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Political Union: from slogan to reality

Thierry Chopin

Summary:

With the crisis vital debate over the future of European integration has been launched notably regarding the issue of "political union". This debate that started several months ago at the highest level in Germany was echoed just a few days ago by the President of the French Republic, François Hollande who declared that he wanted to take a European initiative, notably regarding issues related to "European economic government" and "political union". However starting debate on a clear basis supposes doing away with imprecision and vagueness regarding conditions and intentions. Beyond this the project for European "political union" requires concrete proposals which are possible if political will is also real. For 20 years German leaders (Karl Lamers and Wolfgang Schäuble in 1994 then Joschka Fischer in 2000) have made proposals to their partners in France but each time there has been no significant response on the part of the French leaders. As the European elections of 2014 approach they provide a real opportunity to open this debate up at last. Let us hope that this time the chance will not be missed.

With the crisis vital debate about the future of European integration has arisen over fiscal federalism, banking union, the status of non-euro zone countries and about the UK in particular. However in spite of growing citizen mistrust with regard to the European institutions, the reforms that are underway carefully avoid fundamental political issues: how can we simplify the European decision making process so that it is more transparent and readily understandable for the citizens? How can we strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the decisions taken, which for the time being are mainly the result of a technocratic, diplomatic process? [1] However this debate started in Germany at the highest level a few months ago. Proposals from the latter about the future of the European Union have also grown in number over the last few months. Thought in this direction has also been growing in Poland. This debate must take hold across the entire Union. However whilst many taboos are now being overcome regarding the future of European integration; a non-debate over Europe has become clear in many EU Member States and this was the case in France until recently. In this respect it is remarkable that the President of the French Republic François Hollande announced just a few days ago that he wanted to take an initiative at the European level, notably regarding issues pertaining to "European economic government" and "political union" [2], without however saying what

this might entail [3]. But the re-casting of the European Union supposes clarification regarding terms and intentions so that debate can be launched on a clear base.

FEDERATION, POLITICAL EUROPE, POLITICAL UNION: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

In just a few months, due to the effects of the euro crisis the issue of "Political Union" has finally been transferred from the academic arena [4] to the political agenda [5]. Under the pressure of the crisis the issue of "Political Europe" has returned to the heart of public debate in the shape of a call for progress towards "budgetary federalism" and even "political union". Projects like this, although desirable, suppose however a certain amount of caution and a certain number of conditions if we are to prevent them becoming abstract mantras, as it has been with Political Europe and Federal Europe which only leads to further disillusion. When on 12th May 2000 Joschka Fischer delivered a speech at the Humboldt University on the future of the European Union he pleaded in support of the European "federation" which Robert Schuman had already called for in the 1950's. For his part Jacques Delors' idea, which defined Europe as a "federation of Nation-States" [6], was so successful that for a time it became

1. A initial version of this text was first published by Thierry Chopin and Michel Foucher (dir.), in the *Rapport Schuman sur l'Europe. L'état de l'Union 2013, Lignes de repères, 2013* - <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/>

2. François Hollande : "Several times Germany has said that it is ready for Political Union, for a new stage in integration. France is also ready to provide this Political Union with content (...). This is no longer a question of political sensitivity but one of urgency," speech by the President of the Republic during the press conference of 16th May 2013.

3. We might note the only exception which is to create the position of a "real President" to lead "economic government" "appointed for a long mandate and who would play this role only."

4. On this issue see the work by S. Hix, including *What's wrong with the European Union and How to Fix it?* (Cambridge Polity Press, 2008) ; we might also refer to T. Chopin, "The Limits of the Functionalist Method : Politicisation as an Indispensable means to Settle the EU's Legitimacy Deficit", in O. Cramme (ed.), *An EU "Fit for Purpose in the Global Age"*, Policy Network, Ellamep, London School of Economics, vol. 1, 2009 and with L. Macek, "Après Lisbonne, le défi de la politisation de l'Union européenne", in *Les Etudes du CERI*, n°165, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Sciences Po, 2010.

