Modernization
and the Sustainable Development Goals:
the Case of the European Union

The Second International Modernization Forum, Beijing, May 20-22, 2016

Alberto Martinelli

ABSTRACT

In the two introductory sections of this essay I make a critical reappraisal of the 'multiple modernities' approach, and i develop an analysis of the major strengths and weaknesses of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the following sections, I discuss whether and to what extent the European variety of modernity – as it is embodied by the European Union – is fit to pursue and attain the various SDGs. More specifically, I review the EU core values and distinctive institutions and I examine, first, the key questions the EU is facing nowadays which influence its ability to pursue SDGs (i.e. the exit strategy from the global financial-economic crisis and the consequences for Europe of Middle Eastern wars, such as massive flow of asylum-seekers, fundamentalist terrorism and failed states) and, second, the EU internal cleavages and the unaccomplished process of political integration. I conclude by arguing that the solution to these conflated crises cannot be provided by nationalist closures and the renationalzation of policies but, on the contrary, by the construction of an ever greater union.

Keywords: comparative modernization, EU exit strategy from the global financial crisis, European modernity, neo-nationalism, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were approved in September 2015 at the UN General Assembly in New York, provide the basic framework for successful, equitable and inclusive modernization,

with each country deciding which path to follow to and through modernity. There can a positive relation between modernization and SDGs: on the one hand, the attainment of many goals – such as ending poverty, eradicating hunger, ensuring healthy lives, inclusive and equitable education, full employment, affordable modern energy, sustainable production and consumption patterns – depends on successful modernization strategies, based on the shared premise that there is more than one way to build a full-fledged modern society. On the other hand, the various paths toward and through modernity require that SDGs are taken seriously by every country and be considered common goals by all. The approach of multiple modernities – or varieties of modernity – provides a better framework for the attainment of SDGs than a unique model of modernization, since it allows to take into consideration the specificities of any given country and the varioius impact of the historical time in which the various phases of the process take place. The core values and institutions of a society, as well as its position in the world economy and geopolitics, influence development outcomes and SDGs attainment. The positive relation between SDGs and modernization cannot, however, be taken for granted, because different types of modernity and different development models are unevenly committed to the various SDGs on the basis of different priorities and are unevenly fit to attain them. The strategies for achieving many SDGs – as fostering gender equality and women empowerment, reducing inequalities within and among countries, achieving inclusive and sustainable industrialization, developing inclusive, safe and resilient cities, taking urgent action to combat climate change – do conflict with the economic interests and political strategies of powerful actors, both at the national and global level.

In order to discuss the relationship between modernization and sustainable development goals, I will start with a brief summary of my own approach, that is a critical reappraisal of the multiple modernities approach and I will then examine the major strengths and weaknesses of the SDGs. In the following sections, I will discuss whether and to what extent the European variety of modernity as it is embodied by the European Union is fit to pursue and attain the various SDGs. To answer to this question I will review the EU core values and distinctive institutions and, then, instead of assessing the performance of the EU on each single goal and target, I will analyse the key questions the EU is facing nowadays which influence its ability to pursue SDGs, i.e. first, the exit strategy from the global financial-economic crisis and the consequences for Europe of Middle Eastern wars (massive flow of asylum-seekers, fun-

damentalist terrorism, failed African states) and, second, the EU internal cleavages and the unaccomplished process of political integration. I will conclude by arguing that the solution to these conflated crises cannot be provided by nationalist closures and the renationalzation of policies but, on the contrary, by the construction of an ever greater union.

1. My conception of modernization and modernity

I have developed my conception of modernization and modernity in several writings, among which the book *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (2005) and the essay *Global Modernization and Multiple Modernities* (2014), both available in Chinese. My conception shares some key ideas of the 'Multiple modernities' approach (which is the most innovative approach in contemporary studies of modernization, and which has in Eisenstadt its best known and most articulated proponent); but I criticize, qualify and correct this approach on the basis of some insights of classical modernizaton theory – too hastily forgotten in the contemporary debate – and of the findings of empirical research. My aim is to contribute to develop the comparative analysis of the cultural and institutional patterns of modern Western societies with those of emerging economies and modernizing countries.

To briefly summarize my view, I argue, first, that modernity has become a common global condition, which in spreading to the whole world takes different forms and distinct patterns. I agree with Wittrock that "the existence of a common global condition does not mean that members of any singular cultural community are about to relinquish their ontological and cosmological assumptions, much less their traditional institutions; it means however that the continuous interpretation, reinterpretation and transformation of those commitments and institutional structures cannot but take account of the commonality of the global condition of modernity" (2000, 56). Modern societies are not converging toward a sigle model, as both the classical sociology of Marx, Durkheim and to a large extent Weber (although they greatly differ in their analyses and predictions) and the 1950s and '60 theorists of convergence of industrial societies thought; but they are not diverging either, tothe extent that Eisenstadt (2000) and multiple modernituies scholars' pretend. What is happening in today world is rather a complex dialectics of convergence and divergence.

Second, I maintain that modernization cannot be simply identified with Westernization.The civilization of modernity first arose in Western Europe and then spread to the rest of Europe, America and throughout the world; the original Western project constituted the crucial (and usually ambivalent) reference point for non-Western countries (to the extent that even movements with strong anti-Western and anti-modern themes were distinctively modern). But non-Western societies were capable of adapting, reinterpreting, reinventing institutional and cultural patterns, providing *different responses to the challenges and possibilities inherent in the core characteristics of the distinct civilizational premises of modernity*. These outcomes of the modernization process were, in their turn, influenced by deep-seated cultural and cosmological differences between, say, Western Europe, China and Japan. A basic difference exists here between those scholars who think that in their core identities, these societies remain characterized by the form they acquired during much earlier periods of cultural crystallization and are bound to conflict with each other (as in Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, 2006) and those who stress change and transformation of commitments, values and institutional structures which cannot neglect the commonality of the global condition of modernity. I stand with the latter scholars and I enscribe to this commonality of global modernity also the committment to pursue the Sustainable development goals.

Third, differently from the proponents of the multiple modernities approach, I argue that in defining modernity structural processes and institutions matter (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012), modernization is not "first and foremost a cultural program" (as Eisenstadt maintains), and it is more than just a set of promissory notes, i.e. "a set of hopes and expectations that entail some minimal conditions of adequacy that may be demanded of macro-sociological institutions no matter how much these institutions may differ in other respects" (as Wittrock argues). The development of processes of structural differentiation across a wide range of institutions is a key, distinctive featue of all modernizing societies, although they produce quite different and specific forms of family, firm, government, welfare, since they are influenced by endogenous cultural traditions and historical experiences and by the specific epochs in which the different phases of the journey toward and through modernity take place.

I reiterate that there is not a unique successful model of modern society, a single legitimate way being modern (as in Fukuyama's post-Cold war book *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992), but several mul-

tiple modernities and varieties within them do exist. At the same time, I affirm once again that recognizing multiplicity and diversity does not imply denying the existence of common distinctive features in any process of modernization; if the concepts of modernity and modernization have a meaning at all, they must be defined in terms of few distinctive features, structural as well as cultural. The fact that the path toward and through modernity has been characteriz ed from the start by internal antinomies and contradictions, social conflicts and political protest, and that these contradictions have fostered growing differences in the modernizing countries of the different regions of the world, does not imply that we cannot identify a core of key common features in all processes of modernization, as well as a set of similar problems that receive both similar and different, both common and specific, solutions.

