present dominated by a vision different from ours.

There is first the need for a reform of EU institutions imposed by the contradiction between the limited capacity of the European Council to reach agreements among diverging member states, and the political decision to admit several new and even less homogeneous members. The enlargement of the EU increases the complexity of interests in need of coordination which requires further integration or “deepening” of the EU. The EU set schedules for enlargement that placed it under a self-imposed pressure for reform. However, enlargement has failed to act as a lever for the solution of the more severe structural problems that emerge (1) from an asymmetry between a rather dense horizontal integration through markets and the rather loose vertical integration of competition national governments, and (2) from a corresponding deficit in the democratic legitimation of EU decisions.

Positive coordination

So far national governments have retained most of their competencies for cultural, economic and social policies, while they have transferred their monetary sovereignty to an independent and supposedly nonpolitical institution, the European Central Bank. They have thereby renounced an important means of state intervention. As monetary union completes the process of economic integration, the need for harmonisation of major public policies increases. National governments resting as they do on different schemes of taxation, socio regimes, neo-corporatist arrangements, remain entrenched in distinct legal and political traditions.

Yet these discrepancies between an advanced economic and a retarded political integration could be overcome by the construction of high reorder political agencies, capable of “catching up” with the pressures of deregulated markets. From this perspective, the European project can be seen as a common attempt by the national governments to recover in Brussels something of the capacity for intervention that they have lost at home. This is at any rate the view of those who called for common economic management of the euro-zone, and in the long run harmonisation of corporation taxes within it. Such a move would also meet another well-known problem. The so-called “democratic deficit” of European authorities, in particular of the Commission, is a source of growing dissatisfaction within the broader population - not only of the smaller states such as Ireland or Denmark, or countries that have temporarily rejected entry into the EU such as Norway or Switzerland. So far, the Commission has mainly pushed market-enhancement policies that require only “negative coordination”, which means that national governments are expected to refrain from doing things. Beyond this threshold, the present kind of indirect legitimation through national governments is no longer sufficient. Regulatory policies with a widely perceived redistributive effect would require “positive coordination” on both the output-side (that is, implementation) and the input-side (that is, legitimation) of a quite different kind. At present, legitimacy flows more or less through the channels of democratic institutions and procedures within each nation-state. This level of legitimation is appropriate for inter-governmental negotiations and treaties. But it falls short of what is needed for the kind of supranational and transnational decision-making that has long

since developed within the institutional framework of the EU and its huge network of committees. It is estimated that European directives already affect up to 70 per cent of the regulations of national agencies. But they lack any serious exposure to a timely and careful public opinion or will-formation in those national arenas that are today alone accessible to holders of a European passport.

Civic Nations

.... Eurosceptics reject a shift in the basis of legitimation of the EU from international treaties to a European constitution with the argument, "there is as yet no European people".'

.... Eurosceptics reject a shift in the basis of legitimation of the EU from international treaties to a European constitution with the argument, "there is as yet no European people." According to this view, what is missing is the very subject of a constituent process, the collective singular of "a people" capable of defining itself as a democratic nation. I have criticised this "no demos" thesis on both conceptual and empirical grounds. ...

... There are two lessons to be learnt from the history of the European nation-states. If the emergence of national consciousness involved painful process of abstraction, leading from local and dynastic identities to national and democratic ones, why, first, should this generation of a highly artificial kind of civic solidarity - a "solidarity along strangers" - be doomed to come to a final halt just at the borders of our classical nation-states? And second, the artificial conditions in which national consciousness came into existence recall the empirical circumstances necessary for an extension of that process of identity-formation beyond national boundaries. These are: the emergence of a European civil society; the construction of a European-wide public sphere; and the shaping of a political culture that can be shared by all European citizens.

A Catalytic Constitution

These functional prerequisites of a democratically constituted EU project points of convergence between rather complex processes. We should not forget, however, that this convergence in turn depends on the catalytic effect of a constitution. This would have to begin with a single European referendum, arousing a Europe-wide constitutional debate, which would in itself represent a unique opportunity for transnational communication, and which would have the potential for a self-fulfilling prophecy. Europe has to apply to itself, as a whole, "the logic of the circular creation of state and society that shaped the modern history of European countries." The European constitution not only makes manifest the shift in powers that has already taken place. It can also release and foster further shifts. Once the EU gains financial autonomy, the Commission assumes the functions of a government and the Council becomes something like a second chamber, the European Parliament can attract more attention for the better-staged and more visible exercise of competencies, which are already remarkable. Full budgetary powers would not be necessary in the beginning.

Creating a Public Sphere

There will be no remedy for the legitimation deficit, however, without a European-wide public sphere - a network that gives citizens of all member states an equal opportunity to take part in an encompassing process of focused political communication. Democratic legitimation requires mutual contact between, on the one hand, institutionalised deliberation and decision-making within parliaments, courts and administrative bodies and, on the other, an inclusive process of informal mass communication. The function of the communicational infrastructure of a democratic public sphere is to turn relevant societal problems into topics of concern, and to allow the general public to relate, at the same time, to the same topics, by taking an affirmative or negative stand on news and opinions. The pressing question "Can the European Union become a sphere of publics?" is often

answered from a supranational rather than a transnational perspective. If we look for monolingual (usually English speaking) media with multinational audiences penetrating national borders we find a business elite reading the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, or a political elite reading the *International Herald Tribune* with a digest of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* - which means: nothing specifically European. This is not a promising model for the audiovisual communications of a general public, even for cross boundary communication via print media. In the audiovisual sector, the bilingual, French-German television channel Arte is already more plausible, though still aimed at a notionally supranational public. A real advance would be for national media to cover the substance of relevant controversies in the other countries, so that all the national public opinions converged on the same range of contributions to the same set of issues, regardless of their origin. This is what happens temporarily – if only for a few days - before and after the summits of the European Council, when the heads of the member states come together and deal with issues of equal perceived relevance for citizens across Europe. The fact that these multiple, horizontal flows of communication have to pass through the filters of translation does not reduce their essential significance.

