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**1.** Euphoric discourses about the « European Project » provide daily bread and butter for the majority of politicians on the continent, both from the left and right wing. Only, so it would seem, “populist” extremist supporters (supposedly divided up into far right and far left wingers) oppose the project which would be without alternative for the future of the concerned peoples. And yet, indicators of growing disillusionment of these peoples are not lacking.

The European Project is, in fact rather odd: it attempts, especially since the Maastricht Treaty (1992), to reducing the margins of manoeuvre of national economic policies without making a governance of substitution emerge in return at the level of the Union! In other words, the European Union operates, in actual terms, as the most perfectly “globalised” region on Earth in the most brutal sense of the word (annihilation of the margin of autonomy of the States). This is not of course the case for the United States, or not even the case in the other regions of the world where, the State, even if fragile and vulnerable, remains in principle master of the decisions it makes, the “only” restriction being the rules imposed by the WTO (which also has in perspective the same project of progressive annihilation of the rights and prerogatives of States). Europe is then ahead of the rest of the world in the Great Leap into regression.

This self-inflicted mutilation by European States relates to all aspects of economic life: there no longer exists in Europe any monetary or foreign exchange, budgetary, employment or industrial policies.

The ECB has prohibited itself implementing any kind of monetary policy, to which, it has substituted the exclusive objective of guaranteed “price stability through absolute prohibition imposed to States to finance their deficit via « their » central banks”; so it claims. By operating thus, it no longer has any public interlocutor (neither the States, nor the Union) it would be accountable for its policy. That deflationist option constitutes in principle a permanent additional obstacle to revitalizing the economy.

The ECB cannot implement any active foreign exchange policy either, the objective of which (a « strong » or « weak » Euro) should be defined by a public interlocutor which no longer exists. The government of the United States has, on the contrary, kept all its authority in the area of monetary policy. Consequently, Washington decides whether the dollar will be strong or weak, while the euro can only acknowledge that decision and adjust to it. Let us add that the dollar standard is in fact an oil/dollar standard: oil prices are set in dollar and the United States make all possible efforts, if necessary through military interventions (as was the case in Iraq) to prohibit producer countries to sell their oil against payments in euro. As a fact, European States have so far refused to play that game and “grieve” their friend of the other side of the Atlantic. Thus weakened, the euro cannot, like the dollar, become an international currency. The actual potential competitor of the dollar is not so much the euro than the Chinese yuan.

The «Stability Pact» has tolled the bell to all possibilities of implementing budgetary policies. That option was justified by resorting to a doubtful theory of the equivalence of coverage of a deficit of public finance by taxation or borrowings. That justification is, as a fact, futile as the Pact limits to 3% maximum authorized deficit, and to 60% of the GDP maximum level of

indebtedness! Neither the United States, nor any other country in the world (to the exception of semi-colonies under domination of the IMF's administration!), have inflicted themselves such a mutilation qualified as simply "ridiculous" – rightfully so – by Prodi (who did not draw any consequences from his assessment).

The abolition on principle of all forms of national industrial policy (under the pretext that transparent « competition » - i.e., without protection or subsidies – lead to the most efficient allocation of investments) and employment policy, which is abandoned to the sole laws of the market (flexibility being thought to resolve the problems!), reinforced by the dismantlement of public services and privatisation, has not been compensated – if only partially – by community policies. There is no "industrial Europe" or "social Europe on the immediate agenda. No doubt that, from this view, Europe is drawing closer to the model which has always been the one adopted by the United States; having, at present, very far on the path to committing itself to breaking away with all traditions, which in the XIX<sup>th</sup>, then XX<sup>th</sup> centuries were at the origin of its successes. Still in the United States, however, there exists indeed a strategy of the military-industrial industry which is strongly backed by the State (in spite of the "liberal" discourse which is, by far, more advanced than the one held in Europe. It is amusing to note that the only couple of breakthroughs achieved by European technology (Airbus and the Arian rocket launcher) were achieved through public service interventions, and that, if these were left to private initiative, these two successes would simply never have occurred!

In a specific area – the one of agriculture – Europe has indeed implemented an active and community based policy, freed from doctrinaire liberalism. That policy has given enviable results; it has enabled modernisation of family agriculture, extension of farm areas and intensive use of equipment, greater specialisation, guaranteed prices that ensure balanced income between farm workers and urban workers, and finally produced important (even too important!) surpluses for export. How much did that policy cost? No doubt, half the budget of the European Community, but that budget is insignificant (less than 1% of member countries GDP). It is common knowledge that today, the CAP is being questioned.

