

What European revival? Objectives, ambitions and limits of the German EU- presidency in the first semester of 2007

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Germany under the bid of Angela Merkel prepares itself to takeover the presidency of the European Union (EU) on 1st January 2007. The moment is characterized by two difficulties: Germany, whose authority on the head of the "Grand Coalition" is clearly weakened, lies in a union where many issues remain extremely sensible. After examining the condition of the European question in Germany and drawing a rapid record of the Finnish EU-presidency which is expiring by now, we will present a synthesis which introduces the five major objectives of the German presidency (constitutional revival, energy, enlargement, Turkey and Lisbon strategy) and tries to specify realistic expectations.

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Also available in French.

The delicate subject of the future of the European Union is today in Brussels and in most of the member countries' capitals, a softened theme. No one dares or is capable of saving Europe from the crisis triggered by the double « no » of the 2005 spring for the Constitutional Treaty. The essential issues glide in uncertainty! What is the future of the EU? Are we capable of redefining its finalities, its means, and its action perimeters? Do we want a structured political Europe and, at some point, naturally federal? Or rather an economic union of soft political force – what French people call « Europe the english way »? Does Turkey have its place? What are its boundaries, values, identities ?

While the sharpness of these questions appears clearly, London waits the for Tony Blair's succession, Paris gives up to its nombrilist inclination at the approach of the presidential election and Rome observes the hesitations of its very heterogeneous governmental coalition... Regards turn towards the "Berlin Lady", chancellor Angela Merkel. Germany will take up the round presidency of the EU during the first semester of 2007. Will it be capable to get out of the rut in which it is?

1. The European question in Angela Merkel's Germany

In her first important speech on EU held before the Bundestag on 11th of May 2006, Angela Merkel had asked the simple and fundamental question: "Why Europe"?¹. Clearly, the motive and pacifier force that the European idea had after the Second World War has lost, according to the chancellor, an amount of its power does not suffice to respond to the aspirations of many Europeans. It's a "Europe of results" – resuming Manuel Barroso's expression – that needs to be built as to meet their confidence.

¹ Speech available in German at http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1502/Content/DE/Regierungserklaerung/2006/05/2006-05-11-regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzlerin-angela-merkel.html [November 2006].

The chancellor made reference to the definition of a new determination for the EU: "Europe must prove that it is capable of reformulating a politics based on its own values in a world characterised by a higher competition and globalisation. It is this challenge that we must confront". She called the commitment of political accountants, giving them the mission to convince the citizens that the social market economy ("a European idea") could be adapted to the stakes of globalisation, and that Europe could become again a *success story* in economic, employment, education, innovation and research.

She finished her speech by reminding that the EU "needed the Constitutional Treaty" and promised that Germany "will deal" with this issue.

A. Europe in the political German debate

The reactions in Germany have not been in their integrity enthusiastic, synthesising the scepticism of most of the observers as to the chancellor's capacity to obtain the raise of the European construction, and specifically the closure of the constitutional process². Scepticism confirmed somehow by Angela Merkel, the 12th of October 2006, when she declared in Brussels that the German presidency had given as an objective to establish "the target, the plan and the method" of the constitutional debate before March 2007... and not more than that³!

Europe hasn't been a theme in the campaign of 2005 that brought Angela Merkel in the chancellery, caused by the well-known German *specificum*: national consensus in favour of the European construction. The two big government parties – the Social-Democrats of the SPD and the CDU Christian- Democrats – agree to the idea that the European integration is an indebatable and permanent objective of the German politics after the war. To this could add the doldrums after the French and Dutch "no" that didn't incite to great expectations!

B. The fragile "Grand coalition"

The question of the stability and the durability of the "Grand coalition", reuniting PSD and CDU at the government, and so that of the real leadership of Angela Merkel at its heart is at the centre of all interrogations, and mostly those raised by the European and foreign politics. Most of the critics point at the weakness of the chancellor and accuse her of confining herself to the role of moderator in the government⁴.

Some of them expect profound conflicts after many elections to come in the *Länder*. The gain of power of the opponents of the "Grand coalition" in the *Bundesrat* (where the representatives of *Länder* are in session) could take to real freezing of the federal politics. The next elections will be in Bremen in May 2007. No one actually believes that the "Grand coalition" will last for the entire legislature. Nevertheless, a separation is not to be foreseen from 2007, more surely in 2008, when five successive elections risk jeopardizing the precarious stability.