Sharing a Political Culture

The generation of a European public opinion depends on the vital inputs of actors within a European civil society. At the same time, a European-wide public sphere needs to be embedded in a political culture shared by all. This widely perceived requirement has stimulated a troubled discourse among intellectuals, since it has been difficult to separate the question “What is Europe?” from the fact that the achievements of European culture - which did not, in fact, seriously reflect upon its own nature and origin until the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries - have been diffused across the globe. The main religion in Europe, Christianity, obeyed its missionary imperative and expanded all over the world. The global spread of modern science and technology, of Roman law and the Napoleonic Code, of human rights, democracy and the nation-state started from Europe as well. Let me therefore mention two more specific experiences of our countries that resonate still in the rather remarkable responses they have evoked. For Europe has, more than any other culture, faced and overcome structural conflicts, sharp confrontations and lasting tensions, in the social as well as in the temporal dimension. In the social dimension, modern Europe has developed institutional arrangements for the productive resolution of intellectual, social and political conflicts. In the course of painful, if not fatal struggles, it has learnt how to cope with deep cleavages, schisms and rivalries between secular and ecclesiastical powers, city and countryside, faith and knowledge, and how to get along with endemic conflicts between militant religious confessions and belligerent states. In the temporal dimension, modern Europe has institutionalised a comprehensive spectrum of competing conservative, liberal and socialist interpretations of capitalist modernisation, in an ideological system of political parties. In the course of a heroic intellectual appropriation of a rich Jewish and Greek, Roman and Christian heritage, Europe has thus learnt a sensitive attitude and a balanced response, both to the deplorable losses incurred by the disintegration of a traditional past and to the promise of future benefits from the “creative destruction” of present productivity.

..... Today, moreover, the European nation-states are being brought together by the challenges that they all face equally. All are in the process of becoming countries of immigration and multicultural societies. All are exposed to an economic and cultural globalisation that awakes memories of a shared history of conflict and reconciliation - and of a comparatively low threshold of tolerance towards exclusion. This new awareness of what Europeans have in common has found an admirable expression in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The members of the “Convention”, as it is called, reached agreement on this document within a remarkably short space of time.

Designing a Framework

Taking it as a premise that a European constitution is both feasible and desirable, let me finish with a few remarks on some problems to do with its design. According to the former foreign minister of Germany, Joschka Fischer, we face the task of finding the right combination of a “Europe of nation-states” with a “Europe of citizens.” He offers some more or less conventional alternatives for strengthening the European Parliament, establishing an effective and legitimate executive, and creating a democratically accountable Court of Justice. These proposals do not exhaust the range of imaginative options, but Fischer rightly focuses on the core problem of a federation of nation states that need to preserve their integrity by occupying a much more influential position than the constituent elements of a federal state normally do. The intergovernmental element of negotiation between former nation-states will remain strong. Compared with the presidential regime of the USA, an EU of nation-states would have to display the following general features:

- a) a Parliament that would resemble the Congress in some respects (a similar division of powers and, compared with the European parliamentary systems, relatively weak political parties);
- b) a legislative “chamber of nations” that would have more competences than the American Senate, and a Commission that would be much less powerful than the White House (thus splitting the classical functions of a strong presidency between the two);
- c) a European Court that would be as influential as the Supreme Court for similar reasons (the regulatory complexity of an enlarged and socially diversified EU would require detailed interpretation of a principled constitution, cutting through the jungle of existing treaties).

The Politics of Unification

For European unification to move forward, however, there still remains a vacant space which would have to be filled by the political will of competent actors. The overwhelming majority of the population that is currently resistant or hesitant can only be won for Europe if the project is extricated from the pallid abstraction of administrative measures and technical discourse: in other words, is politicised. Intellectuals have not picked up this ball. Still less have politicians wanted to burn their fingers with such an unpopular topic. But no reform of procedures and institutions can succeed before the content of the political project behind it becomes dearer.

The markedly national orientation of the current Bush Administration can be regarded as an opportunity for the EU to define a more distinctive foreign and security policy towards the conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans, and relations with Russia and China. Differences that are coming more into the open in environmental, military and juridical fields contribute to a soundless strengthening of European identity. Still more important is the question of what role Europe wishes to play in the Security Council and, above all, in world economic institutions. Contrasting justifications of humanitarian intervention, not to speak of basic economic outlooks, divide the founder states of the EU from the UK and Scandinavia. But it is better to bring these smouldering conflicts out into the open than to let the EU splinter over dilemmas that remain unresolved. In any case, a Europe of two or three speeds is preferable to one that breaks up or crumbles away.