2. The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were solemny approuved and launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September 25-27, 2015 in New York. In July 2014, the UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OGW) forwarded a proposal for the SDGs to the Assembly. The proposal contained 17 goals with 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues. In December 2014, the UN General Assembly accepted the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report which stated that the agenda for the post-2015 SDGs process would be based on the OWG proposals. Following the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 Development Agenda began in January 2015 and ended in August 2015, the final document *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015.

The decision to move from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the SDGs was caused by the recognition that the MDGs had been only partially met and that much had still to be done. A few examples drawn from the OWG proposal of July 2014: the goal to reduce by half the number of people living with less than 1.25 dollars a day by 2015 has been achieved, but one billion and two hundred million people still live in conditions of extreme poverty; the percentage of children who do not attend primary school has been halved and gender equality has been achieved, but in developing countries 10% of children still do not receive

any kind of education; the number of deaths below five years of age has been reduced to half, but there are still more than six million who do not reach that age in life; the global maternal mortality ratio has dropped by 46%, but the probability of maternal mortality is still fourteen times higher in developing countries compared with the developed ones. But the most discouraging data are those on environmental degradation due to climate change: compared to 1990 carbon emissions into the atmosphere have increased by 50%.

The agreement on the September 2015 SDGs resolutions as well as that on climate change in the Paris Cop 21 Conference in the following December have been reached adopting a smart device: all undewriting parties, first of all sovereign nation states, agree on the goals, but keep their decision-making freedom as far as means are concerned, with the further qualification that they accept to be monitored and evaluated for their performances. This device is a smart compromise between national sovereignty and global governance. In the contemporary globalizing world we live a basic contradiction between growing economic and technological interdependence and social intreconnectedness, on the one hand, and persistent political fragmentation and cultural diversity, on the other (Martinelli 2003). As human beings we face the same challenges – wars, climate change, inequality – but as citizens of sovereign countries we tend to recognize legitimate decision-making power only to our national governments. Sovereign governments are compelled by the gravity and urgency of the problems of the global agenda to cooperate and coordinate their actions, but they do not accept targets which are imposed from outside.

The United Nations Organizzation is not a world government but an international organization of sovereign states; it can draw attention to problems, recommend appropriate strategies, discourage dangerous courses of action, but can very seldom impose its will on member states. Global governance can only be multiple-actors, multi-lateral and multi-level, but sovereign states continue to be the key players; international organizations, market actors and the various components of civil society – like NGOs, epistemic communities, ethnic and religious dyasporas – also exert thier influence in different ways and to different degree on the the various issues, but political power continue to stay mostly at the nation-state level (Martinelli 2011). In world politics the best option to mobilize the international community to act in the pursuit of common global goals and targets is, therefore, an agreement among all actors involved to implement their own autonomous strategies and policies and to accept

that their performance is periodically assessed on the basis of agreed indicators and assessment procedures. The method agreed upon in the SDGs and Cop 21 conferences is not easy to implement, as it is shown by the practice of the European Union, which has first experimented it under the name of Open Method of Coordination (OMC). This method requires a set of conditions to work successfully: a clear definition of targets, guidelines and deadlines, constant monitoring and periodical assessment of performances by independent evaluators, the involvement of main stakeholders, mutual learning of best practices. Wherever powerful interests prevent these requirements to be met, the OMC risks to become an exercise in symbolic politics in which national governments retaylor existing policies in order to prove their acceptance of the shared goals. Applying this method to the attainment of the SDGs will be even more difficult, because interests' conflicts and ideological divergences are more pronounced in the world at large than in the EU. Major obstacles are on its way both at the global level (economic and social inequalities, asymmetries of power, conflicting Weltanschauungen) and at the country level (vested interests, power encroachments, corruption, illegal activities).

In spite of these difficulties, the UN post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda is a significant example of international cooperation and deserves the effort of all good willing partners, first of all of scientific communities all over the world. Global solidarity is still insufficient, but is growing and it is encouraging that, alongside international organizations, national, regional and city governements, many non-governmental organizations, collective movements, socially responsible corporations, labour unions, professional associations, religious institutions, universities and research centers have contributed to define the goals and targets and, more important, are cooperating to achieve them. The two most important international scientific councils, ICSU for the natural sciences and ISSC for the social sciences, have been involved from the start in the process; they produced together a perspective analysis of all the proposed targets, evaluating those which were well developed, those which should be made more specific and those which required significant work (ICSU and ISSC 2015); and are now working together in major international research projects like Future Earth.

The SDGs are a major improvement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approved at the turn of the century, in the sense that they address key systemic barriers to sustainable development which were not mentioned in the former document, such as inequality, unsustainable consumption patterns, weak institutional capacity and environmen-

tal degradation. The MDGs captured only to a limited degree all three dimensions of sustainability – social, economic and environmental – and dealt only with developing countries. In contrast, the SDGs deal with all countries and all dimensions, although the relevance of each goal vary from country to country. Another key strength of the SDGs is a policy planning which is based on transformative solutions, the deployment of new technologies (ICT), monitoring, real time and intensive learning cycle, high innovation and corporate social responsibility, good governance and public participation, an ethos of solidarity, transparency, honesty and responsibility.

However, although clearly improved with regard to the previous MDGs, the SDGs framework has its own weaknesses: the series of 17 goals and 169 targets is listed and juxtaposed without specifying key trade-offs and complementarities among; goals – and even several targets – are presented using a 'silo approach', i.e. they are addressed as separate elements, mostly in isolation from each others. But, since many goals are interlinked and many targets may contribute to several goals, some goals and targets may conflict, and action to meet one target could have unintended consequences on others, mosttly if they are pursued separately. Groups of targets should, therefore, be pursued in an integrated way, taking care of important trade-offs (for instance, rapid industrial growth can lead to environmental degradation; an increase in agriculture land-use to help end hunger can result in biodiversity loss, rapid urbanization can foster inequalities between city dwellers and the rural population). The SDGs framework consider only some systemic and structural barriers to, as well as drivers of, change – such as inequality, inappropriate consumption, inadequate institutional capacity – but it lacks a theory of change, an analysis of how the pursuit of specific goals and the related transformative strategies would lead to broader outcomes of social transformation. Moreover, SDGs rightly stress the importance of global networks of universities, business, government, and civil society to promote practical innovative and transformative solutions, but fail to identify the key social groups which oppose this or that goal or target and neglect to analyse conflicts of interests and the ways in which pressure groups with conflicting interests influence policy-making. One has sometimes the impression that cooperation for the common goals is 'taken for granted'; the SDGs narrative is plentiful of words like global challenges, universal goals, cooperative partnership, stakeholders engagement, public consultation, whereas there is almost no mention of concepts like power and conflict. But, since the attainment of SDGs greatly impacts on the distri-

bution of costs and benefits and on power relations both at the national and international level, great attention should be paid to the formation of social coalitions capable of opposing and resist strategies and policies aimed at attaining common goals.

