

25 ANS APRÈS LE TRAITÉ DE MAASTRICHT : OÙ VA-T-ON AVEC L'UNION EUROPÉENNE ?

ASSISES AIACE, 29 MAI 2017. DISCOURS CARLO TROJAN

C'est un grand plaisir de revoir autant d'anciens collègues et amis ici à Maastricht. De retrouvailles précieuses qui évoquent beaucoup de souvenirs.

Nous sommes en quelque sorte les anciens combattants de la construction européenne. Nous en représentons la mémoire et l'expérience. Nous incorporons ce qu'on appelle en sociologie la « générativité » : la capacité de transmettre nos valeurs aux générations suivantes. Nous partageons l'engagement européen générateur de paix, stabilité, liberté et prospérité. Un acquis désormais considéré de toute évidence par nos enfants et petits-enfants. La crise économique et financière, l'instabilité accrue à nos frontières de ces derniers temps et la crise migratoire témoignent toutefois que rien n'est garanti et que le projet européen reste primordial pour assurer la sauvegarde de cet acquis et la protection de nos citoyens. Encore faut-il en persuader nos citoyens. Avec l'espérance de vie prolongée, nous, les anciens, pouvons contribuer au débat public qui s'impose plus que jamais.

Le Traité de Maastricht, qui nous réunit 25 ans après, fut le produit de circonstances particulières. Il y avait la combinaison d'une dynamique interne et externe, une conjoncture économique positive et des hommes politiques avec une vision au-delà du court terme. Une dynamique interne grâce au marché interne unique qui a produit de la croissance et de la convergence économiques. Une dynamique externe suite à l'unification allemande et l'implosion de l'Union soviétique. Des hommes d'État comme Kohl et Mitterrand et l'impulsion continue de Jacques Delors. Coïncidence d'intérêt du couple allemand. D'une part la volonté d'intégrer le DM dans une union monétaire européenne. D'autre part la détermination de réaliser l'unification allemande sous un toit européen. D'où la décision de lancer deux conférences intergouvernementales. L'une sur l'Union Monétaire et l'autre sur l'Union Politique. On en connaît le résultat. L'Union Monétaire a été réalisée. L'Union Politique a fait défaut.

L'architecture de l'Union Économique et monétaire était déjà bien établie dans le rapport Delors de 1989 : les trois étapes, les cinq critères de convergence pour accéder à la monnaie unique, l'indépendance du système des banques centrales. Mais sans l'unification allemande et sans la décision courageuse de Helmut Kohl d'abandonner le DM, on n'y serait pas arrivé.

L'Union Économique et monétaire telle que conçue à Maastricht connaît de fautes d'origine évidentes dont les auteurs étaient bien conscients. En premier lieu Jacques Delors.

Une politique monétaire forte et centralisée d'une part ; un manque d'instruments efficaces de coordination économique d'autre part. Les états membres n'étaient pas prêts à partager leur souveraineté à ce point-là. La décision d'aller en avant sur une base déséquilibrée entre le monétaire et l'économique était en fin de compte une décision politique. L'irréversibilité de l'union monétaire et du passage à la troisième étape, celle de la monnaie unique, n'ont été réglées qu'au Conseil européen même de Maastricht. Kohl et Mitterrand, mobilisés par l'intermédiaire de Andreotti et Delors, ont enfin pu accorder une date fixe, celle du 1^{er} janvier 1999, pour l'introduction de l'euro. Ainsi les Chefs d'État et de gouvernement ont endossé le credo de Jean Monnet « que l'Europe se fera par la monnaie ou ne se fera pas ». Par après les états membres ont dû se rendre compte que la politique monétaire à elle seule

ne suffisait pas. La rigueur a fait défaut dans l'admission de certains membres à la monnaie unique (Italie/Grèce). Elle a fait de nouveau défaut dans l'application de la discipline budgétaire (SGP), l'Allemagne et la France en tête. Elle ne s'est pas montrée suffisamment outillée face à la crise financière.

