

From national cultural paradigms to European/global cultural paradigms: A Copernican revolution

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- The polycrisis that the European Union is experiencing calls into question the very essence of the EU itself.
- Dissemination of national-populist propaganda that feeds the myth of the restoration of national sovereignty, an illusion which is unable to respond to the current challenges.
- Citizens' disillusionment with the European Union, which has not met their expectations.
- Unification can no longer be founded on market and economic criteria alone, rather a sense of belonging to Europe needs to be boosted to make it a point of reference for identity.
- Shaping the European citizen, who must undertake a Copernican revolution in the paradigms used to interpret the contemporary world, and rethinking what a nation is.

Purpose: To stress the existential crisis of European integration and the need to shape the European citizen, who forms the foundations of unification, which can no longer be based only on economic conditions.

Methods: Analyse the contradictions in the integration method adopted so far by member states and the fallacious solutions proposed by national-populist movements.

Findings: An education system is needed that is aimed at shaping, alongside the citizens of its own nation-state, the cosmopolitan citizens of a united Europe, who are convinced that to preserve peace, democracy and well-being the continent must be unified.

Keywords:

European integration, sovereignty, nation-state, intergovernmentalism, national populism, education for citizenship.

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1 The European polycrisis

Europe has long been experiencing a crisis, which is not only economic but also existential, affecting the very essence of the European Union (EU), its *ubi consistam*, its purposes. The nature of the EU as it was conceived by the founding fathers and as we have known it for decades is changing. Over the past few years, public attitudes towards European integration have also changed.

This change is manifesting itself blatantly through the spread of Eurosceptic and nationalist movements, which in some cases call for the withdrawal from the single currency, if not from the Union itself, as happened with Brexit. One emblematic case is Italy, where the impositions of Europe were once considered a healthy external constraint needed to oblige the country to adopt more rigorous behaviour in line with European directives. On 30 December 1996 the government, headed by Romano Prodi, imposed an additional tax for Europe, the so-called 'Eurotax', which involved a fiscal measure of 4300 billion lire (over 2 million euros) needed to reduce the Italian public deficit and comply with the Maastricht criteria, which citizens paid to allow the country to join the monetary union from the beginning. Nowadays, a similar measure would appear problematic, if not unthinkable.

In its seventy-year history, the EU has become stronger, without ever reaching the point of no return. However, more than ever before, it has had to face great difficulties and opposition, which have endangered its very existence and the results achieved through integration: peace, democracy and well-being.

This change requires us to rethink the foundations of unification and set its course to reconcile public opinion with Europe.

The crisis the EU is experiencing is made up of many different elements that have come to light almost simultaneously; it is a complex and multifaceted crisis that is difficult to address using the instruments currently made available by the Treaties.

The dramatic flow of immigrants has challenged the principle of free movement of people within the EU, one of the four freedoms of movement guaranteed under the Treaties, and has given rise to serious political and social tension. In 2015 former German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble's request that Greece be excluded from the euro, and the will expressed by several Eurosceptic leaders to have their own countries leave the single currency have compromised the principle of the indissolubility of monetary union, already threatened by growing economic, social and territorial imbalances; all member countries, however, are obliged to join the euro once the membership criteria are met (except for Denmark and the United Kingdom which secured an opt-out). Brexit undermined the idea of the irreversibility of EU membership. International crises that have occurred in recent years have confirmed the weakness of EU foreign policy, its lack of weight on the global stage, its vulnerability in the face of threats to global security. Terrorism has fuelled people's fear of the other, of the different, and fostered a closed, nationalistic and xenophobic attitude towards the outside world. The economic crisis has reduced citizens' purchasing power in some countries (for instance in Italy compared to France or Germany) and scaled down the social safety net guaranteed by the welfare state achieved after the Second World War.

The EU has responded inadequately to these crises. For instance, the EU proved to be unprepared and unable to manage migration flows: see the failure of the mandatory migrant quota and relocation system aimed to share more equally the costs across all the member states and to relieve the Mediterranean forefront countries, refused by the Central Europe ones.