The real challenge is how to verify that pledges to achieve the SDGs are fulfilled by the underwriting governments and how to measure and evaluate their performance. In order to do that we must assess how and to what degree the different goals and targets are considered legitimate priorities by the citizens of different societies and effectively pursued by their governments. However, this analytical exercise is not easy since each SDG is articulated into a set of specific targets and subtargets (from the four of goal 7 to the thirteen of goal 3) and some SDGs lump together more than one objective. Let's take goal 16 as an example: it concerns three different objectives, peace, access to justice for all, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The related twelve targets are rather diverse as well, from the reduction of all forms of violence – and specifically that against children – to combating all forms of organized crime, corruption and bribery, from promoting the rule of law to protecting fundamental freedoms, from ensuring participatory decision-making to public access to information. Most of these targets lack statistical indicators and available data and could not be measured without serious difficulty. For instance, target 1 "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere" is not a target but rather a restatement of the goal; it should have specific targets as, for instance, the reduction in armed conflict among and within countries, and detailed data on murder, assault, suicide, intimidation. Several targets are very ambitious but rather vague and poorly specified; for instance, target 4 ("by 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets and combat forms of organized crime") and target 5 ("substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms") what do exactly mean?: how significantly? how substantially?; and are reliable data available? Contrary to most other SDGs' targets which specify a deadline for their attainment (generally 2030, sometimes anticipated to 2020), this happens here only in the case of targets 4 and 9 ("by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration"). This target and 10 ("ensure public access to information") are actually a policy recommendations. Ambitious targets like those concerning violence and criminal activities or 2 ("end abuse, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children") would need reliable quantitative indicators, others, equally ambitious, like targets 6 ("develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels") and 7

449

("ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels") would require good qualitative analyses. Moreover, at the roots of these goals and target these are different conceptions of democracy (representative, participatory, pluralist, centralized, etc.), different criteria of political inclusion, different models of bureaucracy, which have been developed by a huge literature of Political Science and Sociology and would require a stock-taking of research findings which has not been done. This kind of secondary research analysis is crucial since if we want to assess the feasibility of the various goals and targets, identify key drivers and major obstacles to transformation to sustainability, and orient effective public policies and private actors' strategies.

This critique of the way in which sustainable development goals and targets have been formulated should not, however, discourage us from trying to assess how different societies are more or less fit to pursue them. In the language of modernization studies, we should ask ourselves whether SDGs can be considered key components of the cultural and political program of modernity and try to evaluate whether specific types of modernity are better equipped than others to cope with the attainment of one or the other of the goals, one or the other of the targets. In this paper, I will make this exercise with regard to European modernity (one of the two main variants, with the American, of the Western type of modernity); in other words I will discuss the core values and institutions of the modern European civilization, with the further qualification that I will not consider the whole of Europe but that part which coincides with the European Union.

This exercise presupposes that it is possible to identify Western civilization as a specific socio-cultural entity, European modernity as a major variety of it and the European Union as the contemporary embodiment of European modernity. Two group of scholars would consider it impossible, although for opposite arguments. The first group of scholars, exemplified by D'Andrea (2001), argues that the core elements of Western identity are no longer exclusive because they have been successfully 'exported' and assimilated in other parts of the world. The fact that the civilization of modernity was born in Europe and then spread first to America and then throughout the world induces them to believe that in spreading worldwide, Europe has lost its specific character. In other words, the Europeanization of the world is also the end of Europe as an entity in itself; since European culture, being intrinsically de-territorialized, can no longer define the specificity of a single part of the world. Opposite to this is the view exemplified by Huntington (1997), which claims that the identification of Western civilization with modern civilization is totally false, since

the central characteristics of the West, those which distinguish it from other civilizations, antedate the modernization of the West.

Both views have some grain of truth, but miss two key points: it is possible to identify clear specific features of European modernity, because, first, cultural roots distinctive of Europe existed since antiquity, but they crystallized into a specific set of cultural and institutional forms only with the advent of Western modernity, fostering bold institutional innovations through a process of historical learning (science and technology, market-led industrial capitalism, representative democracy, nation-state citizenship, research university), the European identity is closely related to the culture of modernity, i.e. to a particular conception of the modern age as an epoch oriented toward the future, conceived as being novel, and as better than the present and the past (Martinelli 2005). Second, they neglect the fact that the European origin of global modernization does not entail that countries approaching and undergoing the process of modernity do not develop their own distinctive cultural codes and institutions. In other words, both fail to consider that the contemporary world is a world of multiple modernities, especially in its non-Western parts; and that any transition to modernity implies a process of creative adaptation, not the inexorable establishment of a certain type of mental outlook (scientific rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism). Traditional culture and modern technology to some extent co-existed in many modernizing countries, as well as market economies and authoritarian political regimes. Science, technology, and capitalism are the dimensions of Western culture most widespread in the world because they are largely indifferent to ends and able to outperform any other rival instrument. Other aspects of Western culture, such as modern individualism, the critical mind, civil rights, democratic representation and the rule of law, have proved much more difficult to be accepted since they conflict with deep-seated alternative views of the individual-society relationship.

3. The EU as the embodiment of the distintive features of European modernity

At first glance, the core values and institutions of European modernity that are embodied in the European Union seem fit the pursuit of SDGs. European modernity is one of the main types of global modernity and the

451

EU is its main political embodiment. European modernity shows both strong similarities and key differences with the other most important variety of Western civilization, represented by the United States – which I explored in the book *Transatlantic Divide, Comparing American and European Society* (2007). The European Union is a novel political construction, both institutionally and culturally, a multinational entity with a core of shared values (democratic institutions, basic human rights, free competition, preservation of different cultures and languages, cooperation and coexistence in international relations) that are at the foundations of common institutions.

The value core of European/Western modernity can be identified in the constant tension between rationalism and individualism/subjectivity, seen as opposing and complementary principles. Rationalism and individualism/subjectivity characterized European history from Greek philosophy and Roman law to the Christian religion, but they coalesced into a specific set of cultural values and institutional arrangements with the advent of modernity. They express the tension between individual liberty and social organization. The longing for freedom is universal, but has developed to its fullest extent in Europe, where it has been conceived as the development of the individual together with the social world around him.

Rationalism is the capacity of the human mind to know, control and transform nature (according to a conception of the world as an environment that can be moulded to the purpose of fulfilling human needs and wants), and as the confidence of human beings that they can rationally pursue their own ends and, ultimately, be the masters of their own destinies. It is the product of the critical mind which originated in the Greek philosophical ethos and developed with the Enlightenment's constant critique of its historical era. It has manifested itself in a variety of different forms: from Romanesque architecture to Renaissance painting, from the science of Galileo and Newton to the music of Bach and Beethoven, from the citizen of liberal democracy to *homo œconomicus*. Rationalism is closely linked to the relentless quest for knowledge, which was common to various ancient civilizations, but received new impetus in European modernity, when knowledge was liberated from its subordination to a given religious truth or political end. With its confidence in the power of reason to control and transform nature, rationalism has been the breeding ground of scientific discoveries, technological inventions and entrepreneurial innovations. European modernity was the age of 'Prometheus Unbound' (Shelley) which metaphorically expresses the absence of ethical

and religious limits on the technical domination of nature and belief in constant progress. Reason is related to the perception of an absence of limits, to that particular 'restlessness' of the European people portrayed in such paradigmatic figures of European literature as Dante's Ulysses and Goethe's Faust, and as exemplified in many events of European history, from transoceanic voyages to the spirit of the frontier. At the same time, reason has been conceived as a system of shared rules which make social coexistence possible. Kant did not write an apology for reason, but an inquiry into its limits. The rational mind is strong only if it is aware of its own limits, does not claim to know the Truth with the capital t, and opens the way to an endless search. In this sense, reason is by definition anti-totalitarian and strictly connected to individual freedom.