5. See for example S. Goulard and M. Monti, *De la démocratie en Europe*. Flammarion, 2012.

6. Cf. G. Ricard-Nihoul, *Pour une Fédération européenne d'Etats-nations. La vision de Jacques Delors revisitée*, éditions Larcier, coll. « Essais », 2012.

the political catchword, or conversely a taboo being used as a foil.

However it is not about having an “ideological” approach to the federation, it is rather more a question of demystifying it and deeming federalism simply as a means of organising powers, based on the principle of the distribution of competences between various levels of government. The problem lies in that the dominant doctrine quite wrongly assimilates federalism with the Federal State [7]. But the concept of the State is problematic and is not of much use in European affairs: the Union is not a State and the distribution of respective State and other administrative competences are contested. European integration has been built on the rejection of granting the Union sovereign prerogatives – as early as 1954, with the rejection of the European Community of Defence; France refused the constitution of European defence – because of the States’ protection of their sovereignty. The Union is now devoted to tasks of redistribution (CAP, cohesion policy) which cause appropriation disputes.

However on a less theoretical and a more empirical level it is easy to see that the European Union already disposes of federal tools: one currency for the Eurozone, one central bank, a budget, a civil service and a Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage, just to name a few. Moreover, and in spite of the failure of the treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, which at first led to an obvious wish on the part of the national political elites to relinquish all reference to any kind of “federal” future for European integration, by a sort of a trick of history, the current crisis is pushing towards a federalisation of the European economic policy: implementation of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM); strengthening of the European Central Bank (ECB), a federal institution ‘par excellence’; strengthening of economic governance mechanisms (“six-pack”, “budgetary pact”, “two pack”, are all elements that define genuine budgetary federalism, which is now vital if we are to overcome the crisis [8]. With this in view we can easily see the double drawback that lies in the unfortunate expression of “the federal leap”: its anxiety generating nature (because it sounds like the “leap into the unknown”, which is never reassuring) and the gap between it and the reality of the European Union, which is of a federal nature. [9]

However, if the idea of federation might be applied to a certain degree to the Union [10], we have to note that the choice of the word itself is far from being shared by all Member States and they cannot even be pronounced, nor are they acceptable in some places. Some Member States – like Germany and Belgium – are at ease with this political idea because their contemporary political and judicial culture is based on a system of shared competences which form the heart of the federal idea; conversely, and also for cultural reasons, it is often considered a taboo in France since it is incompatible with the “obsession for unity” on the part of the authorities in office – so typical of French political and administrative centralisation [11]; in the UK the term is even deemed a swear word (the f-word); in other Member States, notably in Central and Eastern Europe, the idea echoes submission to the USSR, which stood as a federation (whilst its political form was naturally closer to that of an empire). For many countries in the Western Balkans the use of the word is problematic and conjures up the history of the Yugoslav Federation. For its part the expression of “Political Europe” is affected by ambiguity, and even by an intrinsic contradiction [12]. On the one hand Political Europe conjures up a “federalist” ideal that aims to go beyond national sovereignties to the benefit of community institutions that are supposed to guarantee a common European interest, starting with the European Commission. On the other it conjures up the determination of some States, notably France – of maintaining and consolidating a world position marked by a strategy of differentiation and even sometimes of opposition, vis-à-vis the USA and which goes together with a discourse on national exception. From this second standpoint the States, and more specifically the “main capitals” (Berlin, London, Paris) – have to play a leading role which leads to the primacy of intergovernmental logic and the pre-eminence of the Council over the Commission.

The confusion over political vocabulary in terms of European issues can lead to harmful misunderstandings. In the economic area, to quote just one topical example, it affects thought about the reform of the Union’s economic governance. The proposal of “economic governance” [13] finds much less of a consensus than at first it would appear whereas it pinpoints the real issue: the need for clarification, simplification and

7. Against this dominant theory read the work by O. Beaud, *Théorie de la Fédération*, Presses universitaires de France, 2007.