C. Europe, object of the German "continuity"

The foreign politics is lead by the chancellor and by the minister of Foreign affairs, the social-democrat Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Until present, despite a precarious stability between the two parties of the "Grand Coalition", the "continuity" remains the leitmotif in the foreign politics. After the coalition contract, and as reminded by the chancellor's speeches, all actors recognize "the German historical responsibility that establishes the the obligation of promoting the European integration, and

² See notably *Die Zeit*, 05-10-2006, <http://www.zeit.de>.

³ Speech available in German on http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1264/Content/DE/Artikel/2006/10/2006-10-11-europ_C3_A4ische-verfassung-bis-2009-verabschieden.html. See also Euractiv, *Will Chancellor Merkel cure EU paralysis?*, october 12, 2006, www.euractiv.com.

⁴ See Pierre Bocev, « Après un an aux commandes à Berlin, Angela Merkel n'a pas convaincu les Allemands » [« After a year of commanding Berlin, Angela Merkel hasn't convinced Germans »], *Le Figaro*, novembre 21, 2006.

not only to make of Europe a great international actor⁵, emphasizing the centrality and complementarity of NATO and the foreign, security and defence policy (CFSP and ESDP).

The reminder of these two pillars of the foreign policy is proof of the present orientation of the public German politics: Frank-Walter Steinmeier has spoken of "proud modesty" (*selbstbewusste Bescheidenheit*)⁶, an expression which reminds of "Kultur der Zurückhaltung" (culture of restraint) as in times of government Kohl. To this doctrine is added a (re-)approaching to the United Kingdom and the countries in Central and Oriental Europe, allowing Germany to be the mediator of Europe. That is how the chancellery tried to ease the German French axis⁷ that occupied too much space and caused some damage, particularly in the relation with the Eastern countries.

The only notable major change is the distinctly more cautious tone in which Germany's traditional support for the "deepening" and "widening" of European integration is expressed. In this sense, Germany has fallen in line with the presently prevailing Euro-sceptic mood.

D. German Foreign Policy – an object of domestic politics

The German foreign policy relies traditionally on four criteria admitted by everyone, including observers and citizens: strong domestic political support to elevate foreign policy beyond bipartisan disagreements; as electors usually don't care about realities in international politics, considerable political leadership is crucial to mobilise domestic support; vibrant and effective international institutions to guarantee effectiveness of Germany's Civilian Power orientation; supportive allies and partners willing to design and implement extensive and effective forms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation⁸.

The challenges which Germany is facing by the end of this year 2006 are: the military missions in Congo and Lebanon; conflict with Iran; the European still-stand; energy policy and environment protection. As we said, strong domestic support is necessary for an effective foreign policy...something which the "Grand Coalition" is clearly lacking. As a matter of fact she is confronting intractable domestic issues which are more dividing than unifying: health insurance, pensions, socio-economic reforms, unemployment and public sector deficits.

E. German Euro-Scepticism

The recent "Eurobarometer" of spring 2006 states that the Germans are the most dissatisfied with the state of European democracy than the average of the 25 members⁹. Only every fourth East German thinks that his voice counts in the EU. Also, 60% of West Germans but only 34% of the East Germans are satisfied with democracy in Germany. Europe also arouses negative associations such as waste of money, bureaucracy, unemployment, rising crime, etc. Concerning EU integration, most Germans fear a transfer of jobs, loss of social benefits and that their country has to pay more and more to the EU. Regarding the European constitution, we can state that all member or candidate countries have a majority in favour of an EU-constitution. In Germany, 71% are for a constitution but like Europeans in general, a majority of Germans want a renegotiation of the Treaty.

Angela Merkel stated in her speech to the Bundestag on 11th May 2006 that political leaders must understand that many citizens fear the over-regulation from Brussels. As a concrete measure, she applauded the efforts made by the EU institutions to get rid of superfluous regulations and laws and even proposed a general cut of 25% of these regulations. The notion to cut Euro-bureaucracy is indeed an attractive and effective slogan in the face of the common image of the EU as a "regulating

⁵ Hanns Maull, "Back to the Future? The Foreign Policy of Germany's Grand Coalition", *Foreign Policy in Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No. 18, april 2006, p. 9, available on <http://www.deutsche-aussenpolitik.de/newsletter.php>.