Rationalism is complementary with, and opposed to, the other core cultural trait of European modernity: individualism/subjectivity. Individualism has found many different expressions in European history: evangelical personalism, municipal freedom of late medieval republics, economic competition in the market, citizenship rights in liberal democracies, reflexive subjectivity of contemporary Europeans. Like rationalism, individualism evolved within the cultural heritage of European history, but it only fully emerged with the advent of modernity. Individualism is at the root of the principles of liberty and equality affirmed by *Ius naturalismus* (which holds that all human beings are equal insofar as they are endowed with reason), and by English political liberalism and French and German philosophy of the Enlightenment; principles which were recognized in the prerogatives of the English Parliament after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 and solemnly proclaimed in the American Constitution of 1776 and in the *Declaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* of 1789. These principles affirm the inviolable rights of the individual to life, freedom and the full accomplishment of his/her existential project. Liberty expresses itself both as negative freedom (i.e. as the protection of human rights against the abuses of power) and as positive freedom (i.e. as the citizen's right to participate in the formation of the common will). Equality was initially defined as the equality of the rights and duties of citizenship and the equality of citizens before the law; soon thereafter it became equality of opportunities and life chances as well, and thus opened the way for the conceptions of progressive liberalism, social democracy and welfare policies which became integral parts of Europe's political culture in the twentieth century. The struggle to strike a balance between equality and freedom is a *Leitmotiv* of the history of European political thought.

Individualism and subjectivity are not identical: the formal term is preferred by scholars who stress positive aspects of European modernity, such as individual rights, scientific progress, secular outlook, cultural pluralism, contractual view of society; the latter term is preferred by critics of those attitudes as pragmatic calculation, the soulless pursuit of money, and the lack of moral passion, to which they oppose the care for the self, spontaneous expression and authentic experience. However, political and economic individualism and aesthetic and moral subjectivity are in fact dimensions of the same principle; they are not the roots of two alternative types of modernity (the supportive and the critical, the societal and the cultural) but rather components of the same cultural and institutional syndrome. Imagination and reason are not enemies; rather, they are allies in the work of both the scientist and the artist, both seek to explore and experience everything without being subject to limits.

The dialectical relationship between the principle of rationality and the principle of subjectivity/individualism manifest itself in the double matrix of change and routine in which the modern self lives. As Gaonkar writes (2003), each of those unforgettable figures of modernity – Marx's 'revolutionary', Baudelaire's 'dandy', Nietzsche's 'superman', Weber's 'intellectual', Simmel's 'stranger', Musil's 'man without qualities', Benjamin's 'flaneur' (and Schumpeter's 'entrepreneur' I add) – is caught and carried in the intoxicating rush of an epochal change and yet finds itself fixed and formulated by a disciplinary system of social roles and functions (a very European list).

In the European civilization of modernity these values, attitudes and interpretations of the world coalesced into a distinct cultural programme and combined with a set of new institutional formations, the most important of which are: the research university, the capitalist market and industrial firm, the nation-state and the democratic polity, the welfare state.

First, universities. The depth of Chinese and Indian religion and philosophy, the richness of Muslim scientific and religious thought, the advanced astronomical knowledge of Mesopotamia and pre-Colombian America, are only some examples of the historical evidence that European/Western knowledge is not exceptional at all. What is distinctive, though, is its more marked capacity to unite abstract theory and empirical research and, even more importantly, to link scientific discovery, invention and technological innovation under the constant pressure of either war or commercial competition. Also specific to European/Western culture is its greater ability to design institutions particularly suited to the

formation and diffusion of knowledge, from Italian and French universities with medieval origins to the seventeenth-century British scientific academies, from nineteenth-century German research universities to contemporary American research laboratories. European modernity was not simply a package of technological and organizational developments; it was intimately bound up with a political revolution, and with an equally important transformation in the nature of scholarly and scientific practices and institutions (Wittrock 2000). Europe has invented and perfected an understanding of science which has become a global example and role model. The main characteristics of this understanding of science as it has developed since the Renaissance are, as Rudolph argues, the recognition of mathematics as the measure of exactness in science, the unity of freedom of scientific enquiry and scientific criticism, and the dependence of empirical knowledge on conceptual reflection (Rudolph 2001).

Market-driven industrial capitalism is a second key distinctive institution of European modernity. The governing principle of capitalism is a constant search for the rational maximization of individual utility in order to compete successfully in the market. Its two basic institutions are the efficient combination of the production factors in the industrial firm, and the exchange of goods and services in the 'free' market expanding throughout the world. The industrial revolution of the eighteenth century (a most powerful process of innovation, capital accumulation and market expansion) was helped by agricultural and long-distance trade surpluses, and the availability of iron and coal; but it was, first and foremost, generated by a specific linkage with the scientific and technological revolutions of modernity. Trades and markets flourished in the early empires, and in many non-European parts of the world as well, but the particular combination of the industrial revolution with the free market is a European specificity which gave capitalist growth unprecedented strength and dynamism. Market capitalism has been extensively criticised, first of all in the Marxist tradition, in terms of the dominance of instrumental reason, the overriding concern with efficiency, the 'depoliticization' of public life, the quest for material affluence and passive consumerism. But, in spite of all its internal contradictions and social costs, market capitalism has proved to be resilient to crises and self-transforming.

The nation state is a third key institution of European modernity: a pre-modern institution which slowly took shape in opposition to the multi-ethnic empires and the supra-national church, grew historically through a civil bureaucracy, an army and a diplomacy, and developed in the modernization process in combination with representative democracy,

455

a fourth key institution of modernity. The nation state resulted from the encounter between state and nation, i.e. between a sovereign, autonomous, centralized political organization, and a community (real and imagined at the same time) founded on ties of blood, language, shared tradition, and collective memory. The democratic nation state is the institutional embodiment of rational/legal authority in modern society, an impersonal and sovereign political entity with supreme jurisdiction over a clearly delimited territory and population, which claims the monopoly of coercive power, and enjoys legitimacy as a result of citizens' support. The centralized nation-state implied the breaking of many local and cultural autonomies, but the risks for individual freedom were kept under control by the development of the institutions of representative democracy, i.e. a political system made up of elected officials representing the interests and opinions of citizens in a context characterized by the rule of law, based on the consensus of citizens, and developed in order to protect their basic rights. The Greek polis, the Roman republic and the free cities of medieval Italy, Germany and the Flanders were all antecedents of this European specificity. The various forms of parliaments, majority rule in government and the protection of minority rights, free and periodical elections, independent judiciary, civil liberties, free press, are institutional innovations born in European modernity and developed in the United States of America (the 'first new nation' constructed by European immigrants) in the course of the three major democratic revolutions: the English, the French and the American and then extended to other regions of the world. In today globalized world, sovereign nation states are still the key actors in international relations, although subject to the two-fold pressure applied by the growing global interconnectedness of social relations, from above, and by the reaffirmation of regional and local identities and claims of autonomy, from below.

