EUROPEAN VALUES AND IDENTITY

A Reflection for an Indispensable Discussion

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ÖIES

EUROPÄISCHE SICHERHEITSPOLITIK

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Introduction

1. Seeking, defining and building identity is a natural characteristic of high civilisations, a driving force towards ascertaining, synthesising and evaluating common spiritual, cultural and moral values. Identity building is an essential and irresistible incentive for re-exploring historical heritage in via perpetual but well-controlled adjustment to new challenges. Identity is endeavour combined with orientation. Strong identity can lead to the protection of cultural, social and moral values. When and only if strong identity exists our cohabitation in Europe, our celebrated diversity through the experiences of other regions and mindsets will show us how to cope with our own problems. (As Goethe says "Compare yourself! Discover what you are!") By sharing culture and acquiring an insight into how people from other cultures perceive the world we can dismantle our prejudices, broaden our mind and become encouraged to make use of synergies by means of cooperation.

2. European identity in the European society is the result of a common history and culture. The European Union is a system of values linking peoples and nations together and providing them identity. Up to now there was no need to develop an accurate definition of the identity of the European Union. European integration never went beyond its "natural" borders so our common European cultural space has not been needed to be defined yet. Now the issue has become urgent, because the Union is facing serious **internal and external challenges**. Europe's identity is something that must be discussed by European peoples and institutions. European identity is not a static and final situation but a task, a dynamic, open process in which members of the European society agree on common perceptions of themselves and others.

Driving Forces for the European integration process

3. WW II ended with the destruction and partition of the European continent and brought about a political, economic and social decline of Europe. This was the consequence of catastrophic totalitarian ideologies like Fascism, National Socialism and Communism and the result of hegemonistic nationalistic policies in Europe. After WW II Europe ceased to be a political, economic and cultural centre of the modern world, and became the **object** of policies of two new superpowers. The Soviet Union took control of Eastern Europe and large parts of Central Europe. The Soviet Empire attempted to impose a Communist type of regime on the democratic states of Western Europe. Therefore one of the key motivations for the governments of Western Europe was to cooperate closely after WW II and to act in unison against the communist Soviet Union.

4. With American support and under the "American umbrella" the political and economic reconstruction and also the European integration process begun in Western Europe. After the creation of the European Steel and Coal Community and the failure of the European Defence Community the European Economic Community was created. The **economic integration process** became an important driver and it <u>created</u> the largest zone of peace and welfare in European history which <u>became</u> <u>a</u> very attractive entity to every other European state which was <u>not a member</u>. Most of the constituent elements of the economic dimension of the integration process have been achieved (internal market, monetary union), but many important things still have to be done.

5. The collapse of the Soviet Empire changed fundamentally the **strategic context** in Europe: the Cold War ended; Germany became reunited and Central European Countries became independent and started to rebuild democracies and market economies. The transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe was supported by the European Union and finally ten countries of Central-Eastern Europe were invited to become members of the EU.

6. On May 1st 2004, eight former communist countries joined the EU and the European Project of reunifying the Peoples of Europe in peace and in freedom <u>moved forward</u>. Admitting those states into the European Union was an important step forward, because it brought together what had been together for centuries and divided by the results of the two World Wars of the 20th century. Therefore this historical event cannot be seen as a step of

"enlargement" of Union Territory, but in contrary, as an act of **European reunification and consolidation.**

7. In a conceptual sense, the European Union has always been more than a mere economic union. The main goal of the European integration process is to overcome **traditional power politics based on national interests** of the European nation-states via building a new European order based on a common framework of European law, common institutions and procedures and an independent European judicial control assuring that in future the rule of law should govern relations among member states.

8. The purpose of the European integration process is not only to create a European zone of economic welfare and strength, but to establish a **stable order of peace.** Its political finality is to develop an ever closer Union of the Peoples of Europe. The political finality of the Communities was already laid down in the Rome Treaties. Treaty of Maastricht established a new quality in the European integration process. The EU was established, and the building of a political union became an agreed objective of EU Member States.

