

Felipe González Márquez, Steering Europe towards its destination


Caption: In 1996, on the eve of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on the revision of the Treaty on European Union, Felipe González Márquez, Spanish Prime Minister, publishes an article in the Spanish magazine *Política Exterior* in which he outlines Spain's role in the European Union.

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Steering Europe towards its destination

To an even greater extent than in the past, this new stage on which we are embarking must have society as both the protagonist and the subject of European integration and have ordinary people at its heart. As part of that process, we must not only establish administrative and political institutions which work and have legitimacy but also produce a European civic area, ‘establish a society’ of Europe. This is a point usually raised at the end of any reflection on the future of Europe. However, it must now be a starting point.

Spain vigorously argued for the development of the concept of European citizenship in the Treaty on European Union. At the next Intergovernmental Conference, we wish to continue to propel it forward as an essential part of the democratic message of Europe. It is a cohesive factor, although not always perceived as such because some people mistakenly think of it as a competitor to the concept of national citizenship and view it through a window of concerns fed by fears about the abolition of the internal frontiers of the Union and the free movement of persons. Accordingly, the development of European citizenship must also be accompanied by a stepping up of the Union’s joint fight against organised crime, such as terrorism and drugs trafficking, and proper control of immigration to the benefit of all.

The development of that concept requires us to clarify, codify or strengthen the rights which differentiate the Member States of the EU from other countries, such as democracy, freedoms, the absence of the death penalty or the recognition of certain socioeconomic rights. It is this which sets Europe apart. It is not enough to enunciate those rights and to embody them in Union legislation as an adjunct to the Council of Europe and its mechanisms. The EU must develop positive measures which implement those rights in practice in fields such as equality between men and women, combating racism and xenophobia, the rights of minorities, and cultural rights; in so doing, we must generally place renewed insistence on the concept which underpinned the Enlightenment — tolerance, which has fallen victim to dangerous new attacks.

As part of the drive for a European civic area, for intermediate structures between society and the institutions of the European Union and its states — the ‘third sector’ which Jacques Delors places between the market and the state — European foundations, associations and non-governmental organisations ought to expand, too.

Placing the citizen at the heart of European integration also means that integration is carried out with an emphasis on resolving the problems faced by ordinary people. Integration must increase European citizens’ well-being, as well as improving other aspects of their lives in the medium and long term, otherwise they will reject it. It is evident that, at the heart of those concerns, are job creation and combating unemployment. The path sketched out leading to the third phase of European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the strategy for growth, competitiveness and employment drawn up by the Essen European Council are beginning to bear fruit: greater economic growth is being more effective in creating jobs.

The Union must go further. The Madrid European Council must therefore adopt a document containing key guidance on job creation policy and on how to reap greater rewards from the benefits of economic recovery and the operation of the single market, among others. We must use to greater advantage the opportunities which European integration affords us, with its dynamics of scale and its political capacity for joint action. Furthermore, employment policy must be based on an acknowledgement of the essential role which business life and the European social model have to play, in other words the model for consensus and negotiation in a market economy and the welfare state.

It could even become a requirement for any decision taken on Community policies to be backed up by an analysis of its repercussions on employment in the form of an ‘employment assessment’ along the lines of the assessment already made of the environmental impact of certain measures. That would enable us to see much more clearly the direction to be taken by common policies on agriculture or fisheries, for example, or even decisions on industrial or environmental matters.

Faced with phenomena such as ‘globalisation’ of the economy, there may be a propensity to take the ‘every man for himself’ attitude. However, it is more rational and reasonable to continue with European integration so as to achieve greater strength and enjoy more opportunities collectively. All European states are too small to

act effectively as individual bodies. We need the European Union, although, I allow, it must be a renewed EU; the world has changed, and Europe must adjust to it by devising instruments and policies which enable it to defend its interests more effectively. Europe has the potential to deal with world changes. But we must put that potential into practice.

