Before addressing the main topic of my presentation, today's European Union, I should like to draw your attention to one of the documents that articulated the reasons why a certain type of Europe could have become the most powerful deterrent to conflicts and the best equipped tool to promote liberty and ascertain individual rights.

At the beginning of last Century, Europe was going through unprecedented violence that was the result of an ideology that used race, its purity and superiority, as the main justification for wars of aggression. Nazism was defeated with an alliance between the oldest democracies, the U.S., UK, Canada and Australia and another totalitarian regime, the Soviet Union. A few years after the end of WWII, it was clear which of the two sides of that anti-Nazi alliance was able to ensure a progressive enjoyment of human rights and why.

From the early 1940s, three Italian thinkers, Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi and Eugenio Colorni, from their confinement on the isle of Ventotene, off the coast of Naples in southern Italy, started to ruminate on the root causes of wars, and on the possible political and institutional scenarios that would have defused future conflicts and secured a future of peace for all Europeans. Their ideas and proposals were articulated in a document known as the Manifesto of Ventotene, which marked the way for a new Europe. The Manifesto begins with a radical critique of the notion of absolute national sovereignty:

Now the nation is no longer regarded as the historical product of communities of men that, as the result of a lengthy process, have increased similarities of customs and aspirations and consider their State as the most effective organisation of collective life within the framework of the whole human society. It has, on the contrary, become a divine entity, an organism that has to consider only its own existence, its own development, without the least regard for the damage this might cause to others.

The absolute sovereignty of national States has given each of them the desire to dominate, since each one feels threatened by the strength of the others, and considers, as its living space, an increasingly vast territory wherein it will have the right to free movement and can rely on itself without any other help. This desire to dominate cannot be placated except by the predominance of the strongest State over

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all the others².

In the minds of the three Italians, but also in those of Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi and Jean Monnet, three other prominent founding fathers of the European community, Europe was supposed to become a common motherland for all those that lived in it, and especially for those that, as a result of the end of WWII, had been sacrificed on the altar of the realpolitik of Yalta and forced to live under Soviet Communism on European soil. From 1950s onwards, Europeans created a series of organizations that from coal and steel³ - two resources which control was believed to be crucial to avoid future conflicts - were able to create a common economic space that eventually became a political union capable of making peoples that had killed each other live together in peace and prosperity ever since.

The Manifesto of Ventotene was a real cultural revolution, based on ideas-force that, if implemented to the fullest, could have brought durable peace overcoming the concept of national absolute sovereignty, a totem to which too many lives have been sacrificed without bringing any good to anybody anywhere. The vision of the Manifesto of Ventotene runs the risk of being forgotten by those in charge of turning its spirit into the law of the land in Europe. Despite these daily difficulties, that text remains valid for today's Europe, and can be a source of inspiration for contexts where there are "victims" of their own identity or its desire to affirm it through self-determination.

In the main essay published in the March/April issue of Foreign Affairs, Jerry Z. Muller sums up what he calls a familiar and influential narrative of twentieth-century European history, arguing that “nationalism twice led to war, in 1914 and then again in 1939. Thereafter, the story goes, Europeans concluded that nationalism was a danger and gradually abandoned it. In the postwar decades, western Europeans enmeshed themselves in a web of transnational institutions, culminating in the European Union. After the fall of the Soviet empire, that transnational framework spread eastward to encompass most of the continent. Europeans entered a postnational era, which was not only a good thing in itself but also a model for other regions. Nationalism, in this view, had been a tragic detour on the road to a peaceful liberal democratic order”. Muller addresses also the thorny issue of Israel, which, according to the prominent historian Tony Judt, “ought to give up its claim to be a Jewish state and dissolve itself into some sort of binational entity with the Palestinians”, Dr. Judt believes that the problem with Israel is that “it has imported a characteristically late-nineteenth-century separatist project into a world that has moved on, a world of individual rights, open frontiers, and international law. The very idea of a 'Jewish state' ... is an anachronism⁴”. I would say that the very idea of an independent state is anachronistic.

Despite the establishment of a quasi-legislative assembly directly elected by the citizens of all Member States in what at that time was known as Western Europe, the general response of European leaders to the process of globalization and its challenges, became increasingly bureaucratic eroding little by little the original spirit of Ventotene and diluting the concept of a European motherland into a Europe of fatherlands in meaningless and selfish competition with one another.

