



**EVENT REPORT:**  
**“EUROPE’S ROLE IN THE WORLD”**  
**With Prof. Franck Debié**

Professor Franck Debié opened his lecture reminding the audience of his postdoctoral studies related to the United Nations interventions and peace-keeping operations after the end of the Cold War. This background testifies to his deep knowledge of the UN and his strong interest in having a lecture at its Headquarters.

Prof. Debié is the Policy Director of the European Ideas Network which is an open pan-European think-tank designed to promote new thinking on key challenges facing the countries of the European Union. He is an expert on Europe’s role in the world, its present reform and potential capacities in foreign policy, defence policy and security. The main point discussed during the lecture was related to how Europe and European Countries, beyond traditional means, can exert their influence in the rest of the world. This is a particularly important topic as it has been somewhat neglected in the academic community.

- First of all, European firms have a similar role in worldwide business to big enterprises in America, China, and India. Important factors that are shaping European influence in the world include the impact of European Foreign Direct Investments on the creation of employment in foreign countries resulting from an outsourcing strategy, and the share of European exported goods and services in international trade.
- Secondly, a traditional diplomatic bilateral and multilateral system is part of the history of most European countries. It dates back to the Peace of Westphalia and the birth of permanent diplomacy and embassies across the Continent and more recently to the Congress of Vienna and the two prevailing principles of *legitimacy* and *equilibrium* on



which nineteenth century statesmen, ambassadors and foreign ministers tried to build the peace by all parties. These experiences have taught middle-sized powers in the European context, such as Poland and Turkey, how to rebuild their negotiating capacities and diplomatic networks, using their historical heritage and influence.

- Civil society and European NGOs is the third pillar on which Europe and European countries can influence global public policy, out of the traditional policy making circles.

**European countries can therefore rely on their big companies, a strong civil society and traditional bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to gain a stronger global influence.**

As an example of global issues, Europe has taken the lead on policies to reduce the impact of climate change, since a simple prevention policy will not be enough to address the following global challenges:

1. Deforestation and desertification
2. Massive loss of fertile soil
3. Massive water shortage
4. Lack of access to legal trade

A further point of discussion during the lecture was concerned with the second term of the European Commission Presidency by Mr. Barroso, re-elected on September 16 2009. It was argued that a new leadership for the Commission is needed to go beyond the main objectives of *peace, democracy* and *prosperity*, which were the core of the European Constitutional Settlement shaped over the previous 50 years.

The European Union should be a tool to strengthen European influence in the world and maximize its role in the global economy. Europe uses 'soft power' as a way to promote its values

and to receive global acceptance. Still, public perception is different from the theoretical construction of scholars. Even the three main goals, *peace*, *democracy* and *prosperity*, that the European Countries set in their recent history cannot be said to be completely achieved.

Will prosperity in Europe continue after economic recovery? A truly European democratic agenda is weakened by the joint challenges of economic oligopolies lobbying in the insulated darkness of Brussels' negotiations and the inherited democratic deficit of EU institutions; peace is a reality only for part of the continent, with on-going peace-keeping and nation-building operations in the Balkans. Immigration policy is another hot issue, especially concerning the project of a "Union for the Mediterranean".

According to Professor Debié, European influence in global affairs will therefore depend on:

- Financial autonomy
- Growth of the European internal market
- Energy independence
- Capacity of trading despite the economic crisis
- End of the *democratic deficit*.

We have to avoid a certain naiveté of thinking that European influence in the world does not need attention to these issues. A traditional agenda does not mean an irrelevant one and even the historical goals of the European Union still require effort.

In conclusion, Prof. Debié remarked on the importance of an effective foreign and defence policy as well as the revival of antitrust measures as welcomed policies to increase Europe's role and influence in the world.

Report written by Renato Giacon and edited by Allison Bryan