8. Cf. J. Pisani-Ferry, *Le réveil des démons. La crise de l’euro et comment nous en sortir*, Paris, Fayard, 2011 ; see also, P. Artus and I. Gravet, *La crise de l’euro. Comprendre les causes. En sortir par de nouvelles institutions*, Armand Colin, 2012, chap. 3.

9. Y. Bertoncini, « Saut fédéral ou unions politiques ? » *Le Mot de Notre Europe*, 22nd June 2012

10. See O. Beaud, « Peut-on penser l’Union européenne comme une Fédération ? », in F. Esposito and N. Levrat (eds), *Europe : de l’intégration à la fédération*, Institut européen de l’Université de Genève, Bruylant, 2010, p. 71-103.

11. However we should note that quite paradoxically and contrary to preconceived ideas the Eurobarometer Survey 78 from Autumn 2012 indicates that the majority of the French (55%) support a « federation of nation-states » far ahead of the Germans for example (46%). This might explain the ambiguity of this expression. Cf. Standard Eurobarometer Standard Autumn 2012 – http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/78/eb78_en.htm

12. We owe it to N. Gnesotto for having highlighted this contradiction in « L’Europe politique a-t-elle un avenir ? », in N. Gnesotto and M. Rocard, (dir.), *Notre Europe*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2008.

13. Cf J-F. Jamet, *L’Europe peut-elle se passer d’un gouvernement économique ?*, La documentation française, 2e édition, 2012.

legitimation of the European economic policy. But the fractures which this debate causes are the same as those which run through national political cultures in Europe. "Government" is synonymous to politicisation and interventionism in France, and conjures up the idea of independently implemented rules in Germany and raises the spectre of a Federal State in the UK and in Central Europe. Since they cannot agree on a common design for their political and economic system, i.e. in reality for federalism – the Member States cannot agree on a common government and ultimately on a collective management of European public goods (macro-economic stabilisation policy, climate and energy, European defence, etc.) [14]. And yet not only is an agreement like this now necessary but it is a matter of urgency!

POLITICAL UNION: A PRIORITY

For the last four years priority has been given to settling the economic crisis and at first this was understandable. To recover sovereignty over the markets and thereby the ability to decide over their future, European States, notably those in the Eurozone – understood that they had to form a more coherent entity. Hence stricter common rules have been adopted in budgetary matters and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) has entered into force; furthermore the project for banking union has moved forwards over the last few months.

During the European Council of December 2012 Herman van Rompuy presented a roadmap for the achievement of real economic and monetary union [15], drafted together with the Presidents of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup. The economic strategy had been clarified: on the one hand macro-economic and financial supervision should be exercised Europe-wide with the necessary corrective tools in order to be credible and effective; on the other hand the Eurozone should have its own means to prevent and settle the crises, which one State alone would not be able to withstand. This long-awaited clarification is indeed very welcome. Now we might hope that the Member States will subscribe to it and rapidly implement the recommendations contained within this

report. Indeed we have too often seen the announcement of measures during European Councils taking months to enter into force due to a lack of agreement on the means to achieve their implementation.

Given the increasing federalisation of decisions regarding economic policy European citizens are still confused however. [16] The polls highlight a worrying decrease in citizen confidence vis-à-vis the main European institutions (see map) [17]. Hence, just as the European institutions are extending their competences and are being called to take decisions in sensitive areas that affect the very heart of democratic sovereignty they no longer seem to enjoy adequate legitimate capital.

