
The Construction of Europe

and the Concept of the

Nation-State

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The campaign for the 1999 European elections, particularly in France, was articulated more clearly than ever before in terms of a rhetorical dialectic between the promotion of national interests and the construction of Europe – although it was expressed differently by different party leaders: ‘We must make Europe without un-making France’ (Jacques Chirac), or ‘prolong and amplify the nation’ (Lionel Jospin), or ‘put France in advance’ (François Bayrou). All these campaign slogans fit more or less into the framework laid down in 1995 by the former president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, when he predicted that the European Union would become a ‘federation of nation-states’. While the concept thus outlined was a little vague, Delors’s intention was to point out the hybrid nature of an institution whose structure combined federalist tendencies with the concept of the nation-state. It provides us with a good starting point for progressing beyond the facile and all-too-frequent opposition in the European dynamic between ‘nation’ and ‘federation’.¹ Previous conceptual models have, from the beginning, sought to capture the specific political nature of Europe somewhere between the two extremes of full national sovereignty and out-and-out federalism. The first, ‘neo-realist’, model, as progressively refined by Stanley Hoffmann, sees European institutions as a ‘pool of sovereignties’ through which member states freely negotiate the creation of community functions and retain a monopoly over their application.² The second, the ‘neo-functional’ model, has been associated since the 1950s with Ernst Haas and sees those institutions as prefiguring a federal super-state which will inevitably appropriate the principal functions of member states owing to a ‘spillover’ effect.³ By contrast, the intrinsically paradoxical nature of the expression ‘federation of nation-states’ reminds us that since the beginnings of the European enterprise the concepts of nation and of federation have been inextricably linked. At this moment

¹ See Bela Farago, ‘Nation, fédération: quelle Europe?’ *Le Débat*, 87 (Nov./Dec. 1997), 26–81.

² Stanley Hoffmann and Robert Keohane, *The New European Community. Decision-Making and International Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991). On the genesis of the neo-realist theory of international relations in the United States see Jean-Jacques Roche, *Théories des relations internationales* (Paris: Montchrestien, 1994).

³ Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950–1957* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958, 1968).

in time it may seem that economic universalism, the collapse of territorial integrity, neo-regionalist integration, changes in civil society and the globalisation of culture are taking us towards a 'decline' of the nation-state and the advent of a 'world without sovereignty'.⁴ But it is worth bearing in mind that the construction of Europe has already brought about the 'transfiguration' of one west European nation-state which in the aftermath of the Second World War was economically ruined, ideologically discredited, socially divided and politically destabilised, as Michael Mann has graphically described.⁵ Following in his footsteps, I should like to bring together some important factors, seldom considered together, which go to show that, over several decades, the unification of Europe has been found to be compatible with the existence of a dynamic nation-state which successfully emerged from the confused hopes of the postwar period to regain its status as an international power, strengthen its internal cohesion, export its grandiose idea of organisation and create institutional stability at home.

The rebirth of a power

The construction of Europe, Robert Marjolin⁶ asserted, was a reaction against the 'decadence' of the interwar period, the 'great work which led to the resurrection of France, the true rebirth of a nation'. What he said about France also applies, mutatis mutandis, to the other states. As all participants agreed, the resurrection of the old nation-state would inevitably depend on the building of the community, a process which would perform the dual function of stimulating internal politics and encouraging economic modernisation.

The first European partners made no secret of their ambition to regain international influence on the back of European integration. Some saw this in terms of a continued existence in a world dominated by power blocs; others envisaged power

⁴ There is a large literature on this, from which it is worth singling out the following standard works: M. Horsman and A. Marshall, *After the Nation-State* (London: HarperCollins, 1995); Bertrand Badie, *Un monde sans souveraineté. Les Etats entre ruse et responsabilité* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); Christian Philip and Panayolis Soldatos (eds.), *Au-delà et en deçà de l'Etat-nation* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1996); Anne-Marie Le Gloanec (ed.), *Entre Union et nation. L'Etat en Europe* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1998). Among shorter studies are: *Reconstructing Nations and States*, special number of *Daedalus*, 3 (summer 1993); John Dunn, 'Contemporary Crisis of the Nation-State?' and W. Wallace, 'Rescue or Retreat: The Nation-State in Western Europe 1945-1993', both in *Political Studies*, 42 (1994); *What Future for the State?*, special number of *Daedalus*, 2 (spring 1995), 1-229; Jean-William Lapierre, 'L'éclatement de l'espace politique', *Espaces et sociétés*, 82/83 (1995), 53-68; Vincent Cable, 'The Diminished Nation-State: A Study in the Loss of Economic Power', *Daedalus*, 2 (spring 1995), 23-53; Paul Quentin Hirst, 'Globalization and the Future of the Nation-State', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 3 (August 1995), 408-42; Oscar Schlachter, 'The Decline of the Nation-State and its Implications for International Law', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, Vol. 36, 1-2 (1997), 7-23.

⁵ Michael Mann, 'Nation-States in Europe and Other Continents: Diversifying, Developing, Not Dying', *Daedalus*, 3 (summer 1993), 115-40, reprinted as 'L'Etat-nation: mort ou transfiguration? L'Europe et le monde', *Le Débat*, Vol. 84 (March/April 1995).

