

Editorial:

What is the role of Europe in the 21st century?

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Unquestionably, the 20th century was a “European century”, but there are doubts whether the 21st century is a European one or not! This depends on Europe itself and the capacity to formulate its role. Obviously, we are in a new stage of Europe. History knows Europe in different stages. It makes no sense to define all periods, but for the influence of the past you may mention some of these on contemporary Europe:

- We had the Europe of aristocracy partly until World War I, when some families dominated the continent. A lot of it remained especially in history and memory;
- We have the Europe of Enlightenment, when the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars very much supported human rights, nation state as well as the development of nationalities. The downfall of Yugoslavia was the last step on this way in our continent;
- We have the European decolonisation when, until after World War II, Great Britain and France deeply suffered the consequences. Whether nowadays Russia might be understood as a colonial power comprising Siberia, Caucasus and so on, or not remains an open question for the future;
- We had a Europe of global catastrophes, like the two World Wars with the consequence of the movement towards unification or, at a lower level, towards a better continental cooperation;
- We had the Europe of the East-West-Division, where afterwards some ways to integration were gone, but it was not the whole Europe and division lines still exist.

Annus Mirabilis 1989

Since 1989, we have had a new chance to build up Europe in a real sense. It is a positive development, sometimes not really perceived by everyone. What are the arguments?

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1. The improvement of democracies:
 - We have never had such a great number of democracies in Europe.
 - We have a new map, where by the downfall of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the final step in the development of nation states was taken; however, we must admit that we do not have the same level of development in all European countries.
2. Europe is still a huge economic power, but we frequently feel that, politically speaking, the situation is essentially different and that the Economic crisis is pulling Europe down.
3. It is clear that Europe's mission has not yet been accomplished: the process of enlargement of the European Union is going slower and slower, maybe it has already reached an end, we have some failed states, and we have not yet managed to attain the quality required in 21st century; we also witness social imbalances between countries and consequently, migration and unrest.
4. We are dealing now with economic crises, but I am really convinced that crises are always a chance for improvement for it may actually be a lesson we need to learn. André Malraux developed a nice form, mentioning that we live in a "musée imaginaire", where a lot of different situations exist in history at the same time where we can go and choose what we want for our understanding. Anyway, crises represent a chance to develop new instruments.

Europe and the global village

The second part of the 20th century was very much influenced by the desire to create a common Europe. At the moment, we are not very close to this and it sometimes seems that we are getting a revival of the nation state and consequently a reduction of the possibilities of European Institutions. Personally, I am convinced that neo-nationalism is a type of egoism, because the nation state concept does not fit the development of globalisation. Some voices argue in favour of stopping globalisation, but this is not very realistic. If we look at the development of our information-society, of technology, of the economic situation and mobility we notice that we are getting closer and closer every day. So far, we need to bear in mind that Europe holds only 7% of the global population, 25% of the economy and a top position in terms of intelligence. The real question now as well as in the future is: what role and position will Europe have in the global village? This question can be only be answered if we know what is the content of Europe. After World War II, it was the "peace project" of the European integration. It has been said quite clearly: it has been a success story until now. In history books, the downfall of huge empires always leads to wars. However, the downfall of the Soviet

Union and the Warsaw Pact System did not lead to this. It happened in the case of Yugoslavia, but it was a strategy failure of the Europeans.

Therefore, a question arises: is it more or less that we want Europe and how are we dealing with our neighbours? Here I may say that Middle East and Turkey, but also Russia is one of the open questions, where we have to react. The current crisis is creating a situation where we are looking more inward than outward to the problematic questions. It has to be mentioned that, for example, the financial and banking crises are mostly solved by Europe despite the proposals that we need less Europe, but the real background to this question is the challenge for more leadership, which is missed in politics nearly everywhere in Europe.

Which kind of Europe?

What are the open questions for Europe? First of all, we have a lot of European Institutions: the European Council, European Parliament, European Member States, European Central Bank, Council of Europe, OSCE and so on. Sometimes, there is a competition, sometimes a contradiction and sometimes a lack of real political will. So far we have to solve the problem of who is actually leading in this process?

There is also a lack of transparency. This is very much supported by populism, because if you offer primitive solutions, it is easier to be successful in politics, but it is impossible to solve problems. We always create more and more institutions and legislation and the consequence is that everything becomes more and more difficult for the European citizen.