Given the transfer of competences that these common measures imply the issue of political union cannot be avoided. European decisions have to enjoy adequate legitimacy in the eyes of the citizen and decision making mechanisms must be sufficiently simple and clear for them to be effective and transparent. Without this, economic union will not receive citizens' support and questions will continue to be raised about the political vision which justifies European decisions and therefore their legitimacy. No Member State is now in a position in which its citizens "blindly" trust their elites to optimally manage their best interests in European matters. Citizens want to have their say. This has been clear for several years, and it is all the more so with the crisis.

In reality the crisis, increasing mistrust on the part of the citizens regarding the European institutions and ongoing reforms, place the European Union before a major political challenge. Either European leaders come to agreement on sufficiently concrete progress in order to rise to the criticism made of its lack of legitimacy and its executive deficit and therefore create a European *demos*, to provide European citizenship with meaning, or they run the risk of seeing the ineluctable rise of euroscepticism, if progress towards integration does not go together with democratic control and adequate decision making power. Many Europeans may turn back to their national state, which they will feel is the only one to guarantee their political rights.

If we ignore the need for a clear political contract economic integration as a whole will be weakened and even threatened.

14. On this point see work by S. Collignon on "The European Republic" and notably *The European Republic. Reflections on the Political Economy of a Future Constitution*, Bertelsmann Foundation, 2003 and also (with C. Paul), *Pour la République européenne*, Odile Jacob, 2008.

15. *Towards a Genuine Economic and Monetary Union*, 5th December 2012 ; also refer to the conclusions of the European Council of 13th and 14th December 2012 – http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/fr/ec/134364.pdf

16. Cf. T. Chopin and J.-F. Jamet, « L'Europe sans les Européens », *Libération*, 14th December 2012.

17. Eurobarometer Standard 79, december 2012. op cit

18. See Ulrike Guérot, "The Euro Debate in Germany : Towards Political Union?", *European Council on Foreign Relations, ECFR*, 5 september 2012.

19. Cf. *Final Report of the Future of Europe Group of the Foreign Ministers (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal Spain)* 17th September 2012 - <http://www.ms.gov.pl/files/docs/komunikaty/20120918RAPORT/report.pdf>

20. Cf. *A Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine EMU. Launching a European Debate*, *European Commission*, 28th November 2012.

21. Cf. "The Future of Europe: Merkel Pushes for Convention to Draft New EU Treaty", *Spiegel Online International*, 27th August 2012.

22. *Die Zeit*, 29th August 2012.

23. *Speech on the State of the Union 2012 to the European Parliament*, 12th September 2012.

24. Cf. *Speech by J-C Trichet, then President of the European Central Bank on the occasion of the award of the Charlemagne Prize 2011 in Aachen on 2nd June 2011*.

25. F. Hollande also said: "Political Union comes afterwards, it is the stage that will follow budgetary union, banking union and social union", interview given to *Le Monde* on 18th October 2012.

26. T. Chopin, J.-F. Jamet, F.-X. Priollaude, "A Political Union for Europe", *European Issue, Robert Schuman Foundation*, September 2012 - http://www.robert-schuman.eu/doc/questions_europe/je-252-fr.pdf Regarding recent articles we might consult Sebastian Dullian and José Ignacio Torreblanca, « What is Political Union ? », *Policy Brief, ECFR*, December 2012 and Philippe de Schoutheete and Stefano Micossi, « On Political Union in Europe ; the changing landscape of decision-making and political accountability », *CEPS Essay*, n°4, 21st February 2013.

Furthermore no European decision maker challenges this. Debate is ongoing in several Member States – it has notably been started at the highest level in Germany [18]. We should also stress the political importance of the article signed in September 2012 by the Foreign Ministers of eleven EU Member States [19]. It might be considered as the first bid to formalise a project for "political union". Thought has been launched on a European level as part of the task given to the "Group of 4" (Herman van Rompuy, José-Manuel Barroso, Mario Draghi and Jean-Claude Juncker) but political union is the poor relation in this debate for the time being and is the focus of very few detailed proposals. There is a notable exception to this however without giving a definite timetable: the Commission's recommendation for a common external representation for the Eurozone. Hence the Eurozone would speak with one voice within the international organisations such as the IMF for example [20].