The inadequacy of the EU response to the polycrisis disappointed citizens and contributed to the growth of national-populist movements, which in turn have fostered public hostility towards Europe. These movements have used and fuelled the politics of fear of alleged threats from the inside (technocratic and financial elites who are supposedly the authors of the austerity policies to the detriment of workers) and from the outside (migrants, terrorists). Populist propaganda has exacerbated the crisis and spread the belief that these challenges could be better addressed by individual nation-states rather than by the EU, consequently resulting in demands to re-nationalize policies already transferred to the EU and restore each country's full sovereignty.

2 The illusion of national sovereignty

The belief that nation-states can effectively solve contemporary challenges is an illusion: it is based on the assumption that every country can be absolutely sovereign. Sovereignty means having the power to make decisions in full freedom, regardless of external constraints, and the – mainly economic – resources to implement the decisions made. However, from the industrial revolution onwards, the world has become increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Not surprisingly, during the 19th century international organisations, which had not existed until that time, were set up to manage the problems generated by economic and social progress common to several countries, which could not be solved by means of traditional diplomacy (Reinalda, 2009).

The Westphalian system stemming from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, whose mainstay was the sovereign state *superiorem non recognoscens*, has governed international relations for centuries. Today, it has been undermined by globalization and regionalism, which have affected the components of the state: sovereignty, reduced by global interdependence and the presence of higher-level international and regional organizations; the territory, devalued by the deterritorialisation of many functions; the population, whose consensus is governments' source of legitimization, which they lack when their decisions impact other countries, whose citizens have not elected their decision-makers.

Today the world has become a global village¹ (McLuhan, 1964, 1962; Wallerstein, 1974, 1980, 1989; Braudel, 1979).

States are no longer sovereign, but rather bound by the numerous constraints of interdependence. A century ago, in 1918, Luigi Einaudi already warned against the dogma of absolute sovereignty:

“The dogma of perfect sovereignty must be destroyed and banished forever ... because it is false, unreal. Truth is the unifying bond, not the sovereignty of the States. The truth is the interdependence of free peoples, not their absolute independence. Countless signs give evidence of the truth that peoples are dependent on one another, that they are not absolute sovereigns wielding absolute and limitless power over their own destinies, that they cannot make their own will prevail with no regard for the will of others. The truth of the national idea ‘we belong to ourselves’ must be accompanied by the truth of the commonality of nations: ‘we belong to others as well’... The isolated state, enjoying full sovereignty because it deems itself sufficient in its own right, is a figment of the imagination; it cannot be a reality” (Einaudi, 2014).

If states are no longer sovereign, demands for a now ephemeral national sovereignty do not mean acquiring decision-making autonomy and greater independence, but result in the inability to act, or in sterile action, hence in the further loss of sovereignty, i.e. in the opposite of what sovereigntists are demanding.

In order for solutions to problems to be effective, the level at which such problems arise (municipal, regional, national, continental, global) must correspond to the level of the territorial authority in charge of solving them (city, region, national state, regional integrations, international organizations). Nation-states are too small to address the kinds of challenges listed above; they must be addressed at the continental level, i.e. the European Union. However, we have seen that the EU has not been able to respond effectively. Is this because of its inherent deficiencies or because member states have been unwilling to transfer the necessary powers to it?

There has always been and still is a contradiction in the European unification process. On the one hand, there have objectively been pushes towards integration due to countries' inability to solve problems that have gone beyond national dimensions and involved other states. Bodies endowed with limited but effective powers needed to be set up to solve common problems: supranational bodies, which overcame the limits of traditional intergovernmental cooperation. On the other hand, there has been strong resistance from national governments to cede powers to supranational institutions. To reconcile the need for integration with the willingness to retain national power and to maintain the greatest degree of sovereignty possible at the national level, states have opted for the functionalist and intergovernmental approach to unification, resulting in the creation of weak institutions lacking in adequate competences.

