

ropean continen, especially in the western half of this geographical area is characterized by the absence of armed conflict on a large scale. In fact, since the end of World War II to the present, or for 7 decades, in Western Europe there has been no great wars between nations, and all the phenomena of armed struggle, from separatism in Spain and Great Britain, to ideological terrorism in Germany, France and Italy, however, have had a fairly low profile, when compared with the phenomena of terrorism today in some areas of the globe, such as the Middle East, where intestines clashes in various countries, cause every day tens of attacks. Comparing then the last 70 years without great conflicts with other eras in Western Europe, but in the same context, we realize how this European pax is a rarity. If we think about it, it is difficult to find another such a long period marked by stability and peace. This is the main and more positive fruit than ever of that we now call the European Union. In fact, since the beginning of the formation of this particular entity, a third way between a federal state (like the U.S.) and an international organization (like the UN) member states have never been involved in conflicts between them. Throughout Europe itself, the only real conflicts since the end of World War II have been articulated by countries that at that moment they were not part of the EU: an example of this is the bloody war in the Balkans, i.e. the worst conflict in Europe since the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. Precisely for this reason experts be-

lieve the key to peace in the Balkans, is the entering of those countries in the EU. Therefore understand how European integration is an asset and not a threat, and the good of peace is something too important because you may have a superficial judgment of the EU. This does not mean that there are no criticisms to make about EU and its institutions. The criticisms should be constructive, however, and a simple rejection of the understanding of this complex phenomena, it is not desirable nor affordable for the future of the Old Continent. Only a unified Europe can have a voice in international dynamics. To think that the European states individually can count for something on the world stage, in the midst of giants like the USA (first economy in the world with 300 million inhabitants), China (more than one billion inhabitants, as well as the second global economy), India (more than one billion inhabitants, among the top four economic powers of the world) or Russia (largest country in the world with more than 100 million inhabitants and a nuclear potential is comparable to that of North America) is a big utopia. Not even Germany alone may be able to trouble these behemoths, not to mention other countries. The answer to the complexity of world politics is a united and independent, not occupied militarily and economically integrated Europe. That said, if you want to make criticism of the European Union and its institutions in a serious and constructive way, the main question to be addressed is the lack of connection between the lead-

ers of the Union, its institutions and citizens. Taking the example of Italy, the turnout in the European elections is very low. In the European elections of 2009, for example, the turnout was 65 percent, well below the Italian average; for example in the national elections, it never fell below 75 percent (parliament's election). This disaffection derived from the opposition to the European institutions, not related to the people and to the electorate. In fact, the only body elected by the people is the parliament of EU, but, in contrast to the national parliaments, has no real legislative power, but at most, in some cases, it is required only an opinion or supervision for decisions that are made in other contexts, such as in the Commission. To understand the mechanism, however, and this lack of democracy, we must understand the powers of the European institutions, both in the relationship between the various entities and institutions (Parliament, Commission, etc.), both for what concerns the division of competences between the Union and member states. But before that will serve a short summary from the historical point of view, to better understand why we came to have this kind of European institutions today. What we now call the European Union is the result of a historical evolution. First we have to remember that when we proceed to a union between different countries or regions, it is important to understand the method used to finish off that unit. For what was the prototype of the EU, namely the European Coal and Steel Com-