Furthermore thought on this issue does not seem to be very structured. Angela Merkel seemed to say that she wanted to have a new Convention [21] and Mario Draghi, President of the ECB deemed that "those who believe that only true federation could be sustainable are expecting too much" [22] whilst conversely José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission spoke in support of a "democratic federation of Nation-States." [23] In addition to this, whilst many taboos are melting away regarding the future of European integration, debate over the political and democratic dimension of the reform of the European institutions is lacking in many Member States, notably in France. Beyond all the discourses, nothing is happening. Angela Merkel and Michel Barnier have spoken in support of the election of the President of the European Commission by universal suffrage; Jean-Claude Trichet has recommended the creation of a post of Eurozone Finance Minister [24] but everyone is putting these innovations off to the future, and even further, which avoids having to make a commitment. [25]

The leaders of Europe can no longer manage urgency and at the same time put off their more ambitious ideas until later. This is particularly true in France which is still feeling the after effects of 2005, with each party fearing division over the reform of the European institutions. But this is a misinterpretation because

both the supporters of the "yes" and the "no" mainly shared the same goal of wanting to make Europe more democratic.

Beyond the French case, some politicians indeed point to the resounding defeat of the negative referendum over the draft treaty for a European constitution. And yet it is exactly this very scenario which might be repeated if they do not strengthen the political and democratic dimension of the European project. Indeed the transfer of major economic competences over to Europe without a matching transfer of legitimacy might cause the rejection of the former, since many citizens feel that they are losing their decision making power. The new powers acquired by Europe would be deemed a technocratic and diplomatic construction over which the citizens have no influence. The mistake made in 2005 could very well happen again. The best way to avoid it is to launch public debate over the real means to strengthen the legitimacy of European decisions.

As the European elections of 2014 draw closer it is time to open up this debate without conditioning it according to the content of the policies themselves. This is a mistake made by the van Rompuy Report. Europe should not be more democratic and clear because it takes integration further. It should be more democratic and clearer because it is good for the Union and the Eurozone whatever the perimeter of its competences. The extension of competences alone is enough to make the present deficits in legitimacy and clarity even greater. We have no time to waste.

"POLITICAL UNION": IT IS NO LONGER A MATTER OF WHEN BUT HOW

Beyond this the project of European "Political Union" demands real progress which will be possible as soon as political will is tangible. This is why a report entitled "A Political Union for Europe" was presented to the European Council detailing pathways and the conditions for their implementation. [26]

On 10th December 2012 the Nobel Peace Prize was formally awarded to the three leaders of the European Union: the presidents of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. This polyarchy at the head of the Union alone symbolises

the political complexity from which Europe suffers, both within and outside of its borders. In a crisis situation which demands a great deal of responsiveness in terms of decision-making Europeans have discovered with frustration the limits of the Union's governance and its "executive deficit".

Without changing the treaty, a simple measure would enable the creation of a clearer and more legitimate leadership. To do this the post of president of the Union would simply have to be created the title-holder of which would be elected by the European Parliament after having led the campaign of the party which wins the European elections. The president of the Union would exercise the office of the present presidents of the Commission and the European Council. It is understandable that Herman van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso who are directly concerned by this measure did not suggest it in their report. But this should be the focus of a debate during the European election in 2014. A second proposal would be to redefine the composition of the European Commission. Several options are possible in view of breaking away from the present system in which the composition of the college of commissioners is based on the principle of the equal "representation" of the Member States. Indeed this system tends to reproduce the diplomatic balance within the College that prevails in the Council and also makes the appointment of the commissioners dependent on discussions between Member States. The president of the Commission – or the new president of the Union if the presidency of the Commission and that of the European Council were to merge together – should be able to choose the portfolio attributed to the commissioners (without this being a result of negotiations between States), which is possible without changing the treaties. Also he should be able to rank these portfolios with the creation of "delegate commissioners" and decide on the size of the college of commissioners himself, as is the case when a government is being formed. However this supposes a review of the treaties according to the ordinary procedure.