The fifth distinctive institution of European modernity is the welfare state. It developed later than the previous ones, in the course of the XX century, partially as a counterbalance to the failures of the market and to the excesses of individualism. It is one of the most important institutional innovations of the XX century. Combined with market capitalism it forms the so-called European social model. The model rejects the notion of the self-regulating market and aims at achieving the joint goals of economic competitiveness and social cohesion. It is an effective way toward the non-violent resolution of redistributive conflicts. The core value at the basis of the welfare state is solidarity, which is based on a sense of belonging, the perception of a common fate, the acceptance of reciprocal

responsibilities among fellow citizens, the mutualisation of risks through social insurances, the limitation of economic and social inequalities. The welfare state contributed to fill the void left by the decline of traditional institutions like the church and the local community, and to answer to the basic question: which are the foundations of solidarity in an individualistic society. Welfare policies of EU member states are undergoing a deep transformation as a consequence of the economic crisis, trying to move from welfare state to the social investment state.

This 'list' of the distinctive cultural and institutional aspects of the European modernity does not pretend to be complete; functionally organized metropolitan cities and churches are other relevant instances. European cities are part of an old urban system, tracoing back to the Roman empire and middle Ages, whicvh was deeply transformed, first, by nation building and market capitalism and second, by contemporary globalization, in which the most important of them have become hubs of global networks of interdependence. Christian institutions like the Roman Catholic Church (one of the oldest and most durable institutions in history), Christian theology and collective movements have deeply influenced modern European institutions and mentality, sometimes as their source of inspiration, sometimes as their adversary: on the one hand, the highest values and associated norms of European modernity (such as human dignity and its inviolability, the rights of the person, individual conscience and responsibility) have, among others, also Jewish-Christian roots. On the other, the notion of the absence of limits and the belief in man as the master of his own destiny have encountered strong opposition in the 'anti-modernist' stance of the Catholic Church. And the distinction between temporal and sacred power – which is a well – grounded principle of modern democracy – was achieved only through centuries – long struggles. In today Europe the impact of religion is not only a matter of memory in a secularized society but still influences attitude and behaviour. Religion is not (and has not been) a simple undifferentiated unity since there is a great religious diversity internally to Christianity itself and religions other than Christianity, primarily Islam, play a significant role.

These core cultural and institutional elements have contributed to a specific definition of European modernity, but they are not unambiguous and do not form a coherent system: they have in fact conflicted with each other, as in the cases of capitalism and democracy, religion and science, nationalism and peace. Nor have they produced solely desirable effects or positive outcomes. As Jaspers (1947) remarks, for every position Europe has also developed the exact opposite. European history has been constantly

457

marked by deep cleavages, violent conflicts, idiosyncratic controversies, and numerous errors and crimes. The values of rationalism and individualism and the institutions of the market and the nation-state have given rise to many contradictions, violations, and deformations, as the profound contradictions between capital and wage labour, economic growth and environmental conservation, colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and the quest for freedom show, not to speak of wars, mass murders and genocide. Indeed, polar opposites characterize almost every core element of European culture: the Christian faith of universal love has inspired some of the most intolerant doctrines and bloodiest religious wars ever; in the heart of twentieth-century Europe, democracy collapsed into devastating totalitarianism; the free market constantly reproduces monopoly and oligopoly; the quest for political independence has degenerated into aggressive nationalism. In other words, for every value has promoted without Europe has also promoted its opposite: faith/reason, tolerance/religious war, democracy/totalitarianism, etc. But this is not a reason for dismissing the importance of the European civilization for human progress (of which SDGs are a basic component): we certainly do not cease to regard ancient Athens as the cradle of democracy because it also experienced tyranny.

Moreover, a salient feature of European modernity today is that history has been subject to reflexive reassertion through a process of historical learning from painful past errors and crimes. The European community was born of the desire to put an end to the centuries-long European 'civil' wars. As Therborn argues (1995), "the conception of history that underlies the efforts to establish an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe is not couched in terms of some 'manifest destiny' of Europe, or in terms of Europeans as a chosen people, rather, it is the view of history's disciples and not of its masters". European modernity is not a model to export and, even worse, to impose on others (seeking to do it would be a risky undertaking, widely opposed as arrogant 'neo-colonialism'). It is not a model, but a key comparator for other modernities, with which the EU should engage in a process of mutual learning and understanding.

4.   How is the EU equipped to meet the SDGs?

The core values and distinctive institutions of European modernity that I have outlined help explaining why the EU can be considered a successful example of economic development and political and cultural moderniza-

tion. The EU is one of the largest economies in the world – in terms of gross national product, market size, scientific potential – and has by far the most developed welfare state: with 7% of the world population and close to 25% of the world GDP, the EU concentrates half of the world welfare expenditure. At the beginning of this century the EU was presented as a better societal model than the American one, which "emphasizes community relationships over individual autonomy, cultural diversity over assimilation, quality of life over the accumulation of wealth, sustainable development over unlimited material growth [...] universal human rights and the rights of nature over property rights, and global cooperation over the unilateral exercise of power [...] a vision of the future, capable of quietly eclipsing the so-called American dream" (Rifkin 2004). The ambitious *Lisbon strategy*, decided in 2000 and aimed at "transforming in ten years the European economy into the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" reflected the optimism of the time and could, in fact, be seen as the necessary precondition to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

This optimist view seems to-day outdated, after the long economic recession following the 2008 global financial crisis; but the EU as the embodiment of European modernity still seems better equipped than most other modern and modernizing societies to pursue and achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals. The impact of the economic/financial crisis, together with unresolved problems of an unaccomplished political union, prevented the Lisbon strategy to be effective. Then, in 2010, a new ten-years program, *Europe 2020*, was launched, which articulated in more detail the previous overarching goal and set five main objectives in order to overcome the crisis and achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: (a) 75% employment of the 20-64 years age group; (b) 3% of European GDP minimal investement in research and development; (c) 20% minimal reduction of 1990 hothouse gas levels; (d) 10% reduction of school drop-outs and at least 30% of people aged 30-34 years holding a higher education degrees; (e) 20 million people risking poverty less than in 2010. These objectives and the suggested ways to implement them – from job creation for the young to fighting poverty, from fostering digital innovation to re-launching the common market – are very similar to some key SDGs. But six years later, the objectives of Europe 2020 are far from being achieved. It is therefore necessary to ask ourselves why and to discuss, in more general terms, whether and to what extent the European variety of modernity favours or obstructs the attainment of MDGs.

The EU, as well as the other modern developed societies, the US, Japan and most OECD countries, seem better equipped than emerging economies and developing societies to attain most SDGs, from ending poverty and hunger to ensuring quality health and education, from access to modern energy to combating climate change, from achieving gender equality to promoting justice and effective institutions, although there is still much to do to fully attain any of these goals. But significant differences in performance exist also among developed modern societies with regard to the various SDGs. If we compare the European and the American economy, we find that the former performs better in fostering innovation (goal 9) and job creation (goal 8), whereas the latter performs better in ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all and at all ages (goal 3), combating climate change and its impacts (goal 13), and making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (goal 11). If we compare the EU with Japan, we find that the former performs better on goal 9 (gender equality) and goal 11 (inclusive cities), while the latter performs better on goal 10 (reducing inequality). If we make comparison not only in space-among different modernities – but also through time – analysing European society at different points in time – we find both improuvement – as in goal 13 (combat climate change and its impact) – and worsening – as in goal 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries). On the one hand, in fact, the targets of the EU environmental policy program 20/20/20 are likely to be met by most member countries. On the other hand, inequality has been growing in recent decades both among EU member states and within most of them, 'absolute poverty' has increased, and even food security and improved nutrition cannot be taken for granted. Economic and social inequalities represent a serious problem of European society, in spite of its developed welfare state which, although has suffered restrictions as a consequence of the long economic crisis, has counteracted some of the most negative effects. Even for goals where a European advantage is recognized, like goal 11 ("make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"), the situation has not improuved, quite on the contrary: cities remain a distinctive feature of European society, continue to play a key role as they did in European history, and are comparatively more resilient and sustainable than cities in other regions of the world; and yet their safety and inclusiveness are now challenged by the terrorist threat and by the need to host huge waves of asylum seekers.