Being the second most important area of expenditure of the Union (a third of the budget), regional policies are based on serious ambiguities and convey outdated political ambitions. Their objective is not so much the reduction of inequalities (among the States of the Union and within the individual regions which constitute them) than supporting their capacities to "face competition", which supposedly, is by itself holder of progress for all (doctrinaire liberalism is never questioned, in spite of its utter state of incoherence highlighted both by history and present times). In that logic, support to the least developed countries is thus compelled to decrease in importance (at least relatively) after the inclusion of CEEC in the Union. Being principally articulated around the support to regions for their expenditures on infrastructure and education, the implemented regionalisation policies have rather made inequalities more acute and given preference to the "promising regions" in places opened to global competition (like Bavaria, Lombardy or Catalonia). Here, the pursued political objective is, in fact, to reduce the importance of "national entities" to the advantage of "regional" preferences. Globalised liberalism has always had preference for smaller rather than larger States, because dismantling of State prerogatives is always easier in the first case. Within the European Union, preference is given to "Bavarian", "Catalan", or "Lombard" positions rather than to the positions of Nations (always suspected of being "chauvinistic" drifts).

In the end, the conceptions which dominate the visions of the enlargement of the Union are not of a different nature than the ones on which the United States have based their project of integrating Latin America into a vast free trade zone of the Americas. These forms of union are designed to widen the gaps, within peripheral partners, (Latin America on the one hand, and Eastern Europe on the other) between well integrated and advantaged small zones under control of dominant capitalist centres (the United States on the one hand, and Germany on the other) and huge fallow reserves left adrift. The discourse – which contends “catching up” will occur by itself thanks to growing flows of private foreign direct investment – has evidently no other function than propaganda. But, while the peoples of Latin America reject the extension of the free trade zone at continental scale and fight the United States on that ground, Eastern Europe is welcoming with the most basic naivety its twin project concocted by the capitalist centres of Western Europe!

Cooperation policies between the Union and Sub-Saharan Africa have never been other than “neo-colonial” and have perpetuated confinement of the continent in a « pre-industrial » state. The liberal stand of the Union, which governs the Cotonou Agreement (2000) and so called “regional economic partnership” agreements (REPA) worsen that adverse evolution. Africa is, from that perspective, subject to a “programmed exclusion” (Cf. S. Amin et alii, *Afrique: renaissance ou exclusion programmée?*, 2005). In fact, “open globalisation” associated with the fettering of the continent in a pre-industrial state is, indeed, a strategy implemented to give dominant transnational capital the means to loot the natural resources of Africa at low expense. But then, one needs to know that looting will benefit more US transnational firms than European ones. In that perspective of the planned decline of Africa, cooperation policies (now qualified as being a “partnership”!) between the European Union and ACP countries are bound to progressively decrease in importance to the benefit of other initiatives in the direction of Latin America, Asia and the Mediterranean. But, up to now, nothing indicates those initiatives could innovate and take distance from the logics of expansion of transnational capital. As for so-called Euro-Mediterranean projects, they are deprived of all potential impact because of the de-facto adhesion of Europeans to Washington and Tel Aviv’s initiatives, in spite of rhetoric gymnastics performed here and there. (Cf. S. Amin et A. El Kenz, *le monde arabe*, 2005).

(i) The European project, as it stands, pushes to the absurd adhesion to logics systematically unfavourable to a successful economic expansion of the continent. The question needs then to be asked; why take such options.

The only reasonable answer that could be given to that question is that the option was taken dominant big capital because this was its means – the only possible one – to crush the social power that workers in Europe (in the first place, working classes) had conquered after two centuries of struggle. The collapse of the soviet system offered that opportunity. The option was then perfectly “rational”, but of course, stemmed from short-term policy logic which has always had spontaneous preference of the capital. Absurd was the behaviour of socialist and socio-democratic European parties which believed the collapse of communist parties would benefit them, when, the objective of the liberal strategy was eliminating them all, the ones after the others.

The project then, as it stands, suits the United States, and this is indeed the reason why Washington sees no “menace” looming from a “competition efficient” Europe. As a fact, the relative stagnation in which Europe trapped itself because of that extreme form of liberal option facilitates the financing of the US deficit which, in turn, is caused by the leadership

position that Washington persists claiming it has. Stagnation produces indeed excess profits which, from lack of investment opportunities in the expansion of European productive systems, are invested on the United States' financial markets.

The prevailing discourse attributes Europe's handicap to the difficulty its societies supposedly have to openly and fully adopt « American style » liberalism, without ever making any reference to the asymmetry which characterises the relationships between the two sides of the Atlantic. In fact, if Europe made the decision to use in its domestic economy the surplus it lends to the United States – and this is the only decision which could take the continent out of stagnation – the US would then face the obligation to readjust its economy and reduce their waste-making-based mode of consumption and military expenditure. This would not happen without a major crisis.