⁶ Between 1947 and 1967 Marjolin was successively secretary of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), negotiator for the Treaties of Rome and later vice-president of the Commission in Brussels. See his *Le travail d'une vie. Mémoires* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1986), 177.

in a different context; yet others sought to regain international respectability. The first attitude was most resolutely embraced by leaders of the Benelux countries such as Joseph Luns, Dutch Foreign Minister at the time of the Six. The Netherlands was willing to sign up to European political unity because it seemed the only way to guarantee equal rights for small states and safeguard the traditional orientation of the Netherlands' national interests by admitting another maritime power – Great Britain.⁷ A good example of the second approach is that of a former 'great power' such as France, which considered the 1951 European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) Treaty above all as a way of reconciling an hereditary enemy and keeping it in check.⁸ Robert Schumann and the ministers of the Quai d'Orsay saw this first form of integration as a bulwark behind which France could redeploy its sovereignty before Germany reasserted its own: Georges Bidault remarked at this early stage that 'we must make Europe without unmaking France'. Six years later, the signing of the Treaties of Rome echoed Guy Mollet's conviction that France could not attain real power through national independence, but only through European interdependence so arranged as to serve France's best interests (a conviction which in 1957 found its expression in French doctrine on the relationship of its overseas territories to the Common Market).⁹ During de Gaulle's years in power, again, the idea of a 'European Europe', speaking with one political voice, was appreciated only insofar as it seemed to offer France a chance to free itself from its US apron-strings, re-balance the Atlantic Alliance and help direct the new assemblage of third world states.¹⁰ Following a suitably bipolar logic, the domination of European leadership to the end of the 1980s was to illustrate the obstinacy of French ambitions.¹¹

German policy is the clearest example of the third way to use 'Europe' – as a passport to international respectability. Whereas France and Britain thought of the construction of Europe in terms of power, for the Federal Republic of Germany it was a question of identity. 'A European Germany is the only way to avert a German Europe', said Thomas Mann, advancing Europe as the antidote to Germany's inner demons and the recurrent temptations of the *Sonderweg*. The European 'way' would be the democratic redemption of Germany, restoring it to the bosom of humanistic Western political culture and legitimating a restrained diplomacy which was not to change substantially even after reunification.¹²

A similar evocation of the democratic principle inspired Italy's involvement in

⁷ Luns outlined his position in an important article, 'Independence or Interdependence?' in the journal *International Affairs* (January 1964).

⁸ Steven Philip Kramer, 'The French Question', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 4 (Autumn 1991), 84.

⁹ Pierre Guillen, 'L'avenir de l'Union française dans la négociation des traités de Rome', *Relations Internationales*, Vol. 57 (spring 1989), 103–12.

¹⁰ See Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe. De Gaulle, les Etats-Unis et l'Alliance Atlantique 1958–1969* (Paris: Plon, 1996).

¹¹ Stanley Hoffmann, 'Obstinate or obsolete? The fate of the Nation-State and the case of Western Europe', *Daedalus*, 3 (summer 1966), 862–915; reprinted in *The European Sisyphus: Essays on Europe* (Oxford and San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995), 95.

¹² Sven Papcke, 'Une Allemagne européenne ou une Europe allemande?', *Allemagne d'aujourd'hui*, 135 (March 1996), 3–10.

the construction of the community under Alcide De Gasperi. 'It is our bulwark, our programme, our combat', he proclaimed during the approval debate on the ECSC on 15 March 1952. Now, almost half a century later, the same sentiments have been espoused by Romano Prodi.¹³

Another advantage exploited by various national governments is the chance to justify the modernisation of large areas of the economy on the grounds of community policy. There are three main motives for this enthusiastic but equivocal 'participation': to exploit the institutions promoting economic integration for the benefit of the national potential; to use the threat of competition in a 'larger market' as a lever to reduce archaisms and introduce new parities; and to pass the burden of restructuring costs on to the European 'welfare state'.

The first motive is often the reason for the federalist attitude of German politicians towards Europe. As an example, when at the end of 1949 and the beginning of 1950 Konrad Adenauer proposed a Franco-West German union with a single parliament and a common nationality – a clear adumbration of the Schuman plan – his main aim was to safeguard West German industrial potential. He wanted an end to the unilateral and discriminatory control over coal and steel production exercised by the International Authority for the Ruhr; a curb on the breaking up of cartels and the redistribution of heavy industry; and a stop to the dismantling of factories such as Thyssen's at Hamborn.¹⁴ Thus the Federal Republic initially saw the ECSC as a way to remove the brakes from German production and resume the leadership of the iron and steel industry (and indeed, France's share of the Community's steel output fell from 32 per cent in 1950 to 24 per cent in 1955).¹⁵ Twenty years later, the same preoccupations doubtless lay behind the proposal for economic and monetary union which Willy Brandt brought before The Hague summit, which heartily endorsed the federalist bias of the Werner Report (harmonisation of economic policies, a central bank, a single currency). In other words, the creation of a European zone with a stable currency based on economic integration and supranational financial control rests on the self-interested calculations of a single state. The Federal Republic holds the lion's share of Community reserves and does not intend to suffer the monetary consequences of a way-of-least-resistance policy conducted in the name of national sovereignty (France's inflationary compromise, for example), or of financing a 'community of inflation'. Germany, drawing on her own experience of an autonomous Bundesbank and efficient mechanisms for combating inflation, sees a common monetary system as a guarantee of financial efficiency.

'Modernisation or decline!' proclaimed Jean Monnet's famous slogan at the launch of the first French plan in 1947. The same fear of decline has haunted French governments involved in various stages of European construction, which see its economic aspect as a chance to generate a new independence by imposing a 'salutary

¹³ Romano Prodi, *Idea dell'Europa* (Turin: Il Mulino, 1999).

¹⁴ Pierre Gerbet, *La construction de l'Europe* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994), 94.