⁶ In the interview "Selbstbewusste Bescheidenheit", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 6, 2006.

⁷ On this question, see Kerber, « L'Europe après le "couple franco-allemand". Réflexions sur le rôle futur de l'Allemagne en Europe » [« Europe after the "german-french couple". Reflexions on the future role of Germany in Europe »], *GéoEconomie*, N° 39, Paris, Autumn 2006, pp. 25-32.

⁸ Hanns Maull, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁹ See http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65_de_exec.pdf [November 2006].

monster". 48% in East- and West Germany – and In the EU overall 41% - suspect that the major part of the budget of the EU is spent on administrative and personnel costs.

We can clearly distinguish the dilemma which the German government has to solve: On one hand, it has to respond to the fear of losing jobs and money by further enlargement and integration of the EU and on the other hand, to the desire for more 'democracy' in the EU as well as for a constitution which is only to be done by deeper integration. The dilemma is resumed in the formulation of Merkel in May, which proposes a mix of "less Europe" (less bureaucracy and overregulation) and "more Europe" (constitution and reliability).

2. Record of the Finnish Presidency (2nd semester 2006)

Prior to analysing the starting conditions and effects of the future German Presidency, we will consider also the Finnish presidency ending on 31st December 2006.

In his preliminary agenda published in May 2006 Finland announced the following priorities: future of the EU, enlargement, better regulation, transparency, financial perspectives for 2007-2013¹⁰. Moreover the presidency aims to concentrate on certain challenges such as globalisation, improving competitiveness, population ageing, climate change and security¹¹. The final concern goes concisely after the French and Dutch "No" to the Constitutional Treaty for a rapprochement of the EU to the citizens. The Finnish Prime Minister Vanhanen has announced to reinforce the acceptance by augmenting transparency of the EU during this Presidency. This was done by making accessible the sessions of the Council via Internet.

What record? A very modest but active presidency which is largely dominated by exterior questions. Below we'll list what appear to be the five principal themes in the second semester 2006:

- 1) The war in South-Lebanon:** from European point of view the meetings of the Council concerning the Israeli-Lebanese conflict in summer 2006 were characterised by a new arousing of the deep disagreements among the foreign ministers and by the incapacity to formulate a common line which could have presented a roadmap for the European "Mr Foreign Policy" Javier Solana¹².
- 2) The integration of Rumania and Bulgaria:** the integration process of the two candidates is positively finished after the consent to accession of the commission on 26th September, but under a climate of uncertainty. On 1st January 2007 the EU will add two new members.
- 3) Enlargement policy:** the debate over the integration of Rumania and Bulgaria gave place for numerous interrogations about the enlargement strategy of the EU. The Commission has approved a strategic document in that matter on 8th November¹³. Many voices demanded a pause for the process. Croatia which hoped for integration by 2009 became a prisoner of the still-stand which accompanies the integration of Rumania and Bulgaria and the difficult negotiations with Turkey.
- 4) Accession talks with Turkey:** the negotiations with Turkey are lasting since the second semester of 2005 and have empoisoned the Finnish presidency – and will be surely empoisoning the following... The break line is located around the question of acknowledging the Republic of Cyprus – already a full member of the UE – by Turkey.
- 5) The negotiations with Russia:** the Finnish presidency has set itself the goal to reach the signature of a new agreement PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement) with Russia. This aspiration is dominated by a specific political interest as Russia has historical and geographical significance to Finland¹⁴. Finland gives also priority to the goals concerning

¹⁰ See http://www.eu2006.fi/the_presidency/en_GB/presidency_agenda/ [November 2006].

¹¹ See http://www.webershandwick-eu.com/pdfs/guide_presidency_fi.pdf [November 2006].

¹² See notably « Holpriger Start », *The Financial Times Deutschland*, 14th August 2006.

¹³ See http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/key_documents/reports_nov_2006_en.htm.