La chute du mur de Berlin et l'unification allemande ont changé profondément l'Europe d'après-guerre. Ce fut un privilège de participer dans cette aventure. Bernard Zepter et moi l'avons vécu en tant que compagnons de route.

Bernard et moi étions aux côtés de Jacques Delors à Berlin le 3 octobre 1990 — Einigungstag. Moi-même, en tant que Président de la Task Force Unification allemande, j'ai pu participer, comme seul non-allemand, aux négociations sur le Einigungsvertrag. J'ai encore un vif souvenir d'atterrir en août 1990 au bord d'un avion de la Luftwaffe avec Schäuble et compagnie à l'aéroport de Schönefeld en DDR. Bientôt, on l'espère —, après 11 ans de construction, le nouvel aéroport Berlin-Brandenburg. Plus de temps que les Chinois ont employé pour transformer le village de pêche de Shenzhen dans une métropole de 12 millions habitants. Ce qui démontre les changements dans le monde depuis lors !

Voilà un seul souvenir personnel que j'ai voulu partager avec vous. Permettez-moi de passer au présent.

C'est presque devenu une banalité de dire que l'Union européenne traverse une crise sur plusieurs fronts. Elle doit faire face à des défis majeurs sur le plan interne et externe.

Sur le plan interne, il y a les divisions Nord-Sud sur l'économie et Ouest-Est sur la migration et l'état de droit. La crise financière et économique a laissé des traces profondes dans nos sociétés. L'émergence de partis populistes, nationalistes et anti-européens a alimenté l'angoisse et le ressentiment dans nos sociétés et amplifié les préjudices existants. La menace terroriste et les pressions migratoires font l'objet de beaucoup d'inquiétudes de la part de nos citoyens. Le chômage très élevé des jeunes fait peser une lourde hypothèque sur la future génération. Le projet européen a du mal à s'imposer. Il est parfois considéré comme un problème plutôt qu'une solution. Une Europe ouverte sur le monde s'oppose à une Europe retranchée derrière des frontières nationales.

Sur le plan externe, il y a instabilité accrue à nos frontières. Sur le plan géopolitique il y a la nouvelle donne suite à l'élection du Président Trump. L'enjeu pour le commerce international est considérable face à « l'America » politique du nouveau Président. *Last but not least* il y a le Brexit et les négociations complexes dans le cadre de l'article 50 TUE qui s'annoncent très difficiles.

Est-ce que l'Union européenne a la capacité politique et institutionnelle de surmonter autant de défis et de relancer le projet européen ?

D'abord le Brexit. And let me switch to English at this juncture. First and foremost, to pay tribute to our British colleagues who have been for the last 44 years outstanding civil servants in the European institutions and who will continue to serve us with the same commitment. I could mention many friends and colleagues but let me highlight one of them: the late David Williamson who was for 10 years Secretary General of the Commission. I had the privilege to serve as his Deputy during that period.

Like our British colleagues we may all regret the decision of the British people to leave the Union. But it is a fact of life and we should make the best out of it. Both for our future relations and for the further development of the EU 27.

The British case is in many aspects self-standing. The UK has been a reluctant member from the outset. Due to its multiple opt outs the UK has placed itself over time in the margins of the European Union. The Treaty of Maastricht was a game-changer in this respect. One cannot transpose the British situation to the rest of the European Union, notwithstanding some analogies amongst the respective electorates. More importantly the decision for an euro-member to leave the EU would have far more devastating consequences.

Let me make two remarks on Brexit.

First of all, Brexit may not lead to a standstill of the EU during the two years negotiating period or even beyond. The challenges ahead are too important to postpone addressing them. The EU is at crossroads. Once the German elections are out of the way the EU 27 should join forces to tackle the fundamental problems, Europe is facing. A genuine asylum and migration policy, the protection of our external borders, defense co-operation, addressing youth employment, the social dimension, harnessing globalisation and *last but not least* deepening the Economic and Monetary Union.

The elections in the Netherlands and France may constitute a positive sign but populism and nationalism are still at our doorsteps. We need positive policies to reverse the trend. We also need to address the principal anxieties of our citizens. The election of Emmanuel Macron is proof that a pro-European stance does not have to be an electoral liability. It also bodes well for a reinvigorated Franco-German co-operation, the indispensable motor block of European integration.