A paradigmatic example of the willingness of governments to retain power at the national level and to transfer only minimal powers to European institutions is given by the monetary union. In Maastricht the single currency was established without the state, without a European Economy and Finance Minister, i.e. without the supranational institution, accountable to the European Parliament, which was able to lay down guidelines for economic and monetary policy, and Eurozone countries were left without currency. National governments wanted to retain competences in the macroeconomic and fiscal sector, deluding themselves that they could continue to govern these sensitive sectors at the national level in order to obtain voters' consensus, entrusting mere intergovernmental coordination to the European bodies. When the economic crisis broke out, the weaker countries, rather than having those powers that everyone in Maastricht had wanted to retain at the national level under the illusion that they were able to manage the economic situation, were forced to accept solutions imposed not by a European democratically-legitimized government and a parliament, but by a sort of directorate composed of strong countries (Germany), international bodies (International Monetary Fund), a European body (Council) that were not accountable to European citizens, i.e. to the European Parliament. The intergovernmental method had not created a European democratic power to which everyone was legitimately subject, but intergovernmental bodies in which the strongest imposed their will. The safeguarding of national powers strenuously defended in Maastricht backfired on the weaker countries when they proved incapable of resolving a crisis that only the European power could effectively counter. However, it has also damaged the stronger countries as it has fostered hostility in public opinion in many of the member countries, undermining the principle of solidarity and the objective of an ever-closer union.



The ever-present contradiction in the integration process has enabled the co-existence of two institutional systems within the EU: a Community and supranational system, based on qualified majority voting and the co-decisional power of the European Parliament, and the intergovernmental system, based on unanimous voting, the insignificant weight of the Parliament and therefore of democratic control, and on the growing importance of intergovernmental bodies (European Council and Council of the European Union).

The EU has not been able to respond to the current challenges because the intergovernmental method of integration has resulted in a lack of efficiency and democratic deficit. There are two facets to this lack of efficiency: decision-making difficulty because the right of veto paralyses the decision-making process and voting unanimously means having to negotiate a compromise that, to please everyone, is achieved on the basis of a minimum common denominator that is incapable of solving problems. It is also difficult to act because the European budget is so small: equal to 1% of GDP (about 160 billion euros, lower than that of a medium-sized member state). The US federal budget accounts for about 24% of GDP and that of member countries on average 44% of their respective GDP. The democratic deficit consists in the insufficient level of legitimacy of the European decision-making mechanism, in which key decisions about the future of the citizens have also been made, i.e. in the non-accountability of the European Council and the Council of the European Union to the Parliament and the inadequate powers of the Commission and the Parliament itself.

The EU has taken away powers from national democratic systems and transferred them to Europe. However, a complete European democratic power has not been established. Ralf Dahrendorf noted that “if the EU applied for EU membership, this application would be rejected due to insufficient democracy” (Dahrendorf, 2004).

The two key decision-making intergovernmental bodies, the European Council and the Council of the European Union, are made up of the Heads of State and Government and national ministers, who are not elected by a European electorate, but rather by their respective national electorates, and they are not accountable to the European Parliament, but rather to the national parliaments, and are therefore inevitably inclined to put their own countries’ interest before the common European interest.

This situation is not attributable to the EU, but rather to member states that have not transferred to Europe the competences and resources needed to decide and act. From the Treaty of Lisbon onwards, the Community method has been further weakened whereas the use of the intergovernmental method has been extended, as in the case of the European Stability Mechanism (2012) and of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (2012), thus worsening the lack of transparency, control and democratic accountability.

Moreover, the European institutional structure has become increasingly complex and cumbersome, making the EU even more distant and incomprehensible to citizens. The possibilities for opt-outs and choices à la carte have increased (single currency, Schengen, the Fiscal Compact, etc.) aggravating fragmentation and differentiation within the EU, threatening its cohesion and making democratic control and the completion of an effective single market as well as an area of freedom, security and justice more complicated.