The EU must be a market, it must be based on geography, in other words an area, but it cannot be just an area. It needs internal cohesion and means of external action of all kinds to safeguard that area. Admittedly, at times when the need for Europe has perhaps been greatest, our societies have lost something of the drive towards integration.

The Union is experiencing a complex, difficult time in the evolution of Europe; a number of challenges which have been building up are likely to have to be resolved in what may be a key year: 1998. It is probable that that year will see the ratification of the reforms approved at the Intergovernmental Conference to be held in 1996, the opening of accession negotiations with the applicant countries, the beginnings of negotiations of the new financial perspective for the Union which will have to take account of the impact of enlargement on the Community budget, a final decision on the third stage of EMU and the framework of the new architecture for European security upon the expiry of the Treaty on Western European Union (WEU).

The challenges of 1998

The challenge is writ large. We are only at the beginning of the process. Negotiations have not begun, but preparations for them are being made in various fields. There is a danger that we may fall behind schedule. The only way to avoid that is to try and steer the course of European integration along the route that it needs to take between 1995 and 2000. In other words, to steer Europe towards its destination. The chief pilot must be the European Council of the Heads of State or Government, supported by the institutions of the Union, and that implies a need for clear, determined political resolve, both at collective and individual levels, and the involvement of society. Accordingly, the project must be clear and understandable.

This new stage will have to see the EU institutions adapt to the new design on the basis of a threefold challenge: to improve what there is, as some aspects do not operate well and greater efficiency, greater transparency and greater democracy are needed; to deepen integration in order to face new challenges such as globalisation; and not to water down the EU when tackling the third challenge, enlargement. The negotiation process is not yet under way, and the Reflection Group has been entrusted with the task of preparing for it so that it can have reached a satisfactory conclusion by the time of the next Intergovernmental Conference. For it to function, especially in an enlarged Union, European integration cannot proceed at the speed of the slowest or most reluctant Member State. However, at the same time it is necessary to maintain the sense of a project or destiny common to all the Member States of the European Union and, therefore, to ensure agreement on general objectives and to strengthen solidarity, both internally and towards the outside world.

One of the major political decisions will involve the transition to the third and final phase of EMU in line with the timetable and methods laid down; they are currently the subject of fine-tuning. I am convinced that most of the economies of the countries which today make up the Union will adopt the single currency. That is the only way things can be.

EMU will bring to Europe as a whole major benefits in terms of exchange-rate stability, reductions in costs and inflation as well as international economic influence. Now, the very process of monetary integration will require much greater coordination between the monetary policies of the Member States. The Union is not only 'monetary' but also 'economic' and, essentially, political as it revitalises the process of integration and engenders institutional reorganisation. Taking a different tack, we should ask what would happen to European integration, not only in economic but especially in political terms, if the monetary project were to fail or fall too far behind schedule.

Such integration will not remove the role of states in what are currently national decisions, neither will it nullify the sense of authority, because most public spending and political decisions will continue to lie with the national states. There will, however, be greater coordination and more collective decision-making, not so much

by way of delegation of sovereignty but by way of a collective exercise of that sovereignty, and that will mean greater political capabilities. Perhaps the political categories needed in order to *think Europe* in that way are lacking. The traditional categories — state, federalism, confederalism, etc. are inappropriate and lead to sterile debate. We are inventing something new.

At the turn of the century, the Union will be enlarged to encompass the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Malta and Cyprus. Europe will thereby become reconciled to its history, and the great reunification will become a factor for peace, security and prosperity for the entire continent. The incentive for enlargement is moral, historic and geopolitical rather than economic or financial. The political dimension of the enlargement could move more quickly. In other words, it may be more appropriate for all the countries to accede at the same time and, therefore, immediately enjoy full political involvement in the activities of the Union.

Economic integration of those countries into Community policies will be individualised by tailoring the process to the needs and capabilities of each country and, consequently, by extending transitional periods as appropriate to the country and the sphere involved. That will enable the states to adapt smoothly to the European Union and will give the Union more time to adjust to the new configuration. The financial cost of enlargement will be small compared to the moral and historic incentive. In any event, the continuance of the Cold War would have cost us much more, as would instability in Central and Eastern Europe, as evidenced by the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Enlargement will be cheaper and much more attractive. Furthermore, enlargement is not a zero-sum game in which one person's loss is another person's gain, it is a win-win situation.