Apart from the possibility (without changing the treaties) of merging the Presidency of the Commission with that of the European Council in order to strengthen the EU's democratic legitimacy it is necessary to place the Eurogroup under the supervision of the European Parliament by creating a Vice-President of the Commission and of the Council responsible for the euro and economic affairs. This would lead to the creation of a European Finance Ministry as suggested by Pierre Moscovici and Wolfgang Schäuble. This person would joint ensure the role of Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs and he would also be President of the Eurogroup, answering to the European Parliament. He

would be Vice-President of the Commission and of the Council. He would support the work of the Eurogroup in the preparation and follow-up to the euro zone meetings and also the Economic and Financial Committee in view of meetings involving all of the Member States. Under his authority he would have a General Secretariat for the Treasury for the euro zone whose remit would match the goals of fiscal union that is now being created (notably via existing insurance mechanisms and budgetary instruments).

The Vice-President of the Commission and the Council responsible for the euro and economic affairs would be the political face and voice of the euro. He would be responsible for the communication of the Eurogroup's decisions and of the euro zone's external representation within the international financial institutions. He would be responsible for explaining how the euro zone Member States' fiscal and structural policies form a coherent policy mix with the ECB's monetary policy. Finally he would have to speak regularly with the national parliaments or in a conference that would bring together (as a part of the implementation of article 13 of the budgetary pact [27]) the representatives of the economic committees of the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

Apart from its executive deficit the European Union is also suffering from a deficit of legitimacy. The rising power of extremism and populism is a symptom of this. From Sweden to Hungary, including France, Belgium, Norway and Greece various general elections have confirmed the strength of the parties on the far right or far left and of populism which is asserting itself in public debate, the core of which comprises economic, cultural and identity protectionism. Moreover anti-European extremism and populism traditionally denounce the power of the national and European elites. They exploit the challenge made to political and democratic legitimacy of the European institutions.

In terms of strengthening democratic legitimacy both the national and European parliaments [28] have a decisive role to play. The realisation of article 13 in the Stability Treaty would lead to greater involvement by national parliaments in the decisions taken at European level in terms of budgetary control [29]. This might be achieved firstly on the basis of a meeting within a Eurozone Economic and Budgetary Committee comprising members of the European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (except for those from Member States which have not ratified the Stability Treaty), as well as the President of the Finance Committees and Economic Affairs Committees from the Member States' parliaments. The Committee would be able to adopt initiative reports, issue opinions and resolutions. The means for the implementation of

27. Article 13 of the treaty anticipates that, "the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the Contracting Parties will together determine the organisation and promotion of a conference of representatives of the relevant committees of the national Parliaments and representatives of the relevant committees of the European Parliament in order to discuss budgetary policies and other issues covered by this Treaty"

28. On this point we might note Y. Bertoncini, « Les parlements de l'UE et la gouvernance de l'UEM. Quelle dimension parlementaire pour l' « Union politique » ? », Notre Europe – Institut Jacques Delors, 11th April 2013.

29. "We borrow this expression from Nicolas Véron « The Political Redefinition of Europe », Opening Remarks at the Financial Markets Committee (FMK)'s Conference on « The European Parliament and the Financial Market », Stockholm, June 2012; also see T. Chopin, "Towards true European executive power; from governance to government", European Issue, Robert Schuman Foundation, n°274, April 2013 et T. Chopin, « How the EU could overcome its Executive Deficit », Policy Network, 16th May 2013 - http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4400&title=How-the-EU-could-overcome-its-%E2%80%9CExecutive-Deficit%E2%80%9D

article 13 might be set as part of an inter-institutional agreement.