Finally, the parties that express the three founding cultures of Europe – liberalism, socialism and popularism – are in crisis and no longer enjoy the same support from citizens as they did in the past. This combination of factors, coupled with the lack of a widely shared vision among member states of the future of Europe, has facilitated the unprecedented spread of Euroscepticism and new nationalisms that are likely to rip apart the EU.



The intergovernmental and functional approaches, which influenced the European integration since its beginning, let start the process and were essential in its implementation. But nowadays, at the present high level of integration, a stronger Europe, endowed with more supranational powers, is required to cope with the 21st century challenges.

3 Disillusionment with Europe

Europe has not met public expectations and there has been widespread disillusionment with it, as shown by the spread of nationalist movements all over Europe, which both left and right populist propaganda have taken advantage of. The former attributed austerity policies to a technocratic caste rooted in Brussels and determined to make the weaker social classes pay the costs of the crisis and to regain those powers that after the Second World War social democratic policies had transferred to the grass-roots classes. The latter blamed the EU for fostering globalization and openness policies that have led to an alleged mixture of uses, customs, languages, social behaviours and have initiated a process to level out differences that has undermined the identity of nations, whose values would be threatened by the intrusiveness of the difference. Both national-populist propaganda have demanded to reduce the EU's powers and restore national sovereignty, and have provided a glimpse of the dream of the return to a mythical golden age of self-sufficient nation-states, which are supposedly able to meet citizens' needs and continue guaranteeing an extensive social security system, to preserve national identity and values.

This has resulted in the EU losing its appeal and a change in the public's attitude towards integration. There has been a shift away from rather broad consensus, albeit general, poorly informed and motivated (the so-called "permissive consensus" typical of the first decades of integration, an overall widespread yet passive Europeanism), to a marked dissent, a form of disaffection that has sometimes morphed into the rejection of integration.

For decades unification was based on economic convenience: integration had limited objectives (the common market), did not impose costs and sacrifices on citizens and trade liberalisation generated positive effects. From the Maastricht Treaty onwards, i.e. from the creation of the single currency, the situation has changed. The sacrifices required to participate in the monetary union, then the economic crisis and austerity policies, have affected the public's perception of how convenient it is to be part of Europe. One of the fundamental principles of living together has thus been betrayed: the principle of solidarity, laid down in 1957 in the Preamble to the EEC Treaty and reasserted in the 2009 Treaty on European Union.

Economic convenience remains a core factor of integration as well as joining the euro, but it is no longer perceived by public opinion, which – wrongly – does not consider the EU an advantage, but rather an unbearable cost. When feelings and irrationality conflict with reason and actual facts, the former prevail over the latter. Economic convenience is no longer enough to hold Europeans together. Europe can no longer be founded on the market, on a balanced budget, on the stability pact. Public awareness of what it means to "be European" should be fostered along with a sense of belonging to a continental – as well as local and national – community; a firm, logical adherence to the ideal of and need for togetherness; the acceptance of an acknowledged and shared cultural ethos; and an acknowledged collective memory. Without these elements, without building the European citizen, economic integration itself is at risk.



Over the past decades, Europe has been created without Europeans, without involving citizens in the unification process. There has been no phenomenon of public Europeanisation, with the exception of the elites, that may be compared to the process of the nationalization of the masses in the 19th century (Majone 2010, p. 604, p. 608), which integrated the peoples of Europe within their respective nation-states. The fact that the citizens of West Germany financed the economic reconstruction of East Germany, evidently convinced that they shared the same identity – that they were all Germans – is paradigmatic. However, this sense of identity did not arise in the case of Greece and other countries in difficulty, although the Maastricht Treaty established European citizenship. Sharing European identity – feeling European – is an attitude that is still uncommon on the continent.