Policies implemented by Europe do not go in the required direction that would express its potential economic power, but exactly reverse way. Privatisation and dismantling of truly efficient public services in Europe (SNCF, EDF and others are highly telling examples) provide US financial capital, especially Pension Funds, exceptional opportunity of profit-creaming on the most lucrative segments of its economies, reducing proportionally the means available to Europeans to exit the crisis.

Should we give in to despair and accept Washington's prognostic according to which nothing will run counter European choices, however absurd they may be? The risk is real and should not be underestimated by alterglobalist movements. The dominant ruling class, in the narrow sense of the term – the big capital of oligopolies – is tempted to lock itself up on the that dead end path for European peoples because, it benefits in return of advantages its participation in collective imperialism grants. Undoubtedly, the gendarme who neutralises the effects of the chaos incurred by that imperialist expansion – the United States – can make their servile partners pay for services they provide. But these do not have the choice, and consequently, accept the slavish positions they are assigned. After all, this will be neither first time in history nor, the only occasion such a situation occurs in today's world.

I will add there is need to take full measure of current pathetic geopolitical options, which reduce Europe's margin of autonomy, and impose it to toe the line of Washington. Europe did not opt out for the construction of a Eurasia against which the United States would have appeared a dwarf; and which simply implied a rapprochement with Russia and China. On the contrary, it opted out supporting – and even encouraging – Baltic and Polish “anti-Russian” chauvinism (one would believe we went back to 1920 and the Versailles' anti-soviet “quarantine line”!). It accepts Israel's expansionism and endorses US military presence in Iraq, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Most pathetic is certainly the alignment of Europe on the positions of the project of military control of the Planet by the armed forces of the United States. That alignment was materialised the day when, on the occasions of the wars in Yugoslavia, Europe accepted that NATO be vested with the new functions of gendarmes of the world; in association with the United States own forces. It might have been thought that, with the collapse of the USSR, NATO would lose its *raison d'être* (“defending Europe against potential soviet aggression”). The decision made went exactly reverse way: substituting the UN with NATO, which henceforth became the administrator international political relations. From that moment, the drift was hard to avoid.

That drift has reached proportions the European public opinion is generally not informed about, because what followed was nothing less than unilateral cancellation by western powers of the United Nations Charter which proscribed the war. The United States have, indeed, reserved themselves the “right” to take initiative of waging “preventive wars” without having their NATO allies react as they should have done; by officially disassociating themselves from that decision. There is even worse, as the U S have also reserved themselves the right of a first nuclear strike, if they deem so “useful”. Daniel Ellsbergs made it clear on that occasion that official documents of the Pentagon estimate “toll” of such initiatives at no less than six hundred million human lives! (a hundred holocausts, D. Ellsberg writes). Europe and NATO, be keeping silent that decision, are now the accomplices of the United States’ murderous project. The only efficient counter attack to that drift is the organisation of a global campaign for the complete banning of nuclear weapons (and certainly chemical weapons as well). Because, it is obvious that the “non proliferation” treaty promoted by NATO powers is, under such conditions, unacceptable for the peoples of Asia and Africa, who know perfectly well they are all under the threat of a US and NATO triggered holocaust.

Can this docility of the leading segments of ruling classes and their political debtors (from right wing and left wing) be indefinitely imposed to European societies? I doubt so, precisely because – and here is the central idea of my thesis on that issue – European political cultures would not allow such a thing. I will not, here, come over on the thesis I developed in *Le Virus libéral et Pour un monde multipolaire*, the conclusion of which I summed up in the sentence below: the development of the logic of the economies of prevailing oligopolies closes the gap between United States and Europe, the one of their respective political cultures widens it.

.3. Consequently, I do not believe the European project in its extreme liberal dimension as much as in its alignment on Washington’s geo-strategy is sustainable.

The answer to the question as to know how it will be challenged and to the constraints of which evolution it will be submitted remains open however.

I will then come back to the point of my analysis which focuses on “political cultures”. The political cultures of an important part of the European continent can be analysed as a succession of major developments which shaped the right wing/left wing divide: the Philosophy of Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Mountain Convention, the formation of the labour and socialist movement in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, Marxism and the Commune of Paris, the Russian Revolution and the formation of communist parties. The right wing movement stood as a counterpoint during the Restoration (“the Holy Alliance”), through the formulation of “anti-Marxist” ideologies (drifting towards forms of fascism), pro-colonial (and racist) ideological corruption, and the anti-soviet movement. The stages of the formation of the United States’ political culture have nothing to do with that history. That culture was shaped by a succession of major events: immigration to New England of anti-Enlightenment sects, the genocide of American Indians and slavery within society (the impact of which is other than the one practiced in far away colonies), the abortion of political class consciousness to which successive flows of immigrants substituted communitarianisms. The political culture produced by that history is not one born from a strong left wing (potentially socialist)/right wing contrast but, the off-spring of a pro-capitalist “consensus” which strongly relativizes electoral bipolarity (Democrats/Republicans).