¹⁵ Gérard Bossuat, *La France, l'aide américaine et la construction européenne 1944–1954* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière/Ministère dl'Economie et des Finances, 1992), II, 794.

renewal' on various branches of the economy – that is, by forcing them out of their protectionist overcoats. To 'practise the Common Market,' as General de Gaulle put it, was to pull on 'the lever which will elevate our enterprises', avert a loss of status and enable France to 'move with the times'.¹⁶ This applied to one sector in particular: agriculture. The reason why France was so determined to link the deregulation of the exchange of industrial products with the creation of a common agricultural policy was that 20 per cent of its workforce was engaged in agriculture, a fact which was seen as an 'obstacle' and an 'archaism' by the devout expansionists in power in the 1960s and 1970s. Edgar Pisani was the prime architect of this link between internal restructuring and external expansion, putting young, modernising, production-orientated agriculturalists 'at the heart of the State'.¹⁷ In pursuit of this neo-corporatist logic, the strengthening of supranational institutions was accepted insofar as it advanced French interests.¹⁸ France's insistence on a strict timetable for the introduction of the single currency in the 1990s reflected the same principles of efficiency and economic rationalisation. It was a way of legitimising the idea that underneath this most 'federal' aspect of the construction of Europe lay a new sovereignty, which would work for every state because if was exercised collectively.¹⁹ In whatever field, the idea is always to 'make France through Europe'.²⁰

Although Italy was scarcely consulted while France and West Germany jointly developed the ECSC, the ensuing negotiations brought the De Gasperi government a series of eminently 'national' victories which fulfilled the third requirement of every Community member: modernisation without tears. Italy's gains were substantial: free international movement of labour, which alleviated her unemployment problem; special subsidies for the modernisation of Sardinian coal mines; a clause giving Italy access to Algerian iron ore; a five-year transition period during which tariffs could be imposed on imported steel. In short, Italy was licensed to use the European 'welfare state' to finance the Sinigaglia plan for creating a steel industry powerful enough to realise her old dream of parity with France and West Germany.²¹

This is not the only European advance that has resulted from similar, determinedly nationalistic, negotiating strategies. For example, the extension of membership to Spain and Portugal was to considerable extent contingent on promises of budgetary aid for Greece. The implementation of the Single European Act was

¹⁶ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 143. The study and eye-witness comments of Alain Prate, *Les batailles économiques du général de Gaulle* (Paris, Plon, 1978), are still well worth reading, esp. pp. 45–76.

¹⁷ Bernard Bruneteau, *Les paysans dans l'Etat. Le gaullisme et le syndicalisme agricole sous la Vème République* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), 63–100.

¹⁸ John T. S. Keeler, 'De Gaulle et la politique agricole commune de l'Europe: logique et héritages de l'intégration nationaliste', in *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, *L'Europe* (Paris: Plon/La Documentation française, 1992), 155–66.

¹⁹ See Nguyen Van Tuong, 'La monnaie unique européenne et la souveraineté nationale française', *Les Petites Affiches*, Vol. 63 (25 May 1992), 13–20; Henri Oberdorff, 'Les incidences de l'Union européenne sur les institutions françaises', *Pouvoirs*, Vol. 69 (1994), 95–106.

²⁰ Jacques Delors and Clithène, *La France par l'Europe* (Paris: Grasset, 1988).

²¹ Frank R. Willis, *Italy Chooses Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

primarily a result of compromises between states, ratified at the last moment by the Commission.²² And the Community's policy on assistance to central and east European states from 1989 onwards depends entirely on the priorities of national governments.²³

Strengthening cohesion

The British historian Alan Milward has proposed the iconoclastic but persuasive theory that the only reason why the member states of the European Community have accepted a loss of sovereignty in certain areas is that with increasing prosperity, this would help them increase their *internal* political integration. Their main preoccupation being to 'save themselves' by satisfying the material expectations of their citizens, they aim to reshape their social structures and renew their political legitimacy, all at the expense of an over-arching 'welfare state'.²⁴ While Milward's thesis has its weak points (internal objectives could have been attained within a framework less complex than the EC; the expectations of mere citizens counted for less than the plans of elites), his interpretation has the merit of highlighting the extent to which the 'European' theme fostered national consensus – by calming factional demands, glossing over ideological divisions and transcending regional separatism.

After the Second World War, European states were forced to reorganise on a broader social basis than hitherto. The 'welfare state' was the outcome of this attempt to extend national policy to embrace groups whose partial or total withdrawal from a similar enterprise had fostered extremism in the 1930s: the peasantry, the proletariat, the middle classes. The policy of European integration was intended to consolidate this internal integration by sharing out the fruits of growth, and so had a magnetic attraction for any group with an interest in exports – from German metalworkers to Belgian miners and Dutch farmers. It could also be attractive for groups who felt too exposed to the harshness of the market. France's economic demands during the negotiations leading to the Treaties of Rome are a good example of how the interests of certain corporate sectors were taken into account in the modelling of Europe. A transitory period during which social costs would be harmonised and exchange liberalised; the principle of a common agricultural policy based on guaranteed minimum prices and common marketing organisations: such was France's price for agreeing to the creation of a (cautiously) liberal Common Market, and it was dictated by the intersecting demands of small

²² Andrew Moravcsik, 'Negotiating the Single European Act: National Interests and Conventional Statecraft in the European Community', *International Organization*, Vol. 45, no. 1 (winter 1991), 19–56, cited in Christian Lequesne, 'La Commission européenne entre autonomie et indépendance', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, Vol. 46, no. 3 (June 1996), 394.

²³ S. Haggard and A. Moravcsik, 'The Political Economy of Financial Assistance to Eastern Europe', in R. O. Keohane, J. S. Nye and S. Hoffmann (eds.), *After the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 256, cited in Lequesne, 'La Commission européenne'.

