

Irreconcilable contradictions mar the European Elections.

They stem largely from the illusion that a Union of 27 countries meeting the Copenhagen criteria will necessarily lead to a democratic Union

The European elections scheduled for June are shaping up to be the most decisive since the European Parliament (EP) was elected by universal suffrage.

The main reason for this is that the external and internal agendas of Member States (MS) vis-à-vis the EU have never been so divergent, making the outcome of the vote highly unpredictable and casting doubt on the Union's ability to function effectively.

This is mainly due to the complexity of the issues at stake, particularly geopolitical ones, which far exceed the ability of political parties to clearly explain the existential choices proposed to voters. For example, in a world where "fake" news is disseminated by social networks and often picked up by the media, the implications of a defeat for Ukraine or the risks of a re-election of Donald Trump to the White House, require a high level of knowledge to form an informed opinion and propose realistic solutions. This leaves the way wide open for populist parties (largely Eurosceptics) to promote their simplistic agendas fraught with highly damaging consequences.

The majority of the European electorate, having not experienced - thanks to the EU - high-intensity warfare, is more concerned with issues such as purchasing power, inflation, climate change, health or pensions. It is not prepared either to assume the cost of preventive measures against a conflict (putting the economy on a war footing, integrating defense, etc.), the costs of which will prove derisory compared to those of a military confrontation, or to contemplate the sufferings induced by the deprivation of freedoms taken for granted today, which could ensue.

The foreseeable result is a confirmation of the trend towards the strengthening of extremist parties (especially on the right). This would make it particularly difficult to maintain unity on foreign policy issues, to deepen the barely initiated integration of defense policies, to ensure the sustainability of the € and the pursue integration efforts, without which the European Union cannot hope to exercise the role of a great power it deserves and which remains out of reach for all Member States individually.

In this respect, it would be appropriate for the EU - within NATO - to acquire an autonomous nuclear capability (like France's) as an integral part of a common defense, since neither Art. 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty nor the more binding Art. 42 of the TEU, sufficiently guarantee the protection of the non-nuclear signatories to these alliances; indeed, it has become clear in the light of recent regional wars that nuclear deterrence can, indeed, better protect those who have it, but not necessarily those who are dependent on it.

More and more voices are being raised in intellectual, military and political circles to draw attention to these realities, but so far they don't seem to be swaying the majority of public opinion, which has forgotten the maxim "he who wants peace prepares for war".

If, as is likely, the European ballot strengthens the Eurosceptic camp in the European Parliament, the Union could be paralyzed. This would offer President Putin - who thinks only in terms of "balance of power" without the slightest regard for international law - the temptation to extend his territory and/or his influence without great risk of confrontation. This would enable him to achieve his stated aims of destroying the EU, on the one hand, and giving concrete form to his belief that Russia has no borders, on the other.

Furthermore, in addition to disagreements over continued support for Ukraine, increasingly visible tensions are surfacing within the EU itself, making the Commission's role as "guardian of the treaties" more difficult. This is reflected in the initiatives taken or envisaged by Hungary and Slovakia, as well as Sweden's refusal to join the €, French and Polish demands on agriculture or disagreements on immigration, etc. These divergences are all the more difficult to manage as the possibility of a much-needed reform of the TEU to eliminate, among other things, the unanimity rule where it continues to apply, and deal with other aspects which mar the democratic character of the EU, seems incompatible with the urgency of the current situation.

In conclusion, the electoral campaign for the renewal of the EP must highlight the underlying issues on which the Union's survival depends, given that Peace is by no means guaranteed in the current context. If citizens allow their individual preferences to take precedence over the collective interest, in a world where the dangers of open conflict are becoming increasingly commonplace, there is every reason to fear that an irreversible downward spiral will be set in motion, and that we will unwittingly (as in 1939) have to suffer the consequences of our own irresponsibility.

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