In a seminar almost fifty years after the signature of the Treaty of Rome, Professor Zielonka discussed his new book *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* in which he seeks to understand the evolving nature of the European Union.

Professor Zielonka argues that the enlarged EU resembles a kind of neo-medieval empire rather than a Westphalian super state. He describes the first paradigm with such elements as a variety of political units and loyalties, multiple identities, economic heterogeneity and fuzzy borders while the second one is seen as embodying features such as a clear hierarchical structure with one centre of authority, cultural and economic homogeneity, military imposition, containment and fixed external borders.

Professor Zielonka claims that the recent wave of enlargement definitely tipped the balance in the direction of the neo-medieval state by introducing a high degree of diversity that can no longer be addressed by the adoption of the *acquis communautaires*. Yet, he recognises that Westphalian state-centred arguments currently dominate the European discourse. These arguments tend to emphasize the state rather than nations, markets and cultures; they propose giving the Union always more powers in areas such as markets, money and social policies and ultimately they constantly support the idea of providing an overlap between its functional and geographical dimension.

Based on his study of the implications of enlargement on three fields (economics, democracy and foreign affairs), Professor Zielonka considers that these statist arguments are mistaken assumptions as the enlarged Union is more likely to embrace the neo-medieval rather than the Westphalian model. The practical implications of the neo-medieval scenario are enormous. Firstly, the EU, as an international actor, is doomed to enlarge always further. Indeed, faced with potential instability from its poorer and less secure neighbours, the Union, just as any other empire, will keep on expanding in order to secure its environment outside its borders. Secondly, the hierarchical governance of the Union is not viable in a neo-medieval state model. Therefore, the Union would have to adopt a more flexible and looser way of governing. Thirdly, the Union’s democratic legitimacy is also doomed to failure as parliamentary representation will not work in a neo-medieval system. Giving more powers to the Parliament may turn out to be counter-productive and alternative principles should instead be adopted.

Finally, Professor Zielonka shows that a neo-medieval empire might be good news for Europe and the outside world. He believes indeed that a flexible empire would be in a better position to cope with the pressures of globalisation and modernisation and to compete with other great powers without eliminating Europe’s greatest strength, its pluralism and diversity. Besides, such an empire can even be seen as more legitimate by making the system more transparent and open. This optimistic view will work on one condition: the EU must be able to adjust to change. The Union needs to espouse more flexible and decentralised systems of governance, to abandon its foreign policy in the style of Bismarck and to adopt a new mode of political representation.

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