²⁴ Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1994); *idem*, 'Etats-nations et Communautés, le paradoxe de l'Europe', *Revue de Synthèse*, Vol. 4 (1990), 253–70.

businessmen fearful of German competition, trade unions resolved on maintaining social advantages and a powerful agricultural lobby anxious to combine productivity with protectionism. These conditions largely explain the approach of a cautious French administration which presented itself as a mouthpiece for the fears being expressed by economic groups which felt threatened, and so as the guardian of the country's general interests.²⁵ Taking agriculture as an example, the common agricultural policy (CAP) was no more than a perpetuation of the 'agricultural exception' introduced at the end of the nineteenth century by the Third Republic – whether the idea was to add another layer of protectionist insulation ('community' rather than 'national' preference) or to reorient electoral loyalties (Lady Bountiful assumed first Christian Democrat and subsequently Gaullist colours). Thanks to Europe and its 200 million consumers, the CAP, originally intended to bring about a 'silent revolution' in the French countryside, was presented by the Ministry of Agriculture as a 'change of heart', a 'return to the source, a rediscovery of agriculture and its pre-eminence' – the reverse of *mélinisme*, in fact.²⁶

Its attendant images (predestined community, peace among peoples) have helped the European idea to insinuate itself into the doctrinal baggage of otherwise opposing political parties. Whether it was seen as the transnational Holy Grail of pacifist democratic socialism or as the last embellishment to the continent's Christian countenance, a united Europe became the touchstone of the socialist and Christian Democrat parties which directed the construction of Europe in the 1950s. Henry Brugmans, Altiero Spinelli, André Philip, Guy Mollet, Christian Pineau, Paul-Henri Spaak and Sicco Mansholt in the first camp, Paul Van Zeeland, Joseph Beck, C. P. M. Romme, Robert Schuman, Alain Poher, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and Walter Hallstein in the second: this gallery of 'Europeans' is almost complete and shows the futility of attempts to distinguish between 'socialism' and 'liberalism'. The composition of the 'Action Committee for the United States of Europe' set up by Jean Monnet in 1955 provides further evidence of this: it included people of influence, representatives of the 'European' press and of political parties, liberals, Christian Democrats and socialists – representing two-thirds of the electorate of the Six.²⁷ 'Europe' was indeed a powerful force for political integration. To begin with, 'building Europe' was a central axiom in government programmes insofar as it constituted a token of the support which an aspiring politician might be able to find outside his own parliamentary party (it benefited

²⁵ See Louis Dubouis, 'L'administration française et l'intégration européenne', in Charles Debbasch, ed., *Administrations nationales et intégration européenne* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1987); *idem*, 'L'administration française face à l'intégration européenne', *Administration*, special number (15 October 1990), 2–86. For a personal view see Marjolin, *Travail d'une vie*; Jean-François Deniau, *L'Europe interdite* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 61–2, 82.

²⁶ *Politique agricole commune, Revue Française de l'Agriculture*, special number (June 1964), 9. *Mélinisme* was the name given to the highly protectionist economic and agricultural policies of the Third Republic, after Jules Méline, Minister of Agriculture in the 1890s.

²⁷ Elsa Guichaoua, 'Le Comité d'action pour les Etats Unis d'Europe et son influence sur la presse (1955–1957)', in René Girault and Gérard Bossuat, eds., *Europe brisée, Europe retrouvée. Nouvelles réflexions sur l'unité européenne du XXème siècle* (Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 1994), 289–305.

Guy Mollet's government in 1956 and Harold Wilson's in 1966). Secondly, 'building Europe' was a convenient ideological tool for re-shaping a party's identity and consolidating its ranks if it fell prey to uncertainties. This treatment was applied to the Mouvement Républicain Populaire in France after 1949 and to the French Socialist Party in the 1980s.²⁸ In other cases, however, certain ways of 'building Europe' (De Gaulle's 'European Europe' and the minimalist version favoured by Margaret Thatcher) can also serve to rally those who share a support for (or nostalgia for) national 'exceptions' but who, for various ideological reasons (the French myth of national grandeur, the English myth of complete national autonomy), belong to competing political cultures.

If it is possible for a foreign policy to be directed primarily towards creating a new consensus around a strengthened and active state which can overcome the traditional cleavages of political life – consider, for instance, the Gaullist policy of 'grandeur' which actually won the approval of seven out of every ten communist electors²⁹ – then the commitment of certain states to the European ideal may also be traceable to an attempt to transcend a weak consciousness of national unity. The commitment of Italy, a 'nation in suspense', or of Belgium, a 'nation which is no nation', or of Spain, an incomplete nation, would fit this pattern. Italy saw Europe as a way of overcoming a historical divorce between the 'state' and the 'nation'. The country was not unified until the nineteenth century – when the unification was imposed 'from above'; this unitary state had been unable to create a living national identity; the Fascist nation-state had lost its right to recognition; the Liberation was followed by a dilution, and precarious reconstruction, of the Italian 'nation'.³⁰ Belgium's 'Europeanism' is similarly incomprehensible unless seen against the background of its internal dissensions. Though two of its most thorny conflicts have lessened recently (over religion and the working class), postwar Belgium has seen a recrudescence of the problems of community which are such a serious menace to Belgian identity.³¹ Meanwhile, democratic Spain is continually being challenged by regional separatism: a strong presence in European institutions can serve as a palliative to the shortcomings of the unitary Spanish identity pursued in the nineteenth century by an impoverished and inefficient state.³² All three countries see their participation in the construction of Europe primarily as a way of restoring legitimacy to the centralised state. A state which behaves as a responsible and active partner, makes proposals and even offers

²⁸ See Pierre Letamendia, *Le Mouvement républicain populaire. Histoire d'un grand parti français* (Paris: Editions Beauchêne, 1995); Geneviève Lemaire-Prosche, *Le Parti socialiste et l'Europe* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1990).

²⁹ Philip G. Cerny, *Une politique de grandeur. Aspects idéologiques de la politique extérieure de De Gaulle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 271–96.

³⁰ On this see the stimulating chapter by Didier Musiedlak, 'Construction politique et identité nationale en Italie de l'Unité au fascisme', in *L'Italie, une nation en suspens?* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1995), 19–61.

³¹ The substantial pamphlet by François Perin, *Histoire d'une nation introuvable*, published in 1988, did much to foster this awareness.