National identities were built by the nation-state during the 19th and 20th centuries mainly by the means of compulsory primary education, national conscription, the invention of tradition and myths. National identities were shaped through wars against the neighbours, imperial ambitions, negative stereotypes about the other, exclusion of non-citizens from the enjoyment of political rights whereas European unification has been carried out through peace and inclusion. The EU is not a state; the absence of the shaper explains EU difficulties to shape it and why the European identity is so weak. The Council of the European Communities adopted the resolution on the European dimension in education in 1988. One of the objectives was to “strengthen in young people a sense of European identity”. The tasks to implement the resolution fell on the European Communities and on the nation states, but the target of building a well-established sense of European identity was not met. The weakness and lack of the feeling of a common European belonging and identity have become manifest in recent years.

The Erasmus programme is the most notable one that helped to build a European identity. The report of the European Commission *The Erasmus Impact Study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions* (2014) shows how much the Erasmus generation is pervaded by European attitudes. But the Erasmus programme involves just a minority of European citizens (some millions of young people) out of half billion of inhabitants.

To involve citizens in the European construction means to put into action effective initiatives to mobilize the masses in favour of Europe, for instance the participatory democracy, as claimed by Étienne Balibar in order to make the EU more democratic than its member states (Balibar, 2012), and to reform the European institutions in order to bring them closer to citizens, for instance by strengthening their democratic legitimization (Council accountability, more powers to European Parliament etc.).

4 Against the nation-centric paradigm

In order to shape the European citizen, the paradigm of the nation-state and the nation-centric logic we employ to look at the outside world needs to be overcome. Each country's citizens have got used to considering political, economic and social problems from the point of view of their nation-state, as if everything else revolved around it. This mental habit has been further strengthened in recent years with the spread of national-populist movements and has been further supported by slogans such as *Italians first, Britain first, Love Britain, America first, Make America great again, Oui, la France, Votez patriote* etc. These slogans are self-explanatory and have considerable communication impact (who would want to harm their own country?), but they have a racist undercurrent and are conceptually wrong, i.e. they do



not achieve their professed aim: the good of their own people. According to the nation-centric logic, each country's citizens believe their national points of view correspond to reality and are indisputably justified. This results in their assertion of arbitrary primacy and any agreement between different peoples becomes impossible; the conclusion is the clash, first verbal, then violent, between the various irreconcilable national primacies and between opposing nationalisms.

Altiero Spinelli had already described in an essay in 1942, during his imprisonment on the island of Ventotene for his anti-fascist beliefs, the logic of the nation-state and the consequences that would lead to its reconstitution at the end of the war² (Spinelli, 1985). Each country, Spinelli noted, would seek to gain an advantage over others, not because it was plagued by a perverse overwhelming will, but because it believed it was its duty to provide for its citizens' well-being – not that of all men. Indeed, the nation-state was set up for this specific purpose and was not suitable to envisaging the interests of a wider community. There was nothing to prevent nation-states from choosing to protect the interests of particular groups (an attitude expressed precisely with the slogans *Italians first*, *Britain first*, etc.) rather than cooperating to safeguard general interests. This choice would lead to the use of force to assert them. Spinelli also foresaw the degeneration of national democracy we are now witnessing. National democracy would actually suffer, rather than direct, and appropriate the specific pressures and the aspirations of the masses, to which it appealed insofar as they were “sovereign” masses. These aspirations were motivated by nationalistic grounds or by the defence of privileges or by immediate – real or imaginary – economic interests, but they were still partial and disregarded the actual general interest. In this way, democrats, eager to represent the will of the people, became instruments of particular groups. Any economic or ideological exclusivism, armed with the weapon of the sovereign state, would evoke similar countermeasures by other sovereign states, poisoning the atmosphere and creating the threat of war.

History can help us understand the blunder of nation-centric logic. Following this logic, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau wanted to punish Germany out of the conviction of pursuing French security. The result was Nazism and the Second World War. In 1950, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, following a non-nationalist logic, associated Germany with the European unification process; the result was the continent's longest period of peace, democracy and well-being.