My second remark relates to the substance of the Brexit negotiations. Obviously there is a price to pay for leaving the EU. That is true for the divorce settlement as such, the so-called exit bill. That is equally true for the future relationship. It is even more true given the red lines Theresa May has drawn: taking back control, no jurisdiction of the ECJ, immigration control, the UK to conclude its own trade agreements.

These red lines exclude UK membership from the Single Market and cherry picking is not an option.

It is an illusion that the terms of a future relationship can be negotiated during the two-year period. It should, however, be possible once the UK has left the EU to negotiate a deep and comprehensive FTA building on the CETA model and beyond. (CETA +). With my apologies to Jean Claude Juncker for using acronyms. You may have noticed that in a major EU trade policy shift acronyms are henceforth 'verboden'.

Such a comprehensive FTA should be even more feasible as the point of departure of the UK and the EU 27 is practically identical as far as legislation is concerned. As a former trade negotiator I am well aware that the devil is in the detail but given the existing models a FTA negotiation could be concluded in a relatively short timeframe.

It is in no one's interest to let us be pushed off the 'cliff edge' into the WTO scenario with tariffs and custom formalities. A sensible transition should be possible. But also there is a price to pay. Transitional single market access implies full acceptance and implementation of the EU legislation, including free movement of persons, ECJ jurisdiction and some contribution to the EU budget.

For the UK the price to pay for a sensible transition may turn out to be a good investment as it gives time to business to adapt itself to a new situation outside the EU and the single market. Maybe the UK elections on June 8th can generate the necessary realism in this respect.

Let me turn to the state of the Union. The Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe is a good starting point. It lists the main challenges and presents a number of scenarios for how the Union could evolve in the midterm. More importantly it allows for a public debate between governments and citizens on major issues in the timeframe before the German elections. The scenarios as such are less important. They are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Eventually they will be the result of progress on substance, of compromises and if need be of coalitions of the willing. What is at stake is to agree on a number of precise midterm policy objectives and a firm commitment on a roadmap to achieve them. A firm commitment to a partial or collective leap forward. What is equally important to get European citizens on board. The EP elections of 2019 would constitute a unique opportunity to seek endorsement of EU citizens for an effective European program addressing the major challenges Europe is facing today. For once these European elections should transcend national boundaries and focus on European collective solutions to today's problems.

I will limit my remarks to two crucial issues. The deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union and EU trade policy in the context of a more inclusive globalisation.

The Economic and Monetary Union is at the heart of the European project. Breaking apart the euro zone would have far-reaching consequences for our economies and for the single market.

The two shocks of the banking crisis and the sovereign debt crisis have resulted in a qualitative jump in the field of financial services regulation, capital requirements for banks, banking union, budgetary discipline and macroeconomic policy coordination. Calm in the financial markets has been restored thanks to Mario Draghi's 'whatever it takes...', the OMT announcement and the QE policy of the ECB. Still the EMU is ill prepared for yet another major economic crisis and may not be viable in the long run without further deepening. Further steps are needed to strengthen EMU's resilience against major financial and economic shocks.

The main threat to the euro remains the poor economic convergence record. Since 2000 divergence has been the dominant trend, aggravated during the financial and economic crisis. The impact of the crisis has been severe. The euro area GDP returned to its 2008 level only in 2015. Almost a lost decade. The figures for countries like Greece and Italy are even more alarming. Investment in the euro area has stagnated and remains at the level of 2009. The North-South divide has increased in terms of employment, competitiveness and current account balances. Germany's current account surplus in 2016 was 270 Bn euro, 8.6% of GDP. Youth unemployment in countries like Italy, Spain and Greece are 35% or above. Public debt in Italy and Greece is at unsustainable levels. Not to mention the institutional divergence between the core and the periphery. A positive development is the low unemployment rate in Central European countries like the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. Another positive development is that economic growth is picking up. The figures of

the first quarter of this year are encouraging. The expectation of the architects of the euro that with the free movement of goods, capitals and persons market forces would liberalise protected product – and service markets have not been realised. Also due to the incomplete single market for services. The macroeconomic imbalances procedure introduced in 2011 has had little effect as it lacks leverage to implement structural reforms. Since the upgrading of the SGP we have a more centralised budgetary discipline with its principal focus on reducing budget deficits while macroeconomic imbalances on the surplus side are not addressed.