³² Borja de Riquer, 'La faiblesse du processus de construction nationale en Espagne au XIXe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, Vol. 41, no. 2 (April–June 1994), 353–66.

the occasional inspiration, and can play a leadership role which puts it (however temporarily) on a level with the 'big boys', will appear strong from the outside even if it is contested from within. Thus the Italian state made itself conspicuous at the Santa Margherita summit of 1951, when De Gasperi and Sforza pursued the political development of the Common European Defence Project; at the Messina Conference of 1955 which relaunched the integration process; by being the only state to approve the Spinelli project of 1984; and at the European Council in Milan in 1985, when Italy held the presidency and was able to push through the plan for an intergovernmental conference as a preliminary to the Single European Act. Similarly, Belgium made its presence felt through the multifarious activities of Paul-Henri Spaak (the planned European Political Community of 1953; the committee to prepare the Treaties of Rome in 1956; opposition to the Fouchet Plan in 1970) and through the solid work done by the committee headed by Etienne Davignon in 1970. As for Spain, its name is attached to a major date in Community history since it happened to be holding the presidency (for the first time) in 1988, when the plan for economic and monetary union was launched; during its second presidency, in 1995, the euro first saw the light (council of Madrid).

But there is another way to contain centrifugal forces within a state – whether in 'Padania' (the would-be republic in the Po valley of northern Italy), Catalonia or Flanders – and this is to involve them in the construction of the 'Europe of the regions'. This model depends on the notion that the trend towards European unity 'up above' and the process of regional fragmentation 'down below' are actually complementary, and has always been viewed with approval by federalist militants;³³ it has made its way into the European institutions under the self-interested gaze of the countries concerned. Far from assuring the birth of regional 'states', the model was a blueprint for their demise.³⁴ In fact, since 1988 the steady growth in aid to the weaker regions from the European Regional Development Fund has shifted the paths of redistribution and muted the separatist demands of the rich regions, while the Committee of the Regions set up by the Maastricht Treaty has institutionalised lobbying and involved the regional elites more closely in inter-governmental organisation (they are appointed by the Council on the recommendation of the member states), thus confining them firmly to the definition of a national position. For 'regional' states such as Spain or Italy, this extended regional integration must be seen as increasing the central power, rather than as a major handicap to

³³ A good many writers seized on this idea in the 1960s: it was advocated in turn by Denis de Rougemont (*Vers l'Europe des régions*, 1962); Guy Héraut (*L'Europe des ethnies*, 1963); Francisco Compagne (*L'Europe des régions*, 1964); Robert Lafont (*La Révolution régionaliste*, 1967), even before becoming a subject of academic study after the Geneva colloquium which was attended by Jean-Louis Quermonne (*Naissance de l'Europe des régions*, 1968). Similar hope is placed in the regionalist dynamic by Claude de Grandrut, *Europe, le temps des régions* (Paris: Librairie générale de jurisprudence, 1996), and by Jean Labasse, 'Géopolitique et régions d'Europe', *L'information géographique*, Vol. 3 (1991), 89–98, and Jean-Jacques Gouguet, 'Les dangers de l'intégration économique pour une Europe fédérale des régions', *Cadmos*, 54 (summer 1991), 85–98.

³⁴ Which is the tragic paradox of the European Union, in the view of the Japanese economist Kenichi Ohmae: *The End of the Nation-State: the rise of regional economies* (London: HarperCollins, 1996).

sovereignty.³⁵ Finally, the sustained commitment to federalism displayed by all three of these states throughout the construction of Europe is intended to pave the way for a process of internal federalisation which at present is still beset with intolerable tensions. It could even be seen, additionally, as a display of national *savoir-faire*, a way to hold up the Italian, Belgian or Spanish ‘model’ to the admiration of their European partners. If a sovereign power can translate its experience of federalism into European terms, this will doubtless confer on that power a prestige transcending all institutional engineering; and it can subsequently capitalise on that prestige when confirming allegiances within its own borders. Without harking back to the Italian inspiration of Article 38 of the European Defence Community (EDC) Treaty, it may suffice to recall the plan for ‘European union’ which failed in 1975: its heavily federalist tone was due to the influence of the Belgian prime minister, Leo Tindemans – who was also the architect of the constitutional revision of 1970 which put an end to the unitary Belgian state.

Exporting the national ideal

When the ‘heavyweights’ of European construction found it necessary to moderate their old aspirations to political and diplomatic supremacy, inherited from the ‘concert of states’ concept which they were so reluctant to abandon, each continued to nurse the ambition of modelling a united Europe on its own political culture. The dream of building a ‘French’ or ‘German’ – or even ‘English’ – style Europe has been a powerful inspiration since the 1950s, whether as a conscious aim or as something to be pursued actively through strong-arm tactics. It is inseparable from the ideological assertion of a model which is viewed as unsurpassable, both because of its (allegedly) exceptional historical origin and because of its (alleged) adaptability to present conditions. To propagate one’s own national ideal throughout the continent of Europe is a way to prolong the old quest for leadership – even if the concept is now clad in the less warlike garb of proposals (mostly French or German) for methods of state action and the division of governmental responsibilities.

At the heart of the world-view of most French leaders lies an idealised vision of France which directs their relationship to Europe, seen as the instrument for realising that vision.³⁶ Thus, since the Schuman plan, French politicians, whatever their affiliations, have striven to infuse into the institutional and economic development of Europe the grand axioms of their own fundamental culture – Jacobinism. This Jacobinism has three main features: a contractual and messianic concept of the nation; a demanding concept of sovereignty; and a *dirigiste* approach to government. This lowest-common-denominator Jacobinism is subscribed to by the over-

³⁵ See Françoise Massert-Pierard, *L’Europe dans tous ses Etats: entre mythe et contrainte communautaire?* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1993); *eadem*, ‘L’identité institutionnelle des régions au sein de l’Union européenne’, *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, Vol. 5, no. 1, *Les identités territoriales* (spring 1998).