Employing the 19th century idea of the nation-state – which was considered sovereign, self-sufficient and sufficient unto itself – to act in the contemporary world means employing an atavism, a legacy of the past, a Ptolemaic criterion to try to orient oneself in a Copernican globalized reality. By 1945 Emery Reves had already begun arguing that this method of analysis was inadequate:

“Nothing can distort the true picture of conditions and events in this world more than to regard one's own country as the center of the universe, and to view all things solely in their relationship to this fixed point. It is inevitable that such a method of observation should create an entirely false perspective... All the conclusions, principles and policies of the peoples are necessarily drawn from the warped picture of the world obtained by so primitive a method of observation. Within such a contorted system of assumed fixed points, it is easy to demonstrate that the view taken from each point corresponds to reality. If we admit and apply this method, the viewpoint of every single nation appears indisputably correct and wholly justified. But we arrive at a hopelessly confused and grotesque over-all picture of the world (p. 1) ... It is surely obvious that agreement, or common understanding, between different nations, basing their relations on such a primitive method of judgment, is an absolute



impossibility. A picture of the world pieced together like a mosaic from its various national components is a picture that never and under no circumstances can have any relation to reality...The world and history cannot be as they appear to the different nations, unless we disavow objectivity, reason and scientific methods of research ... our inherited method of observation in political and social matters is childishly primitive, hopelessly inadequate and thoroughly wrong. If we want to try to create at least the beginning of orderly relations between nations, we must try to arrive at a more scientific, more objective method of observation, without which we shall never be able to see social and political problems as they really are, nor to perceive their incidence. And without a correct diagnosis of the disease, there is no hope for a cure (pp. 22-23) ... Our political and social conceptions are Ptolemaic. The world in which we live is Copernican" (p. 29) (Reves 1945).

So in order to understand the contemporary world, we need a sort of "Copernican revolution" in our way of thinking and acting, adopting a global approach that makes it possible to grasp the interdependencies that bind states and to face contemporary challenges with the appropriate tools, and rejecting the nation-centric approach that prevents us from seeing reality correctly. Adopting a global, Copernican logic means going beyond the narrow national point of view that leads to excluding and segregating what is different, and seeing things from others' point of view, considering the other-regarding interests which lead to inclusion and integration. The slogan that expresses our need to think globally in order to respond to global challenges and that emphasizes humanity's common destiny is *Humanity first*. The task to achieve the "Copernican revolution" falls on the education system primarily and on the mass media as well, two sectors which are still rooted in the national context and consequently badly skilled to fulfil this task.

Overcoming the nation-centric logic poses another problem: rethinking the concept of nation (Renan, 1882). Is the nation a social group characterised by a series of common elements (language, religion, history, traditions, customs, blood) (Anderson, 1983) or is it a community that shares ideals and includes those who were not born there? Is it only a matter of sharing interests, or a commonality of principles as well? Does "nation" imply belonging defined by blood, by genealogical descent, which leads to aberrations in the mono-ethnic state and ethnic cleansing? Or is it participation in a wider community that includes all the residents in the territory, regardless of their place of birth, who decide to live together, complying with the same laws and enjoying the same rights and obligations? The idea that the state must coincide with a nation defined by where one is born leads to a society that is closed, intolerant of political, religious, cultural, social differences and hostile to other nations. The element of identity in cosmopolitan citizenship is constitutional patriotism (loyalty to universal principles of freedom and democracy), whose values citizens identify with independently of their place of origin. Citizenship is thus separated from ethnic origin and linked to residence, and is open to all those who choose to live in that particular territory.

Fernando Savater recalls that in the Middle Ages there were serfs bound to the land they cultivated; today there are "ciudadanos de la gleba", i.e. citizens considered as such because exercising their citizenship rights is bound to the territory where they were born (Savater, 2014).