The process of enlarging the Union cannot be successfully completed if we have an inward-looking view of the Union; instead, we must focus the process around the vision of Europe as a whole. And that whole includes states as large as the Russian Federation or Ukraine or, on the other hand, Turkey; these are states which, although they will not be formally incorporated into the Union in the time-scale that we are considering here, cannot be cut off or separated as the result of a new division unless they themselves seek to be separated. Instead, they must be incorporated into a pan-European whole in which their relationship with the Union plays a key role.

Russia, the Mediterranean and the Americas

The deepening of the relationship with the Russian Federation and other countries is, therefore, crucial, and not only as regards the economic aspects thereof. We must also find ways of making Russia a partner in European security. Making Russia just another part of Europe and incorporating it in a balanced way into a stable, democratic, pan-European order is a challenge equivalent to, but larger in terms of sheer physical size than, the incorporation of Germany into Western Europe after the Second World War, which proved to be a most judicious decision. The structure of a pan-European area is inherent in the transformation of the European Union. This time, European integration is not going to be carried out in opposition to anyone; instead, it will be carried out as a common project. Accordingly, in the not too distant future, we shall be able to glimpse a great market extending across the whole of our Old Continent and even encompassing our southern neighbours, while, at its heart, to echo the language of Schuman, areas of strengthened solidarity would be created, of which the main, but not the only, one would be the European Union. Europe, the European continent, will have been transformed into a 'community of communities'.

Europe cannot be an island of prosperity and well-being surrounded by poverty, misery and instability. The development of our Mediterranean neighbours is required for our development and our security. Cooperation with the South must contribute to the development and the well-being of the whole of the Mediterranean Basin and beyond. Otherwise, a completely different scenario may emerge, a scenario of confrontation and that, of course, is not in the interest either of Europe in general or of Spain in particular. That would be the most likely outcome if we were to do nothing. It is precisely to prevent it from occurring and to encourage the emergence of an area of cooperation and interrelationships that the EU has instituted the process which was initiated, and I say 'initiated' because it was a beginning rather than an end point, in Barcelona by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, which is giving a regional dimension akin to the feeling of a historic project to the association

agreements which the Union is signing with third countries in the area. In the fullness of time, an area of security and interdependence will have been created in the Mediterranean whose only precedent is, perhaps, to be found in antiquity. Today, there is a general awareness that this is important for the whole of Europe, not only southern Europeans (of whom, of course, we are the most affected) and our Mediterranean partners.

Europe, much less Spain, could not remain indifferent to the development of a major regional economic zone such as America, America in its fullest sense. The new century will probably see South America becoming one of the great economic boom areas alongside eastern Asia. Accordingly, the Union is drawing up a framework for close cooperation with Mercosur, Mexico and Chile. Within that future framework, in which the pattern of the major lines of power and world relations is in major flux as a result of the end of the Cold War and major economic change, transatlantic relations must be renewed. That naturally involves maintaining and modernising the crucially important strategic relationship between Europe and the United States and also promoting relations in other fields which will lead to a genuine partnership between the European Union and the USA.

The Union will thus have established an important network for common external relations: Russia, the Mediterranean and the Americas will be among the major players, and the Union will also have a number of roles in other parts of the world. Two cases, however, have been the source of much work and concern in recent years, and the inability of the Union to convey what it has been doing has helped create a bad image: the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. In both cases, the Union and its Member States have played a prominent but inadequate role. One source of regret is the great disparity between the European Union's humanitarian profile and its profile in respect of cooperation and even finance — not to mention the effort that it will contribute to the reconstruction work which, in the long term, will ensure peace and security in those areas — and its not inconsiderable but low-profile political role.