Europe is still powerful and the Euro is clearly a sign of this. The establishment concerning European budgeting, taxation, banking and decision making. The real background is also the fact that we have a very differentiated economic and social landscape and therefore, we need more equality between regions, not necessarily among European Citizens. That means that solidarity is one of the big challenges for the future of Europe. If that applies to the period after the East-West-Division, we are now dealing with a division between North and South. We have the problem of an unemployed young generation in different countries and obviously no European capacity to identify common solutions.

In general, we have to say: there is no real discourse on the concept of Europe. We use some phrases like “Europe of the citizens”, and sometimes it is said that we need “my Europe” to answer the question.

The prerequisite for all these are elementary questions or an elementary consensus:

- Concerning geography: how far does Europe reach? Concerning history: because we still do not have a common history writing, not even a very intense discussion between the different perspectives of history in Europe. I am involved in the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast

Europe (CDRSEE), where we try to compare the history books of the Balkans. It is a nightmare! Okay. That is the Balkans and it is not better in other parts of Europe;

- Instead of this, we need common narratives, which exist for sure in arts and literature but also in religions and scientific solutions. We need a common European understanding. Here, it has to be said, that the fact that everything is different in Europe is not the problem. In reality, this is an asset. That is the impressive result of culture in Europe.

But what we need is a common understanding on aims. We have peace, but this is sometimes not convincing to the younger generation, because it is understood, as coming naturally in Europe. Hopefully, this understanding is right! In this context, we need a role of culture in arts, but we also need a political culture. Do we have the right means to discuss international problems, problems between nations, problems between social groups and so on? Also: where are decisions made/taken? At the European level, at the level of nations and citizens and how is the legitimation done? Which competencies do we need for Europe, for nation states, for regions and so on?

A new European agenda?

Let me mention some points on this:

1. We need a responsibility for leadership at every level: in Europe, in nation states, in regions, in social groups, in the civil society;
2. A new way of transparency has to be identified, this being a prerequisite for common understanding;
3. We have a development process, where the legitimation of democracies has to be done in a new way. We have a European Parliament but no European parties, no democratically elected European Council and so on;
4. The participation of the European citizen is a big problem. To look to the media tools, that we have still a separated system. To give a primitive example: we have no European talk show! Simultaneous translation has already been invented, but at the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) they told me, that making European talk shows they have to divide the advertisement, which is wanted by nobody. So far we certainly have European sport events, the Eurovision Song Contest and so on, but we lack in the means to create common European political understanding.

A European “to do” list

Some American authors compared the USA to Europe, saying that America is Mars and Europe is Venus. Soft power is the equivalent for our

continent, it is nice, convenient and challenging, but it has to be shown in its relations to the neighbourhood. What are the real challenges?

1. We need strategic concepts for the future: climate change, environmental catastrophes, infrastructure, high unemployment rates and so on are pretty well known, but we have found no solutions;
2. Problem anticipation is necessary. Especially in terms of migration, the relations to other parts of the world, the necessity for brain circulation and the common responsibility for education – only to mention some of them;
3. Europe has to be a centre of excellence. We have to look for the conditions and do everything necessary to reach this purpose;
4. Networking: the possibility of connection by means of modern technology is really great. Is it used in the right way or to its full extent?
5. We need a dialogue between artists, intellectuals, scientists. History has produced a lot of contributions, but what are the contributions of the 21st century?
6. We need a better knowledge about us, Europeans, but also about the others around Europe;
7. What are the dominating values in Europe? Here is a challenge for universities, churches, foundations, especially in terms of ethics in Europe. Until now, even the discussion about corruption and tax avoidance has had no results.

Europe for the young generation

The creation of Universities in Europe as a common concept in the outgoing Middle Ages using the same language (Latin), having the same disciplines and providing an impressive mobility of the teachers and students has to be developed in the 21st century as well. This is one of the possibilities to overcome the newly arisen divisions in Europe, concerning Southeast Europe, South Europe and so on. The background is the EU's need for enlargement, because there are still some areas, where strategy can now be recognised – we may only mention Southeast Europe, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus. Also, it is necessary to create a new form of macro-regions, the Baltic Sea and the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The “Arab Spring” - if it is really a spring - creates the necessity to do something in the Mediterranean area. Also, the important role of Turkey as a bridge for a Eurasia concept has to be elaborated.

It is essential to use more imagination and trust for possible solutions. It is a European tendency to always know why something is not possible, but it is also a challenge to say that we can do it because Europe is a gifted continent. It is a scientific and literary tradition to elaborate a lot on possible “Doomsdays” for our world. What we need more are scenarios for the future. Europe will be a

laboratory for the future in the context of the global world and the tests consist in solutions! A lot to do for Europe in the 21st century!