³⁶ Nicolas Rousselier, ‘La ligne de fuite. L’idée d’Europe dans la culture politique française’, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’Histoire*, Vol. 44 (Oct.–Dec. 1994), 103–12; Frédéric Bastien, ‘L’identité française et l’intégration européenne’, *Relations Internationales*, Vol. 90 (summer 1997), 203–220.

whelming majority of French leaders and influences their policy on Europe. Rooted in revolution and cultivated in a powerful juridical matrix designed to turn the state into the legal personification of the nation (its 'breath of life'),³⁷ this doctrine is the source of France's reiterated insistence on building a Europe which is neither an ethnic and cultural community nor an empire, but a political community. France, accustomed since 1789 to see itself as a republic whose struggles have universal value,³⁸ is happiest with the idea of a Europe which would incarnate the universal in the particular and distil universal principles (the rights of man) from territorial policies. From this viewpoint, visions of a 'shoreless Europe' (François Perroux) or 'Eurafrica' (Gaston Defferre) or 'Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals' (De Gaulle) – all of which seek to merge a shared universal with a particular identity, to create a breeding ground for democratic globalism and a heartland of declaratory diplomacy – are nothing but a transposition of the idea of France as a Great Nation. Moreover, the idea of 'the general will' which nourishes the Jacobin conception of indivisible sovereignty dictates the French insistence that the European dynamic must depend entirely on a dialogue among those powers endowed with the most irreproachable attributes of sovereignty. (The most notable illustrations of this are the Elysée Treaty of 1963 and the subsequent Franco–West German summits, the creation of the Council of Europe and Article D of the Maastricht Treaty, whereby the Council 'supplies the necessary motive power'.) The same idea explains France's concomitant rejection of a Europe conceived as a mere juristic community shaped not so much by elected representatives as by lawyers. This idea of regaining sovereignty through the 'concert of states' also emerges in the voluntarist approach to economic and monetary union (true sovereignty resides not so much in the right to mint coins as in the possession of a coinage that matters), and to the idea of a common foreign policy ('Mr CFP will speak for the Union'). Finally, in accordance with their underlying Jacobin concept of a state bent on transforming society, French elites have often been tempted to export their *dirigiste* planning into community politics (the High Authority of the ECSC envisaged by Jean Monnet), or at the very least, to serve it up as an inoffensive form of protectionism. European industrial policy, as envisioned by French governments, was the favourite stamping ground of a state that consciously embodied a superior principle of rationality, whether it was advocating 'grand projects' that 'championed Europe' (Airbus and Ariane) or aid to lame ducks (through a common strategy against foreign competition).³⁹ All this helps to explain why, from 1957 into the 1980s, France was able to pose as the

³⁷ As expressed in quasi-metaphysical terms by Raymond Carré de Malberg in his celebrated *Contribution à la théorie générale de l'état* (Paris: Alcan, 1922).

³⁸ François Furet comments that 'France's originality lay in the way she turned her own unique (that is, national) political culture into something universal: what was exceptional in that culture did not separate France from other nations, but made her exemplary, set her up as a model' (*La République du centre. La fin de l'exception française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1988). See also Christian Saint-Etienne, *L'exception française* (Paris: A. Colin, 1992).

³⁹ Elie Cohen, *Le Colbertisme high tech* (Paris: Hachette-Pluriel, 1992).

engine of European construction – while keeping the real defenders of ‘Europe’ in a lowly position in its governments and majorities at home.

The ‘Lamers’ paper, published by the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in 1994, mercilessly revealed the differences between the political cultures of France and Germany and so ended the ‘constructive ambiguity’ which for three decades had enabled France and Germany to work in tandem on the ‘making of Europe’. It also revealed the superior coherence of the other presiding idea of European construction, an idea that draws part of its inspiration from Christian socialism. The three components of this idea jointly constitute a strongly attractive vision of a federal Europe: a dissociation between political identity and cultural identity, decentralisation and the institutionalisation of management. It is generally agreed that before Germany actually existed as a political entity it was a ‘subjective’ nation whose coherence was grounded much more in socio-cultural traditions (linguistic, regional, religious and corporative) than in democratic citizenship. These are all elements in a ‘German exception’ that is very real but should not be confused with the old theory of the *Sonderweg*.⁴⁰ It is not hard to see that the ‘German temptation’ to distinguish between citizenship and nationality is more conducive than the French example to the ‘community citizenship’ first outlined in the Maastricht Treaty.⁴¹ As for the ‘decentralising’ model, its strength lies in the long roots it can put down into German history.⁴² Without over-stressing the federative principles that governed the Holy Roman Empire (an imperial chamber of justice was created as early as 1495), it is true to say that these principles fostered a political union of states which long served as a model in a pre-national Europe that is now forgotten.⁴³ Moreover, it is not irrelevant that the German Confederation of the nineteenth century was a ‘pure’ federation in that it was a free and voluntary union, which did not claim sovereignty but was already encroaching on that of its member states by imposing monarchy as a political and institutional norm. Nor is it irrelevant that the Empire of 1871 was a ‘federalist compromise’ in which the central state was subsidised by the *Länder*. And Article 30 of the Basic Law of 1949 is a straightforward assertion of the principle of subsidiarity which had long been a subject of debate in German Catholic circles.⁴⁴ Thus the ‘subsidiary state’, whether it expresses a certain concept of the government of complex societies or the predispositions of a certain

⁴⁰ There is a very clear discussion of this question in Florence Gauzy, *L'exception allemande XIXe–XXe siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1998).

⁴¹ Yvonne Bollman, *La tentation allemande* (Paris: Editions Michalon, 1998). On differing interpretations of the concept of the nation in France and Germany, see Louis Dumont, ‘Sur l’idéologie politique française. Une perspective comparative’, *Le Débat*, vol. 58 (January–February 1990); Jean-Baptiste Neveu, ‘Nations, nationalités, ethnies, clans, tribus et le reste’, *Le Banquet* (1st semester 1994), 93–128; La Nation, *Conflits actuels*, 1 (autumn–winter 1997), 1–132.