Europe had oriented itself towards a more inclusive concept of citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty establishing European citizenship. The enjoyment of certain rights (e.g. the active and passive voting right to European and municipal elections) was separated from nationality and based on residence; but European citizenship, after being established, did not develop, did not extend its scope to include new rights and remained embryonic.



If the nation is not a blood community, but rather includes all those who live within a given territory and share the fundamental principles of living together, what attitude should Europe develop towards the refugees who are pressing at its borders? What can it offer them?

The foreigners who have arrived and will arrive in Europe, whom Europe needs, cannot be confined to a ghetto – a sort of internal exile – with the consequent formation of two societies, one where there are no rights and where the people are radicalized and hostile to Western values, as the milieu of some areas of European cities shows. According to Étienne Balibar, the answer is to give people access to European citizenship, enjoying the related social and cultural rights, including the right to work. Balibar provokingly suggests establishing – along with access to European citizenship through national citizenship – direct access to European federal nationality; or extending the *jus soli* throughout the EU, so as to guarantee a safe future for refugees' children, a choice that becomes an integrating factor for the parents themselves. To achieve this, according to Balibar, states should accept the prospect of supranationality (Balibar, 2015).

The challenges of the global world require not only a Copernican revolution in our way of thinking, but also the political courage to propose solutions that abandon the nation-centric logic – the same open mindedness and political courage the founding fathers had when they proposed the Communities, like Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt when they established the European Monetary System, like François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl when they created the single currency. All of them had to face tenacious opponents – the Eurosceptics of those times – but they did not hesitate to think and act according to a supranational logic. Although they had to acquire votes within their national constituencies, they were convinced that their interests and values coincided, i.e. that the national interest of their own country, which as national politicians were obliged to pursue, coincided with the value of European integration. For these statesmen serving their country's interests meant strengthening Europe's unification, not closing themselves within the nation-state, raising customs barriers, building walls and closing ports according to the Ptolemaic nation-centric logic.

Launching a Copernican revolution in our mentalities is a task for the education system, which should not only shape the citizens of the nation-state, but also the citizens of a united Europe, citizens able to understand and govern globalization and therefore build a new international order based on inclusion, not exclusion, integration, not segregation and marginalization. The formation of a national identity resulted from the political unity of a country as stated by Massimo d'Azeglio: "We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians", understood as an appeal to create an Italian national identity. If the *demos* follows the formation of the political entity, the European feeling of identity is weak as Europe is not a political unit.

However, the EU has launched initiatives to build up European identity, such as the Erasmus programme, one of the most successful EU programmes, and the 1988 Resolution on the European dimension in education, urging schools to tackle the problem³. European identity was then defined in the 2000 *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* and the common values shared by the peoples of Europe in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union, both documents unanimously approved by member countries.

Building Europe's political unity and forming European identity certainly will not be easy to accomplish. The obstacles to innovation are highlighted by Niccolò Machiavelli in the sixth chapter of the *Prince* when he described the obstacles to the introduction of new orders:



“And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new. This coolness arises partly from fear of the opponents, who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them”.

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Endnotes

¹ In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan, a sociologist of communications, used the term "global village" to indicate the fact of the world being reduced to the size of the village following the development of communications.

² The essay *The United States of Europe and the Various Political Tendencies* was written in the second half of 1942, published for the first time in 1944 together with the *Ventotene Manifesto* and republished in 1985.

³ The Community Council decided to strengthen the European dimension in education by adopting measures that would help strengthen young people's sense of European identity and emphasize the value of European civilization and the foundations on which the European peoples intended to base their development (safeguarding the principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights). The resolution suggested preparing young generations to participate in the economic and social development of the Community and to make concrete progress towards the European Union; to make them aware of the advantages it represented and the challenges it involved; to improve knowledge about the Community and its member states in their historical, cultural, economic and social aspects; to help them to understand the significance of cooperation between member states with other countries in Europe and the world.

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