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Deforestation and International Trade

Imported Deforestation, a Source of Diplomatic Controversy

Alain Karsenty

In a context of climate change that is developing more rapidly than envisaged, forests are a crucial resource: on average (with variations from one type to another), a hectare of forest filters 50 tonnes of dust *per annum*, stores 338 tonnes of CO₂, produces 21 tonnes of oxygen and filters 1,000 cubic metres of water. Forests are also, among other things, reservoirs of biodiversity (fauna, flora and many molecules or species yet unknown). This essential role in preserving life on Earth spurs many — charitable, governmental and international — actors to combat deforestation, the most emblematic example no doubt being the protection of the Amazonian rainforest. In recent years, a number of states (UK, USA, EU) have decided to double down on their efforts by adopting more targeted measures in the battle against deforestation, in order to take account of so-called 'imported' deforestation, by which they mean the importation of raw materials or processed products that have contributed by their production, directly or indirectly, to deforestation, forest degradation or the conversion to other uses of natural ecosystems in the producing countries. However, the precise definition of deforestation as legal, imported, etc., and the way of monitoring this effectively in the producer countries are controversial questions.

After reviewing the history of deforestation over recent decades, looking at where it has happened and the various facts contributing to it, Alain Karsenty examines the content of these debates. Drawing on the case of the European Regulation on Deforestation and Forest Degradation, he demonstrates the complexity of the measures intended to better regulate the international timber trade and its impact on forests, as well as the potential effects on the producers and countries concerned. In a sector that is still highly informal, it is no doubt going to be necessary to tweak the regulations somewhat to move to achieve the intended result in the fairest way possible.

The Biological Evolution of Trees and Climate Evolution

Antoine Kremer

Climate change, which currently seems to be accelerating, regularly throws up a whole host of issues with more or less direct impact on the agricultural sphere. While some regions are prone to recurrent droughts and water shortage, climate conditions are growing a little more clement in others, raising the question of possible geographical shifts where some crops are concerned (will Cornwall one day be a claret-producing region?). Such a shift may occur through choice and human action (with the species concerned simply being planted elsewhere), but might it also happen naturally through the biological evolution of plants reacting to the new climate conditions?

To answer such a question, we need very long-term comparative data (going back to earlier periods of climate change) on long-lived, slowly-evolving plant species, whose behaviour we have been able to gauge over time. Here, trees (and the forests of which they are part) represent a particularly interesting subject for observation, as Antoine Kremer outlines in this article, drawing on the case of the temperate oaks. In the light of the evolutionary history of trees (their migration over time, natural selection, their resilience, adaptation and genetics), we can assess their capacity to cope with climate change, both individually and collectively. As Kremer goes on to emphasize, this enables us to learn various lessons for forest management with regard to assisting the migration of species, the timescales involved in such forestry management, the make-up of forests etc. At a time when the mortality of species and genetic changes in forests are increasingly under discussion, knowledge around the biological evolution of trees brings new elements for consideration in the adaptation to climate change.

Ecology, Civil Liberties, the Digital, Civilizations etc. A (Geo-)Political Equation for the Coming Decades

Jean Haëntjens

After the Paris Climate Accords of 2015, followed by ambitious announcements and programmes for fighting climate change, re-confirmed or even reinforced after the Covid crisis, the move toward ecological transition seemed well underway in Europe. However, public opinion, jolted by the energy crisis and the increased cost of living after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is no longer so receptive to the targets set by that transition and the attendant constraints. A new message has been spreading in Europe and elsewhere, tending to asso-

ciate ecological policies with lifestyle constraints and a restriction of civil liberties that seem increasingly unacceptable. Can ecology and our freedoms still be reconciled? And, if so, how?

As Jean Haëntjens shows in this article, climate change has jolted the concepts around — and the idea of — freedom that we have formed over centuries, casting them into question in a way that affects the fundamentals of liberal, democratic societies. To understand the paradigm shift that is looming, Haëntjens reminds us here of the different dimensions to the range of questions around (ecological, societal, digital and geopolitical) freedoms, and the issues that arise in the political sphere with regard to how these are exercised. Has there been a change to the social contract? Does it need revising? He lays out how thinking on our freedoms is currently developing, together with the mechanisms that may be used to regulate them while retaining the objective of preserving our environment, and also the actors (both traditional and emergent) by whose endeavours ecology and civil liberty might be reconciled. Lastly, he stresses the geopolitical dimension which transcends these debates by looking at the three main civilizational paths on offer for arriving at these goals (from China, the USA and Europe). It is quite clear that citizens are growing recalcitrant over ecological matters, but the cause may not actually be lost if we can manage to rethink this relationship with their civil liberties.

The Four-Day Week: Prefiguring the Future of Working Hours?

Jean-Yves Boulain

Though work remains a central value for most individuals, recent years, with their periods of lockdown and the expansion of Covid-related tele-working, have

brought a change in the perceptions — and expectations — of employees. More and more people now aspire to a better work-life balance, which may involve other ways of organizing employment and/or shorter working hours. This is why the idea of the four-day week is to the fore again in various European countries, including France.