¹⁴ See notably « La Finlande vante sa relation avec la Russie », *Le Figaro*, 1st July 2006.

energy policy. On the occasion of the summit of Helsinki on 24th November, the EU has given a spectacle of disunion and cacophony facing a Russia who has fully recovered his political powers founded on his energetic capacities¹⁵.

The Finnish presidency only slightly touched the question of renegotiation of the Constitutional Treaty due to being very occupied by handling important issues. How will then Germany go about the question?

3. The objectives of the German presidency

For the third time since the Maastricht Treaty (after 1994 and 1999), Germany assures the presidency of the Council. Germany will be followed by Portugal and in 2008 Slovenia and France will preside. The three main tasks for a country which presides the Council are: directing the work of the Council of the EU; maintaining relations with other EU-institutions; and representing the EU in international matters.

Concerning organizing the presidency, the European policy directory of the Foreign Office has founded a special Task Force for the German presidency since 2005. This Task Force's responsibility is to coordinate all preparation and political implementation within the Federal Foreign Office for the German Council Presidency and to supervise work on horizontal issues¹⁶. Regarding the results to be on the cards it is useful to remember before analysing the principal issues of the presidency that, according to Christoph Demmke, professor at the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht, 90% of the working time of a Presidency are dedicated to routine matters and tasks; and so only 10% are left for ideas, concepts and own impulses¹⁷.

We will now consider the core of our subject. A document entitled *Die deutsche UE-Ratspräsidentschaft* published in November 2006 presented the eight priorities of the German presidency: European constitution, economy and commerce, energy policy, Lisbon strategy, social Europe, environment, internal security, external policy and enlargement¹⁸. As we doubt that Germany will be able to realise strong initiatives for all these issues, we will consider in the following the five issues which are awaited the most.

A. Reviving the constitution

The most difficult task of the German presidency is clearly the constitutional crisis. Mainly because, many hope that Germany will be the (probably) long awaited knight in shining armour. Also we can't say that the situation in the moment when Germany takes over will be very clear. Even though many representatives on the informal meeting near Vienna of European foreign ministers on 27th/28th May 2006 expressed themselves optimistically about the near end of the "phase of silence" and that a solution will be found soon, the pause for "reflecting" was officially prolonged on the following Council on 16th June 2006. Does this silence really mean reflection? We confess our scepticism. In fact, there is not even a consensual interpretation of the crisis. All the actors are repeating the necessity of a revival but are hiding behind vague proposals.

1. Treaty Plus, Nice Plus, Treaty Minus

The positions of the actors in the constitutional debate are approximately known. The different actors can be distinguished into three groups:

¹⁵ See Jean-Sylvestre Mongrenier, *The stakes of EU/Russia summit in Helsinki : Brussels and Moscow between energetic partnership and "geoeconomic struggle"*, Thomas More Institute Working Paper, N° 5, november 2006, 6 pages, available on <http://www.institut-thomas-more.org/showNews/117>.

¹⁶ See Ministry for Foreign Affairs <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/AAmt/AA/Europaabteilung.html>.

¹⁷ Christoph Demmke, *La présidence allemande*, European Institute of Public Administration, EIPASCOPE, 1994-3, p. 1-12.

¹⁸ See http://www.dimap-communications.de/dicomm-dossier-01_EU-Praesidentschaft.pdf [November 2006].

- The first group, consisting of those who already ratified the Treaty like Germany, which favours **continuing the ratification process** and retaining the text of the Treaty as it stands for the aims of these states. At most they would consider amending the Treaty with declarations and protocols to make the ratification in other states easier. They would expect France and the Netherlands to retry the ratification (scenario "Treaty Plus").
- The second group, led by representatives from France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Poland, favours **burying of the Treaty** and re-discussing a new Treaty on the basis of the status quo of the Treaty of Nice (scenario "Nice plus").
- Between these two extreme positions lies the position of the third group which favours a **"mini-treaty"** which progresses from the Treaty. They would save the parts I and II in order to ensure the implementation of institutional and procedural reforms. For that option, the Treaty has to –even if marginally - be renegotiated (scenario "Treaty Minus").

The federal government with the vanward chancellor Merkel are perfectly aware of the difficulty of the task. A recent declaration of the federal cabinet on the German presidency was content with affirming that "the federal government will do his best to fulfil the mission assigned by the European Council in June 2006 and to find a remedy to continue successfully the constitutional process"¹⁹... a very prudent ambition!