The first glance assessment that the EU is reasonably fit to meet SDGs must therefore be better argued and qualified. We could assess the

performance of the EU with regard to all 17 goals and all 169 targets, but the evaluation would be difficult for all the reasons I discussed above (interconnected goals, poorly specified targets, lack of significant indicators and reliable data, etc.). It is then easier and more appropriate to focus on two key questions upon which depends the effective capacity of the EU to attain the SDGs for itself, and to contribute to their achievement by other countries in the world: the first question is whether the EU is capable to implement an inclusive and sustainable development as a successful exit strategy from the crisis; the second is whether it will become an ever greater union with enhanced citizens' participation and a more balanced division of power between its main institutions.

5. The first question: inclusive, sustainable development
   as a successful exit strategy form the crisis

The first question is whether and to what extent the EU will improve its economic performance in terms of innovation, competion and growth, in a socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable way. The 2008 global financial crisis which started in 2008 and the related economic stagnation make this goal more difficult to achieve. But crises are often also opportunities for change. A succesful exit strategy from the crisis should not only reverse the trend of economic stagnation, but develop a type of sustainable growth which updates the European social model, i.e. the combination of coordinated market economy and welfare state, adding environmental sustainability. The EU should not go back to business as usual, but develop a new development model, which permits to achieve the ambitious SDGs both in Europe and in the world at large. However, although the underlying values of SDGs are shared by the majority of the European citizens and European institutions committed themselves to pursue them, member states' governments do not agree on common policy priorities and development strategies. The main reason of this disagreement is the different way in which EU member states are affected by and perceive the impact of three different and intertwined crises: the economic/financial crisis, the migrants' emergency, and the threat of fundamentalist terrorism. These crises put at risk the whole EU fabric since they foster the upsurge of nationalist-populist parties which ask for national closures and the re-nationalization of communitarian policies. The first crisis threatens the European social model, the second and the

third combined threaten the European integration model of building unity through diversity. In other words, the three crises put at risk the most specific features of the EU and dramatically reduce its capacity to follow a path of sustainable and inclusive development.

The 2008 global financial crisis has been longer and with a deeper impact on the EU than on the other main economic regions of the world: the output of several eurozone countries has yet to return to pre-crisis levels, public debts and unemployment rates have been growing for most EU states. The crisis has reversed the long-lasting tendency toward greater homogenity within the EU, which had been favoured by the free circulation of people, goods, services and capital. In the first decade of this century the differences in productivity among the Eurozone countries have increased 30%; the unemployment rate in Greece and Spain is three to four times the eurozone average; almost all eurozone countries are above the Maastricht Treaty requirement of the 60% public debt/GDP ratio, but Greece, Italy and France have higher debts than average. At the root of these differences is not only the crisis that has affected in different ways and degrees the economies of the various EU member states, but also the introduction of the euro and the response to the crisis given by the institutions of the EU governance; in other words, not the lack of an exit strategy, as many argue, but the specific type of exit strategy that was adopted.

The creation of the euro and the European Central Bank was not a political mistake, since benefits have outdone the costs for the countries involved. The demands for ending the monetary union are based on wrong analyses, and in any case, even most critics of the original decision must admit that dismantling the euro now would amount to great economic losses and political risks. The political hazard of the euro architects was deciding a common monetary policy without common fiscal and growth policies to complement it, on the assumption that the latter would 'spontaneously' follow according tot he usual 'spillover effect'. But the fact of having a single currency and central bank with nineteen different economic and fiscal policies of countries with quite diverse economies creates contradictions that are difficult to manage. Moreover, European leaders did not consider that the euro would not only increase the interdependence of member states economies, but also produce relevant differences that had to be managed. These differences could be tolerated in the phase of economic growth of the early 2000s, not in the following phase of recession and stagnation, since they prolonged and worsened the effects of the global crisis. Infra-union differences should have been more

effectively managed, weaker countries should have been helped to recover and allowed to run less stringent public budgets.

On the contrary, the exit strategy chosen by the EU and eurozone authorities was a policy of austerity for all, at the expensens of growth and employment, with the richer countries of Europe dictating the poorer ones the austerity cure in order for them to regain the trust of the financial industry. They did it – a nd continue to do it – in spite of all evidence that austerity is a highly poisonous medicine, an overdose of which will kill the patient rather than stimulate growth and expand the tax base, in which case the weakest Eurozone members become even more dependent on lenders (Offe 2014). EU member state policies have become more and more market-conforming and more and more influenced by the strongest member states, first of all Germany. At the same time, increasing powers have been transferred to the supranational level, without a parallel transfer of democratic control. The consequence of this state of affairs are technocratic governance and elitist policy making, together with a growing asymmetry of power among member states. The predominant austerity strategy has a negative impact also on sustainable and inclusive growth policies, since it curtails private and public investments, creates more unemployment and makes combating climate change a second-rate priority which lies well behind fiscal austerity.

If fiscal austerity has such negative effects, why is a different strategy so difficult to agree upon? The main reason is that the different impact of the global crisis on the economies and societies of the EU member states has fostered political cleavages along nationalist lines to the point that national interests and the related conflicts have become more important than class interests and related conflicts. It is difficult to take the decisions that are needed since they are unpopular: on the one hand, large scale and long-term debt mutualization – which would result in massive redistributive measures both among member states and social classes – is rejected by the majority of citizens of Northern 'core' member states that have been so far less affected by the crisis than those of the South. On the other hand, policies aiming at enhancing competitivenes and adjusting the unit cost of labour (the ratio between real wages and labour poductivity) are hard to implement by the governments of Southern 'peripheral' countries since are rejected by most of their voters. A divorce occurs between politics and policy: populist mass politics that has no perceptible implication for policy-making on core issues propagates a distorted, simplified picture of complex problems like those of the eurozone, while elitist policy-making takes place without receiving legitimation through

politics. It is difficult for Europe's political leaders to generate the public support needed to create an authentic political and economic union – which would allow a more effective, equitable and strategic management of the crisis; they tend, instead, to muddle through, just doing the minimum necessary for the system to survive.

The situation is complicated by the fact that the North/South cleavage between pro-fiscal austerity 'Northern' states and pro-growth 'Southern' states goes together – and often conflates – with two other main cleavages: the cleavage between continental Europe and the United Kingdom and the cleavage between old 'Western' members and new 'Eastern' members of the EU. The cleavage between continental Europe and the UK has long-standing roots in the 'special relationship' between UK and US, in the British imperial past and in the British culture if insularity. UK governments have constantly favoured the European free market and constantly opposed the transfer of sovereignty to supranational institutions. The next June referendum in which UK citizens will decide whether to continue to stay in the EU stems from the dilemma between the perceived benefits of the European common market and the perceived costs of limited sovereignty; conversely, for citizens of the other EU member countries Brexit is perceived as a dilemma between weakening the EU financial and military power and the removal of an obstacle to deeper political integration. The best way out from this dilemma is to design of union 'at variable geometry' in which a group of core countries – most likely the eurozone's – move toward greater integration, while the others – first of all the UK – use the opting-out clause, but remain full members of the European common market.

