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An inconvenient European truth: political unity will not be achieved until France and Germany really want it

Without the contribution of France and Germany, Europeans could not have realised their undeniable successes in terms of safety, economic welfare and political and economic-monetary cooperation in fifty years of European integration. Precisely for this reason, without France and Germany, Europeans will not be able to address the need to found a new continent-sized European Federal State capable, on the one hand, of integrating into the new balances of world power and, on the other, to face the consequences of Globalisation, climate change and the growing imbalances between different areas of the world.

The alternative between taking the decision - a difficult but possible one - to found the European federation and, on the other hand, limiting oneself instead to enduring the events that were pushing towards enlargement to include Central-eastern countries and towards the dilution of the European Union into a free trade area, presented itself to the Heads of State and government - and to France and Germany first and foremost - after the fall of the Berlin wall and the decision to create the European currency. Making the choice of the European federation would have implied - as it still does imply - taking a courageous and far-sighted initiative in order to found a first European federal core initially amongst a small number of countries. But France and Germany did not want to make this choice then, and still now they continue not to actually pursue this objective, in spite of the obvious weak state of the Union, impotent and divided as it is today, in which many European countries - including also some of the founders - are by now gripped with national political crises with uncertain outcomes.

What is also happening in France and Germany is that most statesmen and most of the political class, the world of culture and civil society, when invoking the power to make decisions and take action, do not think of a European power, but of their respective national powers. They limit themselves to paying lip service to the idea of European unity and the need for it, whilst not a day goes by without the merits and advantages of greater European cooperation in any given field being illustrated. But, unfortunately, not a day also goes by without news of one trans-European project or other, from the Lisbon Agenda, to Airbus, to the Galileo program, finding an impasse. In fact political choices continue to be pursued that aim to preserve and strengthen national sovereignties in the key sectors of defence and foreign and economic policy, and which fuel dangerous revanchist expectations in society.

The truth, on the other hand, is that no European country can realistically aspire to recover that status of power and regional or world-wide influence, nor rise to the model of civilisation and progress we have definitely lost to continent-sized states such as the USA, Russia, China and India. Sticking to this path means paving the way for new disasters.

Without a European Federal State, the fate of Europe, and with it that of France and Germany, is sealed: Europeans will experience a slow but unavoidable political, moral and material decline and as soon as any serious crises erupt, the individual and inadequate European statelets will be overwhelmed.

The governments, parliaments and politicians of France and Germany must know that the creation of Europe rests especially on them and that this is their historical and political responsibility. This is the inconvenient truth that more and more Europeans will start to sense. It is also one that those truly desiring the political unification of Europe will continue to use to press those whose primary political duty ought to be to achieve it.

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