



Our path to a united Europe and world peace

We should say, right from the start, that it is not our intention to talk about politics; we see the united states of Europe as a grouping of countries that can help us to maintain peace in our continent. The united Europe conceived by the wise statesmen of the countries of Europe after the second world war has given us the longest period of peace in Europe's history. There were six founding countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Today, following Brexit, there are 27 member states. Not much progress has been made as the European Union. Originally, joining Europe was considered a victory and a privilege. Countries had to act quickly, put their house in order and prove that they met the necessary requirements. We thought that we would all become more peaceful once we joined the Union, which we saw as a confederation of free and democratic states with a border guard formed by all the member countries. This arrangement would improve our internal security and allow us to create an efficient community-wide police force that could defend us against terrorism. This may well have been true, except for the fact that, as we later found out, not everything was hearts and flowers. There were some things that initially remained in the shadows. We believed in the European Union as a lifeline. We are moderately happy with the results that have been achieved and are determined to press ahead. **The dream of the pro-Europeans is to transform the European Economic Community into a confederation of states based on the model of the United States of America.** This does not mean denying our history, our culture and our progress. The global political and economic context has changed, and this change means that we need to adapt; otherwise, we risk disappearing from the world political and economic stage.

The economy and free competition

In order to erase the significant deficits of Europe's weakest economies, it was decided to make sacrifices that dampened (or downright killed off) signs of recovery, without achieving any positive results. This course of action damaged the weakest economies, which were stimulated, and European progress became delayed. This is exactly the opposite of what was initially hoped for. Moreover, in a



liberal economy, the mistake was made of imposing limits on the production of goods for individual countries, thereby hindering free competition. The incorrect or highly dubious economic choices that have been made are errors that have placed the validity of the European project in doubt. We therefore need to change course. The methods used and measures taken have ended up antagonising many of Europe's citizens.

Enterprise and citizens' good will

At the end of the Second World War, Italy had neither agriculture nor industry. This underdevelopment was due to historical, geographical and strategic situations that are easy to understand. At that time, Italy did not have a road network that was conducive to trade with the rest of Europe. Today we can happily say that Italy has modernised and that its road network has improved and is adapting to that of the rest of Europe. Every day, the "Viaggiare Informati" television programme shows us that there are no deserted streets, which is a clear sign that goods are being produced and transported in Italy. Despite a tax wedge that is 10 percentage points higher than the European average, we have a great many industries in Italy, including several champions. Nevertheless, the tax wedge, a thorn in the side of Italy's manufacturing industry, must be reduced, as promised countless times by successive governments over the last 30 years. The lack of tax reform, together with various other reforms that have been attempted several times but never completed, frustrates the government's actions. However, in this case as in others, the good will of the workers (both entrepreneurs and employees) has shown that problems can be resolved: Italy is recovering. It is doing so more slowly than the rest of Europe, but its economy is improving nonetheless. Today, 19 May 2017, a reporter on "Unomattina" repeated a quote given by Mario Draghi the previous day: "the crisis is over: signs of recovery can now be seen throughout Europe."

The reaction of the most severely damaged countries

In Europe, it seems like someone has failed to understand that France, Italy, Spain and Portugal have their own history and their own dignity, which they have no intention of giving up. The same problems that these countries are now facing will be repeated in future for all the other countries that joined the European Union after us. Rules that are imposed and not shared risk pushing out of Europe the four countries that have, up to now, shown a genuine belief in European unity. While the



UK must also have other reasons for leaving the EU, considering the country's tradition of freedom and of being a leader in Europe and the world for centuries, some of the rules imposed upon it may well have been major factors in its decision to leave. Faced with positions that humiliate the very countries that have forged the history of Europe and the world, citizens of Europe must be wondering if someone, instead of trying to preserve peace in Europe and the world, is simply seeking glory for their own country.

At this point, it seems clear that the European project can continue only if it is shared by all involved. The concept of Europe cannot be understood as a union of different countries where some have more weight than others. The EU member states know **that adapting to the shared rules established becomes a goal for all countries.** The fines imposed as a punishment to countries that fall behind have only served to damage the weakest members. In Europe, there are countries with economic deficits and others with surpluses; each country pays its own debts and disposes of its own wealth. In any case, nobody is required to pay the debts of others. EU countries must remain the masters of their own affairs, and no supranational body should be able to dictate rules, methods or time frames for resolving problems. Europe is built on a solid foundation of shared laws and rules. This means that no provision or regulation should be approved if there are countries that are not prepared to accept it. It will not be easy and will take time, but we must achieve this.

The European Union is key to continuing along the path of peace that we have taken

If the 27 member countries feel genuinely integrated and accepted within the EU, they will act for the benefit and development of a united Europe. **In order to accept a united Europe, we need to realistically believe that there is no alternative. None of the 27 EU countries, once isolated from Europe, would be able to compete with China, Russia, the US and India.** As Europe, on the other hand, we will by no means be the strongest (particularly as new economic alliances are being forged), but we will be able to negotiate trade deals and will be an important partner. Moreover, we must acknowledge that conflicts the world over are multiplying and becoming bloodier. This is a warning that Europe cannot ignore.

Italy has already proven to the world that it has an industrial sector with considerable technical expertise. It is classified as the world leader in the field of



precision mechanics, followed by Germany and the US. Our country also dominates the fashion, clothing and footwear sector. It is widely admired for its agrifood business and production of high-quality sparkling wines. The list of Italy's world-leading industries is both endless and well known.

It is often when it comes to the biggest and most environmentally and strategically difficult projects that Italy comes into its own. Speaking on "Unomattina" on 12 May 2017, Prime Minister Gentiloni stated that "we are the leader in the field of renewable energies, ahead of France and Germany".

27 countries pooling their strengths, sharing their experiences and constantly communicating with each other can do great things.

I believe that everyone reading this will agree that a united Europe is a political and economic necessity if we are to prevent the 27 current member countries from being crushed by the giants surrounding them.

The 'United States of Europe' should be made up of countries with equal rights and duties; we cannot conceive of a Europe of first- and second-class countries. As previously discussed, laws and rules must be accepted by all or they cannot be approved. This is an initial obstacle that will be overcome sooner than expected. In the absence of a unanimous agreement, each country will be able to keep their own laws in force. There will obviously be a moral commitment for everyone, to the greatest extent possible, to converge towards uniformity, but this will not be obligatory. The idea of punishing countries that fall behind turned out to be an immature and incomplete notion. This experience must not be repeated.

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