⁴² See Thomas Nipperdey, *Reflexions sur l’histoire allemande* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

⁴³ Frédéric E. Schrader, *L’Allemagne avant l’Etat-nation. Le corps germanique 1648–1806* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).

⁴⁴ Jean Wydert, ‘Une contribution à l’idée fédéraliste de la pensée sociale catholique: le principe de subsidiarité’, in Martine Méheut, ed., *Le fédéralisme est-il pensable pour une Europe prochaine?* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1994).

political culture, is latent in the European Union and expresses an idea of German hegemony, even if this sometimes takes the form of a naive exemplarism.⁴⁵

The third feature of this model, the ‘social economics of the market’ – a kind of free-trade capitalism-by-consent – has had a particular fascination for Europe insofar as it has helped Germany push through its reconstruction and economic development before successfully reabsorbing its eastern half. This is a participatory model, assuming high wages and a high level of social welfare, which gives workers’ representatives a voice in management: it is best suited to a state which acts discreetly, as arbitrator rather than actor. Profoundly liberal, it has tended to recoil from the *dirigiste* French-style Europe embodied in Euratom, the CAP and the High Authority of the ECSC. It is not surprising that in the 1990s some countries in the Visegrad group have succumbed to the attraction of this model.

Stabilising institutions

‘Europe’, as a political idea, is unprecedented, and is largely a matter of representations which emerge strongly during major debates (over the EDC or Maastricht, for example), and more modestly during election campaigns for the European Parliament. As Marc Abélès has observed, Europe is a ‘symptomatic object’ which mirrors our confusions and our hopes.⁴⁶ The theme of Europe is so ideologically plastic that it can fit effortlessly into the discourse of any national political party. Moreover, the increasing integration of political elites into the community gives an idea of how Europe can act as a guarantee of ‘pluralist constitutional’ stability.

A balanced party system can, of course, serve the needs of legitimacy, protest and alternation. For forty years, Europe (or rather the three main notions which various people have of Europe – as necessary, as maleficent or as incomplete) has nourished those three functions, which perpetuate political life within strictly natural boundaries. Thus it reinforces the legitimacy of major governing parties in the states that are involved in the construction of Europe. For them, Europe is a ‘necessity’ which encourages a strategy of openness (witness the rejection of the *Sonderweg* by Germany’s Christian Democrats). It encourages both democratisation (witness the normalisation pursued by the Greek and Spanish socialists) and prudent reform (as with the French SFIO in the 1950s and its successor, the French Socialist Party, after 1983). It can underpin economic reconstruction, even if the teeth of opposition, as in the Gaullist France of the 1960s or the liberal France of the 1980s; and it can do

⁴⁵ Thus Ursula Münch, ‘Le fédéralisme à l’allemande: aboutissement de l’histoire d’un pays et alternative pour l’Europe’, in Günther Ammon and Michael Hartmeier, ed., *Fédéralisme et centralisme* (Paris: Economica, 1998). On the other hand, it is possible to argue that the comparison between German federalism and the European Community shows that both have the same deficiencies when it comes to joint decision-making (i.e. both require unanimity). On this see Fritz Scharpf, ‘The Joint-Decision Trap: Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration’, *Public Administration*, Vol. 3 (autumn 1988), 239–78; Xavier Volmerange, *La fédéralisme allemand et l’intégration européenne* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994).

⁴⁶ Marc Abélès, *En attente d’Europe* (Paris: Hachette, 1996), 13.

the same for the stern policies implemented by such leaders as José María Aznar in Spain and Jacques Chirac in France (1997). On the other hand, Europe is a useful scapegoat for the populist orators of opposition parties in the member states. For the Italian and French communist parties it represents 'big capital'; for the French *Rassemblement pour la République* of the late 1970s it was the 'foreign party'; for the same party in the 1950s, and for the French National Front in the 1990s, it was the 'stateless technocracy'. And again, the chronic incompleteness of 'Europe' is a gift to would-be constructive parties in opposition, being seen as perfectible both socially ('the workers' Europe' hailed by the French socialists in 1981) and democratically (thus the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the British Labour Party). From a broader perspective, a commitment to Europe or a desire to 'reinvigorate' its construction can be a useful mobilisation tool for party leaders who suspect that they may be losing out in the national political lottery. If Guy Mollet (in the 1950s) and François Mitterrand (in the 1980s) were such ardent advocates of Europe, it was because they were anxious to put, or to keep, the socialists in power; if Helmut Kohl sanctioned the publication of the provocative 'Lamers paper' in 1994, it was to help an exhausted and threadbare CDU find its way to a new identity.

Another commonplace is that political integration can pose a problem to an entire nation: it makes political life crystallise round a single question, a single debate. Even if the question of Europe is not central to national political life, it tends to loom ever larger in the eyes of electors, whether their main preoccupation is unemployment, social welfare or immigration. In France, for example, the self-reflexive character of the debate is conclusively indicated by the progressive restructuring of opinion on the construction of Europe. The theme first entered the public arena in 1972, with the referendum on Britain's candidacy for the Common Market; was sanctioned electorally in 1976, when the Constitutional Council ruled that the European elections were compatible with sovereignty; was legitimised diplomatically in 1978, when the 'greater market' was put at the top of the political agenda; and opened up a new fault line in 1992, with the referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. This new split, with its strong cultural orientation, proved difficult to integrate with a political system shaped by the old division between right and left; but this did not prevent some analysts from seeing it as an 'instrument of political renewal'.⁴⁷ The splitting and subsequent recombination of the right after the European elections in June 1999 are clear evidence for this.