The history of the creation of the European Union is founded on the idea that international law should be at the basis of civil, social and economical relationships. At 20 years of the foundation of the European Community, the founding members ratified the Convention on the “Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”⁵:

Taking as their starting point the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the framers of the Convention sought to pursue the aims of the Council of Europe through the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and

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³ http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronologie_de_l%27Union_europ%C3%A9enne.
⁴ http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080301faessay87203/jerry-z-muller/us-and-them.html
fundamental freedoms. The Convention was to represent the first steps for the collective enforcement of certain of the rights set out in the Universal Declaration\(^6\). In addition to laying down a catalogue of civil and political rights and freedoms, the Convention set up a mechanism for the enforcement of the obligations entered into by Contracting States. Three institutions were entrusted with this responsibility: the European Commission of Human Rights (set up in 1954), the European Court of Human Rights (set up in 1959) and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the latter organ being composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member States or their representatives, which entered into force in 1970, that document was also equipped with the European Court of Human Rights\(^7\).

Despite the adoption of a series of complex treaties\(^8\), Europe has not been able to adopt the Treaty of the Treaties, e.g. a common Constitution, after having spent months in trying to codify the “Judeo-Christian” roots of the continent. Despite the firm commitment of all major parties in France and the Netherlands, the citizens of those two countries rejected the so-called constitutional treaty because they felt that European Union was not becoming neither an entity capable to defend them from the invasion of non-citizens, nor something radically different to the market-driven U.S. Model. The new EU fell victim of the lack of politicization of her raison d'être.

I have tried to shed some light to what made today's European Union possible, despite its less encouraging latest developments, because I believe that a “federalistic” perspective not only remains valid for Europe, but, and perhaps even more, could foster radically new approaches in other contexts where apparently the adversary, or the enemy, seems to be unbeatable, like today's People's Republic of China.

East Turkestan was twice, and for a few years, a full-fledged and independent republic\(^9\) until it was finally occupied by Communist China. We also know that despite the suffering of those that still live there, the Uyghur community that has found refuge in Europe and the United States has been able to keep alive the Uyghur language, their culture and customs as well as religious traditions developing a series of institutions designed along democratic participatory lines. Within these institutions everyone is granted the possibility to speak and play leadership roles and non Uyghurs have been welcomed to share ideas and coordinate common efforts to foster the Uyghur cause. It is right for these reasons that, bearing in mind the efforts that the Uyghurs have been able to put together over the years in managing their anger at the Chinese oppression and repression, I believe that the time has come to challenge the Chinese authorities engaging them in a dialogue on what the possible solutions, which means partial but at the same time reasonably reachable, to allow some form of genuine self-determination. That challenge can only happen if we engage the Chinese authorities calling for the application and respect of the laws that they have adopted over the years and that, if implemented, could bring new hope for all those that live in China today.

Article 4. All nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's nationalities. Discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited; any acts that undermine the unity of the nationalities or instigate their secession are prohibited. The state helps the areas inhabited by minority nationalities speed up their economic and cultural development in accordance with the peculiarities and needs of the different minority nationalities. Regional

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\(^7\) [http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/The+Court/The+Court/History+of+the+Court](http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/The+Court/The+Court/History+of+the+Court).


autonomy is practised in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established for the exercise of the right of autonomy. All the national autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China. The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.  

We need to take advantage of the momentum generated by the debate over the Beijing Olympic Games, and build on the great international attention raised by the non-violent struggle of the Tibetan people. It is precisely in the light of this struggle, of the nature of its objectives and of its leadership, that I believe it is important for us today, particularly, to reflect on the legacy of the 'federalistic' vision embodied by the Manifesto of Ventotene, and on the lessons that can be learned with regards to the Uighurs cause.

As you know, the Dalai Lama has been able to open a channel of dialog with the Chinese regime, requesting a form of full autonomy for Tibet. Such a dialog, to prove successful needs to be known by the entire world that can, in that way, be not only a supervisor of the process, but become an active player at critical times exerting pressure in different ways whenever words are not kept or agreements are violated. Thanks to this, we will be able to work toward the promotion of a new China, a country that could become a federation of different autonomous and self-governing entities. As I hope my intervention today has made it clear, our 'federalistic' proposal is not just the result of a realistic approach; but rather of a vision that sees the overcoming of the totem of national absolute sovereignty as a necessary condition for the real respect of civil liberties all around the world.

As you know, the Nonviolent Radical Party is currently engaged in a Satyagraha, a nonviolent action that wants to raise the issue of the trans-national respect of international norms and pacts as the necessary prerequisite to the promotion of democratic and democratized institutions at the national, regional and international level. Developing a comprehensive proposal for a full autonomy for the Uyghurs in China, also as a complement to what the Tibetans are asking and to what the Mongols may request tomorrow, could reinforce the Satyagraha enriching it with the historic strength of the Uyghur people, which may end up making the necessary difference to reach the ultimate objective of the agreements that must be kept. Whilst waiting for the debate to develop on this topic, I would like to conclude by inviting you to adopt a new slogan: “Free Tibet, Free East Turkestan, Free Inner Mongolia, for a Free China!”