

The speech given by romano prodi

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Evaluation of the speech given by Romano Prodi, the president of the European Commission 2000-2005 in Europarlament, Strasbourg, 15 February 2000. After a quick glance at the speech we can see a positive inspiration of an ex-prime minister of Italy, to a stronger, healthier Europe thorough a better management of scarce resources (money) and optimization (review our priorities and focus on our core business).

To focus on its real priorities... to shed low-priority activities and thus free up resources". Prodi wants to revive the lost faith in the European institutions. Enlargement, progress, lower unemployment. Strengthen Europe's capacity for prosperity and progress. This " vision" then, is for an all-round project enabling the construction of a Europe capable of upholding its own responsibilities towards future candidates for accession.

Enlargement, approached on a basis of such a broad design, adds a number of considerable advantages: politically, it strengthens the role of democracy in Eastern Europe; conomically, it offers the prospect of a vaster, more competitive market; from the security viewpoint, it can represent the starting point for a new all-European system of guarantees, thus playing a complementary role with the enlargement of NATO, offering Russia reasons for integrating and cooperating with the West.

However, usual debates about vigorous and sustained growth, security, sense of meaning and purpose and projecting its model into a wider world have a strong political motive. Not only Prodi wants to satisfy his personal ambitions, but also want to steer the entire process of establishment of new Europe. Relation to the in-house administrative reform of the Commission.

Renewed understanding of the tasks and "core business" of the Commission that are enshrined in the Treaty, given the new context of interdependence and interactions between various levels of government.

Despite denying of thinking imperialistically, the aims are to establish a control over large territories, to impose European principles. "We must aim to become a global civil power". European interests mentioned by the president of the Commission are nothing else but a wish for Europe to be a superpower. Prodi paints a picture of a European Union increasingly at ease with itself as it grows in both political and economic stature. Take economics first: Romano Prodi's five-year statement, published a week in advance of his appearance at the European Parliament, is a blend of Thatcherite economic rectitude and Clinton's high-tech infospeak.

His objectives are clear. To push for continued, if painful, reform of Europe's welfare systems and labour markets. To enforce the euro-inspired disciplines on public spending. To promote the case for further international trade liberalisation. To point Europe towards a high-value service economy, based on high universal educational standards and widespread access to information technology, to rival that of the US. To clamp down on state subsidies and provide space for private initiative.

What Romano Prodi does not say is perhaps even more significant: no more corporatism, no more inflated public spending projects, and no more false promises. His approach will be reinforced at a special summit of European leaders in Lisbon at the end of March. The political will finally seems to be in place to transform the rhetoric of economic reform into practice across

Europe. Among new priorities, Prodi said the commission needs to improve the delivery of its external aid: the EU is the world's largest donor but its work is often slowed and hampered by " top-heavy internal systems" and lack of staff where they are needed.

It will focus on the Balkans, notably aiming to liberalise trade, build infrastructure and support political and civil reforms to bring those countries closer to the EU, he said. The commission will also " vigorously conduct" EU enlargement negotiations and develop cooperation with Russia and the Mediterranean countries. EU enlargement, aimed at bringing many of those countries into the Europeanfamilyof nations, " will be a hard road to travel," Prodi warned. " We will have to win over public opinion. We will be open, but also frank and tough in negotiations. "

Even as Prodi addressed parliament, EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels were formally opening membership talks with the second wave of six applicant countries - Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Six others - Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia - have been in talks for two years. " Enlargement is necessary," said Prodi, " if we are to spread peace, stability and shared values throughout the continent. We must reassure the public that enlargement is not just an awkward necessity, it is an historical opportunity in our joint political and economic interests.

The challenge of enlargement involves break with the past. The prospect of enlargement automatically gives the Union a continent wide posture, which requires a redefinition of its internal policies and makes it a benchmark

player for the Russian Federation and Mediterranean area. It also increases the Union's responsibility as a power in the context of globalisation.

Institutional and democratic challenges are also inevitable. The priority now needs to be changing the methods to ensure that objectives can be understood and acted on successfully.

Encourage discussion amongst citizens of European values, issues and decisions. Reform the process for preparing and implementing Community rules and policies to ensure that they are pertinent and coherent. The commission will overhaul its own functioning concentrating on "core business" and "shedding activities". " This will be our response to one of the key criticisms made by the Committee of Independent Experts - the mismatch between resources and tasks. We will demonstrate that we can help them match by shedding activities. "

He confirmed the commission's proposal to decentralise its exclusive powers in competition policy to national competition authorities and courts, allowing it better " to develop and interpret the rules and deal with competition cases that have a real Community impact. " Governance will be taken to encompass rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards accountability, clarity, transparency, coherence efficiency and effectiveness. Does the Commission act in democratic way? Does the actions achieve their objectives?

What should be done to improve situations? The speech, as I see, has a strong political tone. It is not just about optimizing European management, it

is to re-inforce the Commission. None of the European institutions are untouchable. Many of them will be forced to decrease their power. Shift from a procedure-oriented organisation to a policy-oriented one. And Commission is going to be that one. " The Commission must become a political driving force to shape the new Europe, that inspires and manages, acting always in European interest,... moving away from the more traditional tasks".

His global ambitions demand some attention too. He wants to take a real participation in regulating world class questions such as wars, genocides. In my opinion, his intention is to counterbalance NATO and US through establishing own European security and intervention into at least European conflicts. The concept of governance is aimed at a common political system of the European Union. Construction of a Community that respects the identity of each of its Member States. Reformation of European modes of governance is all about improving democracy in Europe.

Prodi's speech to parliament did not draw general praise. Some called it " a scientific treatise but not a real political strategy. " Others told " There is nothing new at all in working program, lots of prose, not much optimism. " " There are still significant disparities among the countries of Europe and you fail to address these. " Prodi said that actions speak louder than words. Even if a small part of what he intends to do will occur, we shall see a quite different Europe in terms of strength, political behaviour and a strong institute, the Commission.