The other cleavage stems from the enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 (and then 27 and 28) member states (most of which from Eastern Europe). The enlargement has been praised by some as a strategic success, arguing that the EU was capable to take advantage of the 'window of opportunity' opened by the collapse of the USSR. But the enlargement has been criticised by others as a strategic mistake, arguing that it took place before 'deepening' the political integration, with the consequence of making European governance more difficult and conflict-ridden. In fact, the new 'Eastern' member states (Poland, Baltic states, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, later Romania and Bulgaria and then Croatia) have had a quite different post-Second World War history, after the end of the Cold war have gone through a complex regime change, have faced partially different problems and sets of policy priorities (first of all in foreign and in migration policies) than the old 'Western' member coun-

tries. Old ethnic and national conflicts – which had been silent during the Cold war years and had been absorbed by the great ideological divide between the USA and the USSR – surfaced again and fostered aggressive nationalism and euro-skeptic government parties, which pursue stubborn renationalization, and obstruct the road toward a more developed supranational union. Nationalist/populist right-wing parties, which are in government in Poland and Hungary, do not support the European social model, reject the European open policy toward immigrants and want to restore internal borders, abolishing the Shengen agreement on the free circulation of people within the EU.

The opposition to the key distinctive aspects of European integration – as social market economy and open internal borders – is not only due to the increasing disparities created by the economic crisis and its exit strategy, but also by the conflation with the two other crises-the consequences of Middle-Eastern and Northern African wars – which push millions of people to look for refuge in Europe and put European cities under the threat of terrorist attacks by the Islamic state. These crises feed feelings of insecurity, fear and xenophopia, bolster demands for closing the frontiers and building walls, and make more difficult the social integration of immigrants. Nationalist parties with strong populist rhetoric build their consensus on these sentiments and on the illusion that retrenching within national borders and renationalizing European policies can restore political security and economic wellbeing.

6. THE SECOND QUESTION, THE UNACCOMPLISHED CONSTRUCTION OF THE EU: DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT AND UNBALANCED DIVISION OF POWER BETWEEN ITS MAIN INSTITUTIONS

The upsurge of nationalism in the EU is not only fostered by the three crises, but is also due to the second key question: the unaccomplished construction of the EU and the unbalanced division of power between its main institutions. The EU is a supra-national union in the making, where decisions are taken by a tripartite structure (the Council of heads of government that represents the governments of member states, the Parliament that represents the peoples of member countries, and the Commission as a linkage between the other two). The builders of the united Europe did not want – and could not – reproduce the model of nation-state building, first, because they were determined to put an end

to centuries – long 'civil wars' among the European nations and avoid the disastrous impact of aggressive nationalism; second, because European supranational institutions lacked fundamental characteristics of a sovereign state like a strong centralized power and a standardized culture articulated through a common language. For the first time in European history the state was not relying on military structures for the integration of such a huge and economically potent body, but rather on a legal and economic community, and did not aim to deprive its members of their cultural diversities and different identities but on the contrary to preserve them as a common resource.

The EU did, however, only partially substitute for the nation states of member countries, which have been simultaneously strenghtened and weakened by European integration. To a certain extent, the EU can be seen as an instance of 'consensual democracy' (Lijphart 1999), insofar as the different socio-cultural components of the European society are recomposed at the political level by democratic elites open to cooperation and agreement. The role of member states in European decision-making has been tempered by multi-level governance, i.e. a system of governance that relies on action taken at different levels (local, regional, national, supranational) by a variety of state and non-state actors who coexist in an integrated hierarchy of decision making. But insofar as nations remain the building blocks of the supranational union (and have perpetuated themselves through the union), nationalism at the state level continues be a major obstacle on the way of a deeper integration, especially when it is used instrumentally by political elites to increase their electoral support.

The second key contradiction of European union building, which is related to the first one, is the contradiction between the transfer of increasingly growing portions of national sovereignty from the nation-state level to the supranational level (the steel industry, agricultural policy, open European space for the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, a shared currency) and the still insufficient transfer of commitment and loyalty from the citizens of the member nations to the evolving supranational community and institutions. The two contradictions are clearly linked together: policy decisions at the EU level unevenly distribute costs and benefits not only among different social groups but also among different countries, and foster a re-nationalization of conflicts that needs to be held in check by a strong communitarian sentiment and commitment to a shared project. In order to achieve an authentic union, the European peoples and their governments (hopefully of all, but at least those of the eurozone countries) must solve these two contradictions

through the development of a European citizenship and the institutional rebalancing of the EU governance. The development of a European citizenship requires the strengthening of institutions that can foster supranational commitment and loyalty, such as the integration of European education, the creation of European-wide media, the use of referenda on key public issues and the adoption of a unique and simultaneous voting system for the European parliament.

Institutonal rebalancing is not less crucial. In the tripartite governance the European Council has increasingly enjoyed greater power than the Commission and the Parliament. In the European lenghty and complicated decision-making the member states' heads of government and their ministers in the European Council tend to pursue first their national interests and negotiate complex and laborious compromises, whereas European Parliament's members and EU commissioners can more easily view problems in terms of a broader European interest and even share a solidaristic supranational perspective, but they have less influence, since the intergovernmental method increasingly prevails over the communitarian method in policy-making. Moreover, as other intergovernmental organizations, the European Council suffers from a legitimacy deficit, while the secrecy of its debates runs against democratic accountability. It is therefore no surprise that many European citizens feel that their fate is largely decided by foreign governments which defend foreign interests, and/or by global finance and technocratic bodies that are aligned with their views. Finally, the complexity and length of intergovernmental negotiations make for very slow decision-making in areas like economic governance that would require quick decisions; hence the increasing reliance on technocratic bodies which are not subject to democratic control.

And yet the EU has still great resources at its disposal. With 18,000 billion dollars European GDP is the world largest. Despite declining productivity, the EU economy still has a high competitive potential, thanks to innovative entrepreneurship, well trained workforce, reliable enforcement of contracts, efficient regulation and supervision. Despite relevant internal differences among the EU member states (in activity rates and labour productivity, international investment and export shares, sovereign debt and budget balance, business R&D and educational achievements) the EU economy draws significant benefits form its increasing interdependence, free trade and capital movement, policy coordination and supranational policy steering. In spite of high unemployment, high sovereign debt and constant budget deficits in most member states, the European social model (coordinated market economy with welfare state)

is alive and experiencing significant reforms. In spite of its unbalanced structure, long negotiations and complicated compromises, the EU governance provided a management of the global crisis which avoided the collapse of the euro and the breaking apart of the union (with measures like Euro plus, the European semester, Six pack, and Fiscal compact). But the great resources which the EU still has at its disposal must be pooled together and more effectively used to face the crises.