But the question of creating a specific assembly for the Eurozone has to be debated freely. The European Parliament obviously would prefer not to have to compete with this assembly and for it to be one of its sub-committees [30], as the Eurogroup is a sub-committee of the Ecofin Council and the Eurozone Summit is a sub-committee of the European Council. In this instance the Eurozone assembly would convene MEPs from the Eurozone Member States. Alternatively, this assembly might comprise the extension of the experiment enabled by the implementation of article 13. Its existence would however only be political and a modification of the treaties would be necessary for its decisions to be legally valid.

Whatever the solution chosen the legitimacy of the European Parliament would/should be strengthened. At present its composition is not in line with the principle of democratic equity [31]. The number of MEPs per inhabitant for example is more than twice as high in Finland than in France. But given the significant increase in the European Parliament's power as the treaties have been approved, strengthening the democratic legitimacy of this institution, which incidentally is the only one to be elected by direct universal suffrage, comprises/represents a real challenge. The jurisprudence of the German Constitutional Court reminds us of this regularly [32] since it considers, as matters stand, that the European Parliament does not enjoy adequate democratic legitimacy for it to adopt laws that impact significantly the German budget without the prior approval on the part of the Bundestag. A simple solution would comprise having an MEP for X (form example 1) million inhabitants with a minimum of one or two MEPs per Member State. However this would imply a revision of the treaties according to the ordinary procedure.

CONCLUSION

In just a few months and because of the euro crisis the issue of European Political Union been transferred from the academic arena to the political agenda. But the leaders of Europe now have their backs to the wall because declared intentions are no longer enough. Real progress is possible, some without changing the treaties if the political will is real. Europe is facing an existential challenge and the present deepening of economic integration will be weak as long as the functioning of the European institutions suffers a lack of clarity, legitimacy and ability to take decisions. [33] If the markets do not call matters to order, the citizens might do so. And the awakening to this would be painful.

For 20 years German leaders (Karl Lamers and Wolfgang Schäuble in 1994 then Joschka Fischer in 2000) have made proposals to their partners in France but each time there has been no significant response on the part of the French leaders. As the European elections of 2014 approach they provide a real opportunity to open this debate up at last. Let us hope that this time the chance will not be missed.

Thierry Chopin

PhD in Political Science from the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS, Paris) he is currently Studies Director at the Robert Schuman Foundation. He is associate professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM). Visiting Professor at the Collège d'Europe (Bruges), he also teaches at Sciences Po and at the Mines Paris Tech. He is an associate expert at the Centre for International Studies and Research (CERI – Sciences Po). He is the author of many books on European issues including (with Jean-François Jamet and Christian Lequesne), *L'Europe d'après. En finir avec le pessimisme*, Lignes de repères, 2012.

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30. Not only is this idea defended by M. Schulz, President of the European Parliament but also by the European Commission; cf. *A Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine EMU. Launching a European Debate*, op. cit.

31. Cf. T. Chopin and J.-F. Jamet, "The distribution of MEPs seats at the European Parliament between Member States: a democratic and diplomatic issue", in *European Issues – Robert Schuman Foundation's policy papers*, n°71, 2007.

32. Decision of the German Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe on the Lisbon Treaty stresses that the democratic principle applied to a States makes the respect of certain conditions obligatory which the Union does not do – notably the fact that the European elections do not take place according to the principle "one man, one vote".

33. The political unification of the EU is also vital if it wants to exist in the world. P. Lamy said this clearly. "In the world as it now is I cannot see a future for Europe as a civilisation, for what it represents in terms of values, without greater integration. I see no place for what makes Europe specific a wise dose of freedom, security, social, market, efficiency – without political union., It concerns European interests" in a speech at the University College of Sciences Po, 31st August 2012, published under the title "Leçon sur les perspectives mondiales" in *Commentaire No.141, Spring 2013.*