Three years on from the Maastricht Treaty, the achievements in foreign policy are not to be underestimated. However, they are not enough. The development of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) is one of the most difficult aspects of European integration, because it awakens historical misgivings between states and differences in the interpretation of national traditions and interests. The Union has an ever-increasing number of global interests which are shared by the states which are its members, and so we must be ambitious but realistic in this field.

In order to become reality, the CFSP requires three basic institutional elements as well as political will: effectiveness, discipline and visibility. Effectiveness in the preparation of decisions through improvements in planning, analysis and synthesis of decisions, the effectiveness of the decisions themselves and of the instruments used to implement them, including funding and, where security issues are concerned, military means. In a European Union of 25 or more Member States, that type of decision will be even more difficult to make. We must enable the European Union to carry out this policy or these measures, and that will not be something which can be done on the basis of unanimity alone. We need flexible frameworks for making and implementing decisions in which the non-involvement of one state in a specific measure does not lead to stalemate in the European Union but rather that it allows the other Members to move forward; this is a view which will make it possible for difficulties to be overcome, subject to certain limits.

The second point, which follows on from the first, is the need for greater discipline so that once a common line of action has been approved, all the consenting countries can pursue it and the dissenting countries do not place obstacles in its way. Otherwise, the common foreign policy will not be consolidated. What is needed to that end are clear procedures and political leadership. The latter leads us on to the third aspect: visibility and the ability to hold a dialogue with third parties. Several possibilities are under consideration in that respect.

It would also be beneficial to study the possibility of a 'solidarity clause' in the European Union under which all the Member States would undertake to act together if the vital interests of one of their number were attacked by a third party. We would thereby achieve collective solidarity of a diplomatic nature for all, as well as a collective defence for those countries committed to going one step further, a stage which all countries should ultimately reach.

The idea of a common foreign and security policy carries with it the need to cultivate a European defence identity. Such a long-term exercise must be based on reality and on what is viable and desirable. The members of WEU, and the European Union as a whole, do not have the material means available to them today which are required to achieve a true common defence. We must develop them specifically, and that is a process which will take several years. Even when those means are available, we must maintain the alliance with the United States, because the best arrangement for a stable world and European order is based on that alliance. NATO continues to be the king-pin of the European security system, and it is under NATO that the Europeans must develop a European defence identity which first leads to a common defence policy and, possibly, to a common defence. We must not do anything which obstructs the attainment of that ultimate objective, and we must do everything to achieve it.

An enormous effort is being made to reorganise the security institutions in Europe — the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Atlantic Alliance, WEU, the European Union itself and, of course, the UN — and to adapt them to the changes which have taken place since 1989 and to prevent new dangers from arising. The whole world accepts that this effort to reorganise must not lead to those bodies being placed in a hierarchy; rather, it should lead to coordination between them. The coordination should follow a clear principle; now is the time to take up the concept promoted by Willy Brandt and Olof Palme: security must be shared in our continent and by its neighbours, and that means that everyone is involved. The end of the Cold War means that the security of one party cannot be constructed over and above the security of another party. It is becoming increasingly clear that we shall have to act collectively against the risks that the future will present to us. That is a key challenge for the coming years.

The new, emerging Europe in whose design we are fully involved offers challenges and opportunities for Spain, not only for the state but for society as a whole. Further integration of Europe and, in particular, of the European Union is advisable for Spain, and we should place ourselves at the heart of that integration not in geographical terms — geography is geography — but in terms of operation and policy. It is worth considering two other scenarios. In one, significant areas of European integration are planned without full Spanish involvement. In the other, Europe goes backwards. Both would be disastrous for Spain. Accordingly, we are striving for progress in the direction outlined here, because, as Spaniards, that is the only choice open to us.

In so doing, we must Hispanise Europe while we Europeanise Spain. We have made much progress in both endeavours since 1986. Today, the European Union is much more responsive to Spanish interests than it was ten years ago. Gaining benefit from the new Europe will require effort and perseverance, but perseverance in our efforts will, as we have already seen, be amply rewarded in terms of well-being and influence.

Felipe González Márquez is Spain's Prime Minister.