Jean-Yves Boulin, who has just completed a detailed survey on the subject for Eurofound, examines the factors that have revived interest in the four-day week on the part of employees, decision-makers and business leaders. Referring to a variety of experiments, he shows the forms in which this can be organized, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the various specific arrangements applied in these experiments, from the standpoint of both employees and businesses. Lastly, he reflects on the prospects for a general adoption of the four-day week. Is it something people want? And is it desirable — both from an individual and a collective point of view? If it is, then under what material conditions? And does this apply to all sectors? The lessons learned which he presents here are an indispensable contribution to the lively debate potentially to be had among the social partners, citizens and decision-makers of the countries looking to move to a four-day week.

What Should the EU's Strategy Be for Economic Security?

Elvire Fabry

After decades of globalization that has proceeded, if not swimmingly, then at least without major disruption, a series of crises have recently upset the apple cart: the Covid pandemic, war in Ukraine, the Israel-Palestine conflict, China-US tensions etc. In this drastically changed context, European states have felt the limitations of their external

dependency in a number of areas (medicines, technology, minerals, cereals etc.) and have taken a series of political measures aimed at recovering a degree of their sovereignty, particularly in certain 'strategic' sectors. The publication of this issue of *Futuribles* coincides with a new Commission taking over at the head of the European Union. What can we say at this point about the current state of European economic security? Is there a clear, consensual doctrine on how to protect against strategic risks? How is the EU positioned towards the global leaders that are the USA and China, where strong state support is being afforded to their national companies and increasingly protective — if not, indeed, protectionist — trade regulations adopted? Would the EU be able to cope with an inflow of Chinese goods if the new American laws were to lead Beijing to redirect its trade toward the European continent?

It is these questions, crucial to Europeans' futures, that Elvire Fabry examines in this article, showing how the EU is dealing with the situation by adopting a defensive strategy in economic and trade matters. However, attack often being the best form of defence, she urges the new European authorities to go further and deploy an offensive strategy to stimulate and protect the EU economy, taking advantage, in particular, of the pull of its Single Market.

Naïve Europe? Power Europe?

• A Federal Constitution to Restore Peace in Europe

Jean Marsia

• Radical Change — Is What Is Needed: A Wake-Up Call for the European Union

Mario Draghi

By the time this issue of *Futuribles* is printed, the European elections will

be over. We won't go back over the results here — they have already been amply commented on elsewhere — nor over the potential coalitions which, as Jean-François Drevet clearly stressed in his last Chronicle (*Futuribles* 460, May-June 2024) will be crucial in determining the make-up of the European Parliament. Yet, over the next five years, given its now substantial powers, this new Parliament will have to take a position on the future of a Union that many criticize for being excessively naïve in not having realized sooner how drastically the global geopolitical scene had changed and how bitter was the economic competition between the world's main regions.

Faced with his new state of affairs, a number of major actors have been at pains recently to stress the need for an EU re-think and change of course: Enrico Letta is one such, whose report published in April is analysed in these columns by Pierre Papon, and Mario Draghi is another, asserting that a 'radical change is necessary', with Emmanuel Macron a third, who — most likely taking a lead from Paul Valéry's famous 1919 remark that "We civilizations now know ourselves to be mortal" — called in a speech at the Sorbonne on 25 April 2024 for a "power Europe". In this 'Forum', which is intended to feed into the debate on Europe's ambitions, we publish two points of view: that of Jean Marsia who, in order to restore peace in Europe, argues clearly for a federal Europe; and the position expressed by Mario Draghi in his speech at the High Level Conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights in Brussels on 16 April 2024. We should acknowledge that this forum contains little in the way of contrary opinions; these would however be welcome, potentially for our next issue.

Three Scenarios for an End to the War in Ukraine

Jean-François Drevet

This issue of *Futuribles* comes out two years and four months after Russia launched its offensive against Ukraine and it must be admitted that there is currently little optimism over the outcome of the conflict. Whereas in spring 2022 Kyiv's resistance to the Russian troops had given hope of a longer war that would ultimately see Moscow's plans thwarted, this spring of 2024 brings confirmation that the war still goes on, that it grinds on indeed, but Ukrainian forces are under severe strain against Russian soldiers who seem to be in better shape. Delays on the part of the USA and the EU, which have meant that material support has been held up, are doubtless partly responsible, but, even if the Ukrainian army manages to regain fresh momentum, it is difficult to foresee a rosy scenario developing, particularly as the situation is now tending to inflame opinion in other countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region.

In this Chronicle, Jean-François Drevet examines three contrasting scenarios as to how the war in Ukraine might end, and the ensuing impacts on the EU and European security: Russian withdrawal (virtually utopian), the stabilization of the front (temporary or otherwise) or the defeat of Ukraine (at what cost?). As he points out in conclusion, it is most improbable that the European project will emerge from the conflict with its reputation enhanced. Neither having properly assessed the security issues on its borders nor succeeded in producing an adequate common defence policy, the EU will have to learn the lessons. Might that mean redoubling its efforts or simply giving up? ■

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