A familiar notion, again, is that a national political system can be stimulated by the permanent jockeying for position among party elites. In this way, European elections, which since 1979 have been fought largely on national questions,⁴⁸ help to reinforce the party system. For example, the preparation of candidate lists is not

⁴⁷ Pascal Perrineau, 'L'enjeu européen, révélateur de la mutation des clivages politiques dans les années 90', in François d'Arcy and Luc Roban, eds., *De la Vème République à l'Europe. Hommage à Jean-Louis Quermonne* (Paris: Presses de science politique, 1996), 57.

⁴⁸ Jean-Luc Chabot, *Elections européennes, suffrage partisan* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1980).

the responsibility of the Euro-parties or of any transnational group, but of the national party apparatus. Similarly, campaign strategies are conceived in terms of forthcoming general elections and not of European elections, which are seen simply as dry runs ('second order elections'). Finally, it is obvious that a seat in the European Parliament is commonly seen as a transitory stage in a political career: it can be either a jumping-off point for a career in national politics or a means of keeping afloat after an electoral defeat at home.⁴⁹

That Europe should help preserve, and even strengthen, national political systems might be seen as a perverse outcome of the federalist thinking which is emerging at every level in Europe. Though federalism is *a priori* a twofold menace to those systems (putting them in danger of dissolving into separatism or being absorbed by Europe), the contradictory tensions engendered by federalist thinking actually help to perpetuate them.

Another factor is that the growing participation of party elites in Community institutions is giving them access to a new institutional culture – yet another variant on the culture of government and politics, and one which, issuing from a process of political and practical co-operation which involves continual compromise, could be defined as a 'political culture of compromise'.⁵⁰ Commission staff, members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and members of the European Parliament all face a demand for transparency which is at the basis of the community's work and which gives a central role to information, exchange and expertise.⁵¹ With its foregrounding of consensus and its permanent accountability to its partners, the Community's political culture may produce a world in which the search for harmony replaces the will to power, and rationality is invoked instead of the rhetoric of imagination and discord. These Community ideals are gradually permeating party cultures, or even party ideologies, thus encouraging opposition parties, when they gain power, to play down divisions and foster continuity with the preceding regime (so in France in 1981, Italy in 1993, Spain in 1996) – and thus, in the end, to set in stone the differing national forms assumed by constitutional pluralism.

Like the power of transnational capitalist links or post-modern culture, the idea that the construction of Europe must be supranational has often seemed clearly to underpin the argument that national sovereignty must inevitably be eroded. While it is true that integration has caused some fragmentation of the state apparatus, this has not automatically enfeebled the nation-state as such. If that enfeeblement has been moderated, and the nation-state has found in the Community a means of

⁴⁹ Jacques Gerstlé, 'La dynamique nationale d'une campagne européenne', in Pascal Perrineau and Colette Ysmal, eds., *Le vote des Douze. Les élections européennes de juin 1994* (Paris: Département d'études politiques du Figaro et Presses de science politique, 1995), 203–28.

⁵⁰ Marc Abélès and Irène Bellier, 'La Commission européenne: du compromis culturel à la culture politique du compromis', *Revue française de science politique*, 46/3 (June 1996), 431–56.

⁵¹ See Marc Abélès, *La vie quotidienne au Parlement européen* (Paris: Hachette, 1992), ch. 5; Pascal Lamy, 'Choses vues d'Europe', *Esprit*, 175 (October 1991), 76–7.

redeployment rather than an element of decline, it is because, since the war, there have been factors at work which favour the conservation and revitalisation of that state. This could be seen as a result of the actual way in which the Community has been 'built': because everything has been done by negotiation, the national parliaments (more wary of 'federal' ideas) have been unable to exercise steady control, while the decision-making process, being chiefly in the hands of COREPER, gave the maximum scope to national governments which set themselves up as guardians of the national 'exception'.⁵² Moreover, a division of labour has increasingly been seen as necessary whereby the Community pursues its vocation as the economic regulator of civil society, while the nation-state remains the main arena of political exchange – i.e. of democratic accountability.⁵³ Thus it is not inaccurate to say that 'the member states have given the Union its means to action insofar as they remodel their basic sovereignty'.⁵⁴

We must also consider the historical background. Five factors, which are all too often overlooked, have contributed powerfully to the periodic marginalisation of the federal thinking favoured by certain pro-Europeans, and to making the sovereign nation-state the 'master' of the treaties. The political generation that emerged in the 1950s from the experience of the Resistance was emotionally committed to patriotism; in the 1960s the right to national self-determination was underlined by decolonisation; in the 1950s and 1960s the attributes and responsibilities of governments increased owing to the rise of the welfare state; the crisis of the 1970s encouraged a new nationalism in economic policies; and in the 1980s, the collapse of Soviet universalism gave fresh lustre to the 'glory of nations'. The power of this historical context explains why the nation-state has been found to be compatible with European integration, and also why the former has, for the reasons examined in this article, been able to exploit the latter. In this context, and for these reasons, I am inclined to believe that if the European Community has stood tall for nearly forty years, it has been on the back of the nation-state.

⁵² Renaud Dehousse, 'Les Etats et l'Union européenne: les effets de l'intégration', in Vincent Wright and Sabino Cassese, eds., *La recomposition de l'Etat en Europe* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996), 63.

⁵³ On this see Giandomenico Majone, *La Communauté européenne: un Etat régulateur* (Paris: Montchrestien, 1996); Pierre Manent, 'La démocratie sans la nation?', *Commentaire*, Vol. 19, no. 75 (autumn 1996), 569–75; Luc Rouban, 'L'Europe comme dépassement de l'Etat', *Revue Suisse de Science Politique*, Vol. 4 (winter 1998), 57–79.

⁵⁴ Florence Chaltiel, 'La souveraineté de l'Etat et l'Union européenne. L'exemple français', Thèse de droit public fondamental (Université Pierre Mendès France–Grenoble II, 1999), 476.