9. The European Union is therefore
    A. a community of **values**
    B. a community of **law**
    C. a community based on **civil society**
    D. a community of **solidarity**, a solidarity which is essential for the functioning of the EU.
    E. a "community of **communities"**
    F. a community of internal **peace in Europe**, which assures that conflicts of interests are solved within the common framework of European law and institutions
    G. a community of **shared interests**
    H. a community, which **assures the protection** of the EU's and its members' global interests

10. The European Union is founded on the respect for human dignity and rights including the rights of communities and families, the value of freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law. These values are common to the member states' societies in which pluralism, non-

discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, responsibility and equality between women and men prevail.

11. In building the European Union, the EU member states move beyond the system and the order of the Westphalian Treaty[1] which, for many centuries, has determined the rules and the behaviour of the civilized world. In building the EU, the member states have not only created the framework and the body of the European laws and rules, but also put a **new political "culture" into** practice.

12. As the EU is more than a multilateral organisation, it establishes a political **Community** (Gemeinwesen). <u>The Union also establishes relationships between the Union, the member states and the European citizens with rights and obligations</u>. This means that a functioning civil society exists in European countries.

13. Putting the principle of **Subsidiarity** into political practice, the European integration process has to overcome the artificial concept of Nation-Statehood. Europe also has to strengthen its naturally and historically developed communities, where people have their roots and feel they belong to. In this way, the <u>principle of Subsidiarity</u> can lead us to the realisation of Europe as a "community of communities".

14. If we speak about European **civil society** we mean common culture, history, rules, verbal and non-verbal, communicated and non-communicated, laws, and communities of interests, moral attitudes, values and institutions – the un-reflected structural preconditions of a sustainable politically based solidarity.

15. The EU is more than a political construct, it's a complex – a "culture" of institutions, ideas and expectations, habits, feelings, moods, memories and prospects that form a "glue" binding Europeans together – and all these are a foundation on which a political construction must rest. This complex – we can speak about it as the **European civil society** – is at the heart of political identity. It defines the conditions of successful European politics.

16. **Solidarity** is an essential building block of the EU. As it was conceived by the founding fathers, the EU is more than a free-trade area, but mainly a **political project**; solidarity is a building block of this project. Solidarity will develop if it is supported by the citizens

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[1] Outside the Union, the Westphalian order continues to be applied. The UN system developed the rules of the Westphalian order. The building of the European Union has been a success story since the process of European integration started. It has been so far the most successful political project of modern European history. It created the largest and most successful zone of peace and prosperity on the continent. But we must be aware that in many parts of the world, chaos reigns. The European integration finds great interest in parts of the world, e.g. Latin America, Africa, but one must be aware that it is not a model which can be universally applied.

and the civil society of the member states. According to that, EU citizens must feel that they belong together. This does not mean that European society is uniform. Quite the contrary, the cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the characteristics of the European society. <u>Nevertheless there is a basic common understanding of our spiritual and cultural heritage and roots</u>

17. From the beginning, the European Union was a Union based on diversity (**Unity in diversity**) - but there are different ways to interpret this dialectical principle, putting emphasis on Unity at cost of diversity (France) or by putting emphasis on diversity at cost of Unity (Britain) – or by undertaking the intellectual challenge to understand this principle as dialectical concept: Unity lying in the shared acceptance of mutual diversity, in tolerance (Voltaire). This challenge is as demanding as the concept of the contradicting notions of Equality (France) and Freedom (Britain), which means not either – or, but: Equality lies explicitly in everybody's Freedom (Kant).

Challenges

    A. <u>Internal Challenges</u>

18. After the historic "enlargement" and the admission of ten new countries the main problem which the EU is facing now is to ensure the proper functioning of the EU institutions and to guarantee an efficient decision making procedure in order to make the EU act <u>efficiently in</u> the interests of its member states. This means that the EU has to maintain and improve its problem solving capacity. We must therefore ensure that the Community of 25/27 states is able to respond to the challenges that Europe is facing today.