In fact an asymmetric economic policy coordination. Countries with a budget surplus and large current account surpluses like Germany and the Netherlands should promote investments while countries with budget deficits should implement structural reforms in labour-, product- and services markets. This is not happening. How to get out of the present stalemate and regain the path to economic convergence?

It is in the first instance up to the countries concerned. Emmanuel Macron's France may give a good example implementing serious structural reforms and trigger a fresh dynamic at European and national level. The big question mark at national level remains Italy. There are some positive signs. Economic growth has picked up. The budget deficit will come down to 1.2% next year. The government is contemplating a new competition law and an overhaul of the civil justice system. But much will depend on the upcoming elections.

At European level the internal market for services should be completed. A comprehensive investment agenda is needed. The operation of EFSI, the so-called Juncker Fund, is promising. Some 165 Bn euro are so far mobilised. The completion of the capital union may promote cross-border investments.

Completing the banking union is equally important.

After the German elections, we may expect some progress on the open question of a backstop for the European Resolution Fund and on a European Deposit Insurance System.

Monetary stability has been reinstated to a large extent thanks to the ECB. But the ECB is overstretched and there is a limit to its QE toolkit. Eventually the European Stability Mechanism should be upgraded and evolve into a genuine European Monetary Fund.

In the aftermath of the French election there is much debate about the euro-budget and a European Minister of Finance. A horizon that seems under present circumstances far away. Nonetheless there is a strong case to improve euro governance and to strengthen democratic accountability. There are too many actors involved and decision-making is burdensome and ineffective. The handling of the Greek loan programs is testimony of it. Major reforms would require Treaty changes. Under the present hybrid institutional set up one could, however, envisage strengthening the position of the permanent President of the euro group and investing a vice-president of the Commission with this function. A double hated position like the one of Federica Mogherini.

A euro budget immediately raises the spectre of a transfer union.

Nonetheless a well-defined budget facility to absorb asymmetric shocks as proposed in the 5 Presidents report is certainly worth considering.

Let me conclude with some remarks on trade. Over the last few years we have seen quite some turmoil on this front. Anti-globalisation rhetoric, serious question marks on ISDS, TTIP

placed on hold, the CETA saga, the trade implications of Brexit and the America first policy of Donald Trump.

There is much to do about globalisation and free trade. These were important issues in the electoral campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic. A well-informed public debate is more than welcome. The recent Commission reflection paper on Harnessing Globalisation is a useful input for such a debate. On the whole globalisation is a positive force for change. It has led to specialisation, export-led growth and lower consumer prices. It has brought hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. Positive effects globally but benefits are spread unequally among people and regions. There are genuine concerns about job losses notably in manufacturing. But the great majority of job losses is due to technological changes and automation. Protectionism will not bring back these jobs. It will lead to less purchasing power, less economic growth and will hit the poor more than the rich.

To harness globalisation we need more global government and global rules to promote a level playing field. But also better enforcement of existing agreements. Above all we need well designed national accompanying policies and anticipate the changing trends in globalisation. Boosting competitiveness and vocational training are part of such policies.

As the largest trader and investor in the world the EU can play a decisive role in shaping globalisation while continuing to promote trade liberalisation.

It is essential in this context to maintain a rules-based international trading system as developed in the WTO. It is equally important to have an effective common commercial policy. The international trading system is under threat of America first policy of Donald Trump. The common commercial policy is under threat in the aftermath of the CETA imbroglio. The exclusive competence inscribed in the treaties is a precondition for its effectiveness. The Commission cannot be a reliable trade negotiator if every trade agreement would require approval of 38 national and regional parliaments.