We can clearly see that advances will only be achieved by taking small steps. No country – not even the big ones – will risk to expose itself or to advance solutions which could be inconvenient for one country or more. To say it more trivially: nothing to hope except to suffer a setback! Furthermore, France and Great Britain, one of the most powerful countries, are not in a convenient situation to take over political leadership.

2. France and Great Britain: Between immobility and regression

In France the Interior minister, leader of the UMP, and declared candidate for the presidential elections Nicolas Sarkozy called several times for a "mini-treaty" based essentially on the first part (procedural and institutional organisation) of the existing constitutional text²⁰. He proposes that this "mini-treaty" would be only ratified by parliamentary procedure and left open the question whether the second part with its Fundamental Rights Declaration and the third part will be afterwards ratified. Among the European executives, only Romano Prodi, Italy's Prime Minister, has yet supported these ideas.

On his own President Chirac weakened by the negative may's referendum was not ready to take new decisions except to defend offensively the French's interests and French's leadership. Hence, from the point of view of numerous observers France turned out to be a weakened european partner, a little difficult to manage. Some observe the weakening of the French-German tandem²¹.

Ségolène Royal, the candidate for presidential elections of the Socialist Party and hostile to "mini-treaty" of Nicolas Sarkozy, proposes to give the debate a timeout and that "the French presidency will [in the second semester 2008] will propose to organise a convention charged with the composition of a text of a constitutional reform". For what would be left, she is expected to concretize her issue "Europe by proof"²². Anyway, given the traumatism caused by the failure of May 2005 and the weak popularity of the issue "European construction" in the French population, we can speak of a great absence of the issue Europe in the French election campaign. *Rendez-vous* in summer 2007!

In London, the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons published a report "Developments in the EU" in July 2006 in which they comment on the recent developments in

¹⁹ Federal cabinet on the German presidency, « L'Europe aboutira grâce à la contribution de tous », 8th november 2006. Available in French on the website of the German embassy in France: http://www.amb-allemaigne.fr/cidal/Content.aspx?rubcode=EUR&rbaid_ =5065. Traslated by the authors.

²⁰ See his speech in front of the « Friends of Europe », 8 septembre 2006, à Bruxelles. Available in French on <http://www.friendsofeurope.org>.

²¹ See « Merkel und Zapatero gemeinsam für eine EU-Verfassung », *AP-Meldung*, 20th April 2006 and « Spanien will Deutschland helfen, die EU-Verfassung zu retten », *Die Zeit*, 23th April 2006.

²² See notably *Ségolène Royal révèle sa vision de l'Europe*, Euractiv, 12th October 2006, www.euractiv.com.

the EU²³. They conclude that “although the Treaty is not dead, it is comatose and on life support” and recommend that the “Government [should] encourage its European counterparts to face up to this reality and explicitly to abandon the TC as a package, in the interest of making progress on some of the real and important issues which are at present caught up in the paralysis created by its rejection”. Great Britain is counted to the Euro-sceptical countries and it cancelled the referendum after the double “No”. What comes after Tony Blair isn’t clear. Also Gordon Brown, Blair’s most likely successor in 10, Downing Street, is improbably to turn into a Euro-enthusiast.

3. Perspectives

What will the German presidency be able to do in this context? Only two elements of the calendar are known these days: on the 25th March 2007 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome a declaration entitled “Declaration of Berlin” will attempt to provide “a guideline with regard to the values and objectives of the EU”²⁴ and on the summit in June 2007 by closing its presidency, Germany aims to develop concrete propositions on the future of the Constitutional Treaty, propositions that will be developed in the frame of a popular campaign which could be linked with the EU-parliamentary elections in June 2009.

What could be these concrete propositions? There are rumours that the German’s point of view is in agreement with the idea of Nicolas Sarkozy in France. It would be the adoption of a “mini-treaty” abolishing the parts 2 and 3 and concentrating on the institutional measures²⁵. This option would not be subjected to referendum (except in Ireland, where it’s obligatory due to the Constitution), and would not require to reopen a debate similarly large – and risky – like in 2005 and would allow to wait a European sky clearing...