19. In order to reach this, the EU has to make important steps towards deepening political cooperation. The **Constitutional Treaty** would have been an important qualitative action in this direction; however, it would not have solved completely a great number of key issues as far as the effective functioning of the EU is concerned.

20. The European Union has in the past decade become more and more a product of the **political Elite,** and this Elite failed to explain its own motivations, purposes and deeds. Politicians often neglected people's everyday interests, problems and fears. The decisions of the political elite in the European Institutions (European Council and European Commission) are more and more disconnected from the hopes and needs of European citizens.

21. A serious loss of confidence and trust in the work and performance of the European Institutions is thus taking place and the gap between the Elite and the People has perhaps never been so deep in the history of the EU. This **estrangement** leads to abstract and bloodless administrative bureaucracy which is unable to provide a strong and legitimate political leadership, neither inside the Union nor outside in an international context. The EU seems therefore not to fulfil the real expectations of the people who want the EU to become a real actor in international politics and play a positive role in the world. The outcome of the two negative referenda in France and the Netherlands, bringing out concerns shared the majority of EU citizens, challenges the legitimacy of today's EU institutions and the political elite of the EU and its Member States.

    B. <u>External Challenges</u>

22. Internal cohesion and an efficient capacity to act are also preconditions if the EU is to become a credible **global actor**.

23. The EU must enhance the **security** of the Community and it has the obligation to protect and foster its own <u>and</u> also its members' interests.

24. The EU commands substantial soft power and is developing components of hard power in order to become a global player. So far the EU has not been able to contribute and set the global agenda according to its international weight and its common interests. Territorial and demographic dimensions alone do not mean political strength and power as such.

25. In order to influence the global agenda the EU has to develop the political will to act in accordance with its interests. In order to be able to develop such a political determination the EU has to be self-confident about its own **nature and identity**. Only a more politically cohesive unified and self-confident European Union is likely to be able to act the role of an international actor effectively. Comparing with the US, China, India and Russia, individual European nation states look like dwarves. If the European states can be united politically, much of the power that individual states have lost would be recuperated in common.

C. Socio-economic Challenges

26. In 2004 the total **population** of the EU increased from about 380 to 455 million, at the same time its **territory** grew to 3.991.539 from 3.242.456 km2. Although the number of inhabitants enlarged by 19% and the geographical extension of the EU also jumped by 23% the aggregated GDP per capita in the EU decreased by 8%. The data implies a real test for European solidarity and subsidiarity. The taboo question, in effect, is to what extent the old, more developed members are willing to finance the <u>further development</u> of the new member states just for the sake of unity and equality.

27. Today Europe as an economic power is also about to be challenged by very competitive economic rivals (USA, China, India, Japan) and the European Model of Social Market Economy, society, culture and set of values have to face existential challenges by the **globalization process**. <u>A special challenge in this context is the lack of European media-networks able to give Europe's culture a voice on the global scene.</u>

28. The EU up to now has been built on the European concept of a **social market economy** which became widespread almost on the whole European continent. In the framework of

such a model there is a convincing case for socio-economic solidarity, not in a purely market-driven neo-liberal economic concept. On the global scale the neo-liberal model is getting omnipresent. It is therefore important to adjust the social market economic model by making it more competitive and sustainable. The European economic and social model must be able to stand up in a globalised world economy, but the EU should also use its economic power to influence and set the rules on global markets. This is a special challenge for the European Commission which has full authority in trade matters.

29. The integration process in Western Europe fostered economic and social **cohesion** and helped to overcome regional disparities. The rate of disparity was 1:2. One consequence of the last "enlargement" is that economic and social cohesion has diminished and disparity has grown; now the rate is 1:5. The increase of Socio-Economic heterogeneity has serious implications for the qualitative criteria of the economy (competitiveness, productivity, corruption etc) and represents serious challenges for the completion of the Internal Market, the Harmonization of Economic and Fiscal Policies, which are necessary to sustain the European Monetary Union.

30. The main challenge the EU faces right now appears in the field of economics and society. The EU has to make efforts to overcome the increased socio-economic heterogeneity and has to head for a greater **socio