Great advancements have been made by the European nations and peoples in the sixty-five years since the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, but this process is now at a crucial point; the EU is facing the unprecedented challenge of three conflated crises. The conflation of the three crises is sometimes imaginary, as in the use of March 2016 Brussels terrorist bombings made both by British activists to fuel their campaign for Brexit and by the Polish government to question a commitment to accept 7,000 refugees under a previously agreed quota system. But in other cases conflation is quite real as in Greece, where the economy continues to contract and combines with the problem of dealing with the growing mass of refugees trapped in the country since Macedonia closed its border; it is also quite real in so far as it complicates the agenda of European leaders and reduced their ability to agree on effective, consensual, solutions. Each unresolved crisis implies in fact an increased loss of trust and political capital and a rise in euro-sceptic attitudes in the population. If the EU is seen as failing to resolve problems, people naturally become reluctant to bestow the union with new powers. National-populist parties and leaders, on the left and the right of the politica spectrum, are on the rise, exploit union's failures and inabilities to cope with the three conflated crises; but re-nationalization, the solution that they uphold, is a false solution (Martinelli 2013). In order to cope with the European crises and, more generally, with the problems of the global agenda, as syntethised in the SDGs, the EU must become an accomplished federal union.

Effective crisis resolution requires, in fact, executive power and a common strategy which, in its turn, requires an 'ever greater union' with legitimate and policy-effective government institutions. The introduction of the single currency and a central bank were important steps toward political union. But the nineteen member states of the Eurozone which already form a monetary union live the contradiction between a common currency and nineteen sovereign debts, open to international financial speculation, and nineteen fiscal policies in harsh competition with each other. In order to solve this contradiction the eurozone member states

should agree on common macroeconomic, macrosocial policy and security policies. Greater macroeconomic policy integration can be achieved gradually through a series of measures, such as: appointing a Finance and Treasury minister who could rely on a certain degree of fiscal sovereignty and budget capacity; levying a common carbon, corporate, and financial transactions' tax, while at the same time homogenyzing the taxation levels of member states; issuing eurobonds for targeted Europe-wide investments in infrastructures, scientific research, the digital economy; pooling together part of the sovereign debt of member countries; completing the banking union and creating a European guarantee on bank deposits; empowering the European Central Bank with the full powers that other major central banks enjoy; implement common energy and environmental policy.

The common macro-economic policy should be complemented by a common macrosocial strategy, which defines shared rules and minimal standards for welfare policies and implements common measures – like a European unemployment subsidy and a fair ridistribution of asylum seekers among member states. Third, European governments should agree on a common foreign and security policy focused on defending the external boundaries and enhancing internal security with such measures as the formation of a single European army, a single federal police, a pan-European border patroling.

The three key sets of policies must be developed together in order to avoid that they run against each other as a consequence of their different logics; single market policies and welfare and security policies imply, in fact, two different logics: economic integration implies the breaking of barriers, the opening of national systems, freedom of circulation and rules of non discrimination on the basis of specific identities, whereas both welfare policies and security policies, on the contrary, have developed within the nation state framework and imply a logic of social closure, insofar as people are mostly entitled to protection from want and from criminal acts on the basis of their national citizenship. What EU citizens should realize is that even their social protection and personal security are better assured by a strong supranational union than by their nation states.

This ambitious set of measures require, in their turn, the rebalancing of the division of power in the tripartite governance structure (adoption of the generalisation of co-decision method of Council and Parliament for union legislation and abolition of the veto power within the Council). Given the strict rules and lenghty procedures of the Treaties' revision and given the staunch opposition of some member states to such reform, a

smart way out is the creation of a 'Europe at variable geometry' with some member states moving toward a deeper integration and others opting-out while fully remaining in the single market. The obvious candidate for the role of the advanced group are the nineteen eurozone countries which already have a common currency and monetary policy and can more easily implement the policies I suggest above. But in order in order to provide democratic legitimation to key policy decisions and avoid the criticism that they are taken by a technocracy without control, the Eurozone should have its own parliament, which should be a portion of the existing Parliament of the whole EU (Cavalli e Martinelli 2015). In other words, the Eurozone countries – with other member countries hopefully joining in due time – should move toward an accomplished union, overcoming nationalist egoisms and prejudices that obstruct it. The peoples and governments of these countries have to make a clear choice whether to move on toward greater political integration or scale back to a simple free trade zone with some legal and administrative agreements in which member states re-nationalize most of their policies. The urgency and scale of the problems of the global agenda (outlined in the SDGs), the increasing world competition, the need for effective and equitable exit strategies from the conflated crises, all push toward the first alternative, i.e.an accelerated process of political integration. A federal solution may be premature but important steps can be taken in that direction. To put it simply, the capability of European modernity to achieve sustainable and inclusive development actually depends on the successful accomplishment of the European Union.

REFERENCES

Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*. New York: Crown Business.

Cavalli, Alessandro, e Alberto Martinelli. 2015. *La società europea*. Bologna: il Mulino.

D'Andrea, Dimitri. 2001. "Europe and the West: The identity beyond the Origin". In *A Soul for Europe: An Essay Collection*, edited by Furio Cerutti and Enno Rudolph, vol. 2. Leuven: Peeters.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. 2000. "Multiple Modernities". *Daedalus* 129 (1): 1-29.

Fabbrini, Sergio. 2015. *Which European Union? Europe After the Euro Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: The Free Press.

Gaonkar, Dilip P., ed. 2001. *Alternative Modernities*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 2014. *Turbulent and Mighty Continent*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

International Council of Science (ICSU) and International Social Science Council (ISSC). 2015. *Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective*. Paris: International Council for Science.

Internatinal Development Law Organization (IDLO). 2015. *Doing Justice to Sustainable Development*. Roma: International Development Law Organization.

Jaspers, Karl. 1947. "Vom europäischen Geist". Dans *L'esprit européen. Textes in-extenso des conférences et des entretiens organisés par les Rencontres internationales de Genève 1946*. Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière.

Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Martinelli, Alberto. 2003. "Markets, Governments, Communities and Global Governance". *International Sociology* 18 (2): 291-324 (revised ed. of the *Presidential Speech ISA World Congress of Sociology*. Brisbane, 2002).

Martinelli, Alberto. 2005. *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity*. London: Sage (Chinese ed. Beijing: The International Press, 2005).

Martinelli, Alberto. 2007. *Transatlantic Divide: Comparing American and European Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martinelli, Alberto. 2013. *Mal di nazione. Contro la deriva populista*. Milano: Università Bocconi Editore.

Martinelli, Alberto. 2015. "Global Modernization and Multiple Modernities". In *Global Modernization Review: New Discoveries and Theories Revisited*, edited by Alberto Martinelli and Chuanqi He, 5-24. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.

Offe, Claus. 2014, *L'Europa in trappola. Riuscirà l'Ue a superare la crisi?* Bologna: il Mulino.

Rifkin, Jeremy. 2004, *The European Dream*. London: Penguin.

Rudolph, Enno. 2001. "Introduction". In *A Soul for Europe: An Essay Collection*, vol. 2, edited by Furio Cerutti and Enno Rudolph. Leuven: Peeters.

Sachs, Jeffrey D. 2015. "Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals". *Journal of International Business Ethics* 8 (2): 53-62.

Sen, Amartya. 2009. *The Idea of Justice*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2002. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2015. *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and What We Can Do About Them*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Therborn, Göran. 1995. *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*. London: Sage.

United Nations. 2015. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.

Wittrock, Björn. 2000, "Modernity: One, None, or Many? European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition". *Daedalus* 129 (1): 31-60.