B. Energy policy

The strategic document entitled *Die deutsche UE-Ratspräsidentschaft* underlines in its energetic chapter two subjects to be priority: security of supply and renewable energies, and so the research/innovation.

Given the importance of its needs, its geographic situation and his repeated refusal to be committed again in nuclear energies, Germany is particularly depended of supplies from Russian gas resources. The appointment of Gehrhard Schröder in March 2006 as the chairman of the supervisory board of the North-European Gas Pipeline Company, which is the society who conducts the construction of the German-Russian gas pipeline crossing the Balticum (and passing “over the heads” of Baltic countries and Poland...), confirms this bothering. Furthermore, the constant re-affirmations of the Chancellor of the need of the EU to reinforce the “strategic partnership” with Russia²⁶, show the same picture. There exists for Germany a real Russian tropism based on dependence quite also real...

In the chapter concerning the renewable energies, the German strategic document does not outreach a declaration of principles: remembering the urgency to prepare the time after gas, reminding the need for the fight against global warming, the importance of research/innovation and the stimulation of these in terms of development and jobs.

What’s else except great empty words will nurture the ambitious « energetic actionplan » that German presidency promise for the beginning of 2007? It is hard to see. The spectacle given by the Europeans on the recent summit in Helsinki lets barely prophecy their capacity to define and reach common goals²⁷. The self’s logic, on a very sensitive issue as energy, could win the battle...

²³ See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmcaff/768/768.pdf> [November 2006]

²⁴ The German Federal Cabinet on the German Presidency: English text available on: http://www.bundesregierung.de/nm6516/Content/EN/Artikel/2006/11/2006-11-30-europa-gelingt-gemeinsam_en.html [November 2006].

²⁵ See notably « Constitution européenne : le plan franco-allemand », *La Revue parlementaire*, Paris, December 2006, p. 23.

²⁶ See notably « Paris et Berlin plaident la cause de Poutine auprès de Varsovie », *Le Figaro*, 5th December 2006.

²⁷ See Hildegard von LIECHTENSTEIN, *European Energy policies: 10 questions, 10 answers for the future*, Thomas More Institute Note, N° 7, March 2006, 20 pages, available on <http://www.institut-thomas-more.org/showNews/85>.

C. Enlargement

Merkel repeated in her several speeches her demands for clear frontiers of the EU but didn't answer the question whether who is in her eyes allowed to become a member.

By underlining that accession negotiations are not a "one-way street"²⁸ she sent a message surely directed to Turkey and Croatia because the accessions of Rumania and Bulgaria are certain. The countries of the Balkan are equally concerned: Macedonia is an official candidate, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro are "potential candidates". The question of the accession of countries such as Ukraine, Georgia or Moldavia is still away; but their aspirations toward admission, depending on their each political evolution and on the russian touchiness, cannot be ignored.

This programme – impressive but objectively confused – demands an improved and better defined European Neighbour Policy (ENP), as the chancellor has claimed. By reminding that "reinforced political cooperation must not necessarily mean full membership"²⁹, she takes the first step towards clarification but without précising her vision of such cooperation.

D. The Turkish question

Today, at this stage, another sensible and complicated issue is the accession of Turkey.

Germany has been under the bid of previous Chancellor Gerhard Schröder one of the supporters of a Turkish membership. Merkel's opinion on the possible membership of Turkey is well known, arguing that "inviting Turkey to become a candidate [...] was a mistake". Meanwhile, Germany remains Turkey's most important economic and commercial partner within the EU. "The volume of bilateral trade, worth 14 billion Euros annually, has doubled in the past ten years. Nearly 14 percent of Turkey's exports go to Germany, while 17 percent of Germany's total exports go to Turkey. There are nearly 1,100 German companies operating in Turkey today, and over three million German tourists visit Turkey each year. There are an estimated 2.5 million Turks living in Germany today, and 600,000 of them have already become German citizens"³⁰.

