

Good morning. My name is Riccardo Veneziani. I am here on the request of Professors Hofmeister and Baroncelli, whom I thank.

When thinking of the value of the European Union, many sensible considerations come to mind. Few will be found disputing the prosperity brought by the Customs Union, and fewer yet point to the freedom of movement of people as something nefarious.

These aids, however convenient they may be, cannot form, as an end in themselves, the core of the Union's value. The development of European institutions prevents it from being so. If this extension is to be considered -as it is- legal and legitimate, then this Union cannot remain a mere economic instrument. Nor should it be reduced to an apparatus, intended to prevent further outbursts in what has been called "the long feud between Teuton and Gaul". Regardless of its noble intention, the European Coal and Steel Community alone would not have sufficed for the achievement of this objective. The London Naval Treaties provide a stern reminder of what treaties are worth when faced with unwilling participants.

No, if the Union is to endure, it cannot do so as a footman to national interest. The sum of the glories of the many proud nations on the Continent *must* amount to more than a loose conglomeration of shopkeepers. I would instead argue that the European Union is beneficial *because* of the values that it promotes. It is from these that the advantages I described stem. The absence of belief in human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human and minority rights would inevitably give way to the primitive doctrine that “might is right”. This notion, still too widely held elsewhere on the globe, has fortunately been eradicated from Union States. Nowadays, the flag flown by many countries at the side of their national colours is hoisted there by the will of the people, not by the coercion of a foreign power. It may be well said, that through the action of the European Union, the fierce factionalism which once divided Western and Central Europe has subsided.

Much has been said of the tardiness with which European institutions have at times acted. However, it must be remembered that seldom bodies as large and heterogeneous as them have moved with the same agility and decisiveness of smaller and more cohesive ones.

This does not mean that we should not strive for success. It was Winston Churchill who once wrote of his great ancestor, the Duke of Marlborough: “Napoleon could order, but Marlborough could never do more than persuade or cajole”. This is the arduous role that present and future European leadership must assume for the enterprise to succeed. Relinquishing all notions of national empowerment is not an easy or instinctive task by any means. Nevertheless, I maintain that nothing short of it shall be demanded of future generations, if not of us. Any failure in the discharge of this duty would exact tremendous costs on the peoples of the Union, the nature of which has already materialised itself in minor forms.

Fortunately, such conditions are far from manifesting themselves in full. What is apparent is that one of the greatest challenges of the century has been presented. I firmly trust that my generation will take up the gauntlet, as its predecessors have done. The task is daunting, the target distant, the stakes immense; but I maintain that, through the unified exertions and sacrifices of the European peoples, no obstacle will be insurmountable, no objective unconquerable.

