
The Barroso II Commission and the need to extend *Europe 2020*

By Janis Emmanouilidis

Finally. Eight months after José Manuel Barroso was unanimously nominated by the European Council, five months after the European Parliament's confirmation vote on President Barroso's next mandate, and more than three months after the original date foreseen in the Treaties (1 November 2009), the Barroso II Commission will start its term on 10 February 2010. After 27 hearings and the resignation and replacement of the original Bulgarian commissioner, the EP confirmed the new College by a clear majority of 488 votes.

The Barroso II Commission will have to roll up its sleeves and get to work immediately. There is no time to lose as the agenda is packed with pressing issues like the reform of financial regulations, the need to respond to the severe consequences of the global crisis, the review of Europe's climate strategy after the Copenhagen fiasco, the implementation of the Stockholm Programme, and the setting-up of the European External Action Service.

But the new College needs to offer more than a patchwork of initiatives and legislative proposals. President Barroso and his team need to provide a new sense of orientation in an EU, which has suffered from a multiple lack of leadership. Since the late 1990s and following 'big-bang' enlargement the Commission itself has lost much of its strategic clout. The Union's fate has been increasingly determined by the heads of state and government (especially from bigger EU countries!) – an intergovernmental tendency likely to be strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty.

However, the European Council has not been able to provide forward-looking leadership either. The traditional Franco-German engine has lost steam, attractiveness and effectiveness – and no alternative leadership coalition can be identified on the horizon (yet). Berlin's European orientation has become more pragmatic, less visionary and more determined by narrow national interests. Among and within EU countries antagonistic and apparently irreconcilable views about Europe's *finalité* oppose each other. Finally, one can observe an increase of national focus and a growing distrust among member states. As a consequence of all this, citizens and political, economic and intellectual elites have lost interest and confidence in the European project, which today suffers from a lack of internal dynamism and a loss of strategic orientation.

Now, one could argue that this is not the first time that European integration has entered into a period of internal exhaustion. After all, most of the 1970s till the early 1980s were characterised by an extensive phase of *euroclerosis* only to be superseded by a highly dynamic period of European integration, which led to the Single Market, the euro, Schengen and to the establishment of the European Union. So why not grant today's EU a period of internal consolidation to digest 20 years of constant treaty reform and enlargement? The answer is simple: the EU and its members do not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, Europeans are under severe pressure to keep up the pace in a highly dynamic international environment.

The 'old continent' cannot afford to take 'time out', if it wants to avoid the risk of gradual marginalisation. The EU needs to develop new dynamism, if it wants to (continue to) influence the pace of history in an environment characterised by a relative decline of the 'old West', by fierce economic competition between old and newly emerged players, by the pressing need to redesign the system of global governance according to the new realities of international relations, and by a new quality of interlinked transnational global risks, which cannot be effectively encountered on a national or even continental level.

But how can one inject new dynamism into the European project in order to avoid gradual marginalisation? The EU needs to develop (not invent!) a new ambitious yet realistic and concrete *grand project*, which addresses the complex and interlinked challenges deriving from

the globalisation of the economy, the globalisation of security, the globalisation of the environment, and the globalisation of societies. This new project must not be based on a common understanding of the Union's ultimate *finalité*, but rather follow a functional approach, which provides concrete answers to the following question: What is the EU's future added value – well beyond the preservation of what has been achieved in the past? The new *grand project* must enable the 'old continent' to uphold its global impact, so that Europeans can continue to (co-)determine global and regional developments on the ground of their common values, their historical experience and, last but not least, their interests.

The Barroso II team should take up this challenge and provide the EU with visionary ideas and new initiatives. In his *Political Guidelines for the New Commission* from last September President Barroso demonstrates that he is aware of the necessity to inject new vitality into the European project when he states that: "Europe is facing stark choices in today's interdependent world. Either we work together to rise to the challenges. Or we condemn ourselves to irrelevance."

In an attempt to define an "integrated vision", the Commission has proposed and is currently fine-tuning the *Europe 2020* project, which is supposed to revise and replace the current Lisbon Strategy to fit the post-2010 period. At its core, *Europe 2020* aims to achieve a "smarter, greener, more competitive economy". The *Europe 2020* project points in the right direction as it attempts to bring different strategies and instruments together – although its success will depend on the final choice of priorities, on the commitment of member states, and (most crucially) on how the objectives and measures proposed will be translated into practice on the European and national level.

However, in its current design the *Europe 2020* project falls short as it concentrates almost exclusively on strengthening Europe's economy. Not to be misunderstood: in the midst of the global crisis strengthening Europe's economic competitiveness – as the basis for maintaining our social model – must constitute a core pillar of the EU's new *grand project*. However, considering the multitude and complexity of challenges inside and outside our continent, the *Europe 2020* project should be extended to other areas especially in the realm of security.

Europe is a very exposed actor. Contrary to the hopes of many Europeans after the end of the Cold War, we are experiencing a period of disorder, risks, crises and unprecedented dangers. European security faces challenges that range from the professionalisation of international terror, the effects of climate change to human security, nuclear proliferation, the consequences of poverty and social injustice (mass migration, drug and human trafficking), the risk of global pandemics, or the negative consequences of state failure. These risks and threats combined with a high dependence of energy and raw materials, the geographic proximity to (potential) crisis regions, and the vital significance of impeded world trade for EU economies, make Europe a particularly vulnerable continent.

The *Europe 2020* project should address these security challenges, which no individual EU country (even the biggest ones!) can effectively manage on its own. The Union and its members should jointly define their key security objectives and elaborate concrete policy priorities, which the EU aspires to implement in the course of the next 10 (or even 20) years. For this purpose, President Barroso should task a 'pool' of relevant commissioners from his new team to work out ideas and detailed proposals under his supervision and in close coordination with the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy.

The elaboration and implementation of a comprehensive *grand project* dealing with the complex challenges of globalisation would provide citizens and elites with a new sense of orientation, inject new dynamism into the European project, and force the EU and its members to define their strategic interests and objectives. These things are necessary, if Europe wants to become a more attractive partner for other global actors – which is the only way, how the 'old continent' can avoid gradual marginalisation.

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