Yet, the government adopts the *pacta sunt servanda* principle. Negotiations have begun, and the government does not want to undo that fact (nor can do)³¹. The commission has on 29th November 2006 recommended the Council to suspend partially the negotiations with Turkey. The Council of December 15th approved this recommendation³². Until when can the Europeans blow the hot and the cold? Can they allow another open crisis to happen which would on one hand satisfy the majority of the public opinion in Europe, but would on the other hand shake the European setting of which Russia, the United States and the NATO are equally beneficiaries? We don't think so: the "consensual culture" which infiltrates so much the thinking and decision-making in Brussels opposes the eventuality of a brutal break with Turkey.

We live – and will probably live for a long time – in changing periods of irritation, relaxation, bluffs, overbiddings and mutual concessions. Germany takes over in a very precare moment in the negotiations like in the constitutional issue.

E. The Lisbon Strategy

The Federal Government articulated in June 2006 that the realization of the Lisbon strategy is a main goal of the future German presidency. Merkel has appointed Michael Glos, Minister of Trade and

²⁸ See notably http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1502/Content/DE/Regierungserklaerung/2006/05/2006-05-11-regierungserklaerung-von-bundeschkanzlerin-angela-merkel.html [[August 2006].

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ <http://www.euractiv.com/en/eu-turkey-relations/article-129678> [November 2006].

³¹ Ton Nijhuis, "The European Policy of the Grand Coalition", *Foreign Policy in Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No. 18, April 2006, available on <http://www.deutsche-aussenpolitik.de/newsletter.php>.

³² See the conclusions of the Council on http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/conclusions/vko50/en_GB/1166190412454/.

Industry, the national coordinator for the Lisbon strategy. Despite the optimism of the Commission³³, we know that this means not a complete return to the objectives which were fixed in 2000. Realistically, this goal will be moreover an attempt to save what is remediable and to realise what is realisable. The government has so fixed three objectives:

- **Slimming bureaucracy:** The EU bureaucracy has to advance simplification of the regulatory framework, says Glos, and favours a clear separation among the competences of the EU and member states.
- **Consolidating budgets:** It is very important to consolidate the public authorities which serves to meet the stability and growth pact. Glos affirms that this is crucial for Germany to be again a motor of growth and reforms in the EU. By doing that Germany would accordingly to the Lisbon Strategy contribute to develop an economy with sustainable growth and better jobs. The Lisbon strategy is a "plea for conducting a mostly similar economic, financial and social policy"³⁴.
- **Promoting research and innovation:** Equally, the additional funds over six billions Euros which are to be invested in research and innovations, contribute to the Lisbon strategy as it envisages the investment of 3 % of GDP of the EU members in research and innovation.

Obviously the realisation of the Lisbon strategy could not be realised by a single presidency. On this issue Germany has taken the initiative to work in cooperation with the two following countries presiding the Council Portugal and Slovenia to define objectives for the next 18 month, which seems to be the good direction³⁵.

Conclusion

We can resume after this short overview that the margin for success is really small for the German presidency. The issues it has to handle are particularly sensible and delicate: don't go back (je comprends pas). What is clearly observable is the incapacity for the EU and its members to develop together a new concept of the European construction. The problem lies deeper than a simple disagreement how to deal with the *impasse* of the Constitutional Treaty and the underlying crisis of the European Integration Project. There is lack of direction and leadership, which is observed in the difficulty to identify the original interests in the several proposals which the actors have made yet. The so often underlined European breakdown is not a mechanic breakdown but a breakdown of intentions.

Is the Chancellor Angela Merkel capable to answer to the question, to the most urgent to answer question of the "raison d'être" of the EU which is asked since May 2006: "Why Europe?". It seems to be difficult in a Germany which is certainly traditionally euro-enthusiastic but where also the scepticism rises proportionally to the diminution of the support for the government.

³³ See *Is Lisbon strategy finally on track?*, Euractiv, 24th November 2006, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/lisbon-strategy-finally-track/article-159120> [November 2006].

³⁴ <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2006/06/2006-06-14-lissabon-strategie-ein-schwerpunkt-der-deutschen-eu-praesidentschaft-2007.layoutVariant=Druckansicht.html> [November 2006].

³⁵ See the Federal Government on the German EU-Presidency, « L'Europe aboutira grâce à la contribution de tous », 8th November 2006. Available in French on the site of the German Embassy in Paris: <http://www.amb-allemaigne.fr/cidal/Content.aspx?rubcode=EUR&rbaid =5065> [November 2006].

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