The question raised in Europe today is to know whether the heritage of the political culture is set for erosion (and see the left wing die out as holder of a post-capitalist project) to the

advantage of an “Americanisation” in progress (socio-liberal parties are joining the concert of the advocates of “perpetual capitalism”) or, whether a “new left wing” is capable of crystallising around programmes up to the challenges. In my view, both evolutions remain possible.

The ideological offensive of the new right wing (which includes the majority of electoral left wing) has developed an aggressive “anti-French” discourse, because, rightfully so, that right wing sees France as a country – which played a major role in the crystallisation of political cultures in Europe – the “weak link” in the European system engaged on the road to Americanisation. “Colbertism” (i.e. a system, which in its own time, laid – with absolute Monarchy – the bases of capitalist modernity, making feudalism obsolete), “Jacobinism” (which understood that economic liberalism being the enemy of democracy, Revolutions should be popular and not strictly bourgeois as was the case of the British revolution), “secularism” (the “radicalism” of which handicaps maturation of “community” identity sought after by the pro-American right wing model), and may be even “Gaullo-communism” (to which M. Cohn Bendit certainly prefers the phrase anti-soviet Petainism!) constitute all themes harped on ad nauseam by this media propaganda. Now, there is need noting these themes dominate the “European” discourse (in the sense of pro European Union as it is today, and as it is hoped to be).

Beyond the praxis of the European project, it would then be useful to analyse the discourse which drapes it. In that discourse, any reference to the heritage of European political culture is viewed as “old hat”: the defence of the interests of social classes (is invariably qualified as “corporatism”!), patriotism (preference goes to powerless regionalisms vis à vis the capital, communitarianisms, or even, Baltic or Croat style ethnocracies, etc.). On the contrary: glorification of competition among workers, regions and countries (whatever their social cost), or anti-secular concepts (such as the Polish style pope worshiping) are viewed as modern.

The reconstruction of a European political left wing evidently demands radical criticism of all these discourses. It furthermore demands identifying the principles on the basis of which the alternative can be constructed, and, from that, concretely draws consequences in terms of short-term and long-term programmes.

Views above constitute a severe analysis not only of the “European project” as it is but also the reactions it produces, even within committed progressive social movements. The project as it should certainly be qualified as a non “European project” but as the “European component of the Atlanticist project under the hegemony of the United States”. The major critical reactions to the project seem to me more articulated around a search of a less asymmetrical balance within the imperialist triad (through the organisation, in that framework, of the relationships between Europe and the United States) than to a search of a world balance less unfavourable for the “rest of the world”.

Under these conditions the question remains open: can the European project “change direction” or is it necessary, for that to be possible, to go through the phase of open recognition of its failure?

We know that the main argument – may be even the exclusive argument – of Europe’s political left wing advocates is based on their fear that rejection of the European project may bring about vigorous resurrection of nationalisms which caused the misfortune of the continent in the XX<sup>th</sup> century. I certainly share that fear with these friends, and have no illusions on the necessarily demagogical and retrograde character of these apparent autism. I

am saying apparent because, in fact, these far right wing movements will never challenge the leaderships of the plutocracy of the oligopolies. I contend that persistence in “the defence of the European idea at all cost” and the de facto acceptance of the realities of its formulation inside the project in place that it incurs (under the pretext that situation is “less worse” than what the far right populist alternative would represent) are indeed the guaranteed means to prepare for the right wing collapse of the project. Thinking it possible to make Social Europe move slow motion is perfectly unrealistic. The existing institutional framework will never allow but cosmetic reforms without impact. The peoples know it already. The political left wing has understood the impact of that and drawn consequences.

The United States are perfectly lucid and neutral on that issue: the Europe of Brussels institutions, as it stands, suits perfectly their plans; a Europe divided into States under domination of populisms would equally suit them.

That evolution,— safeguarding at all cost the European project, or falling into chaos – if it was the only possible alternative, would mean that Europe has engaged on the path to inexorable decline. If I remain optimistic, it is because I believe the reconstruction of authentic political left wing movements on the continent is possible through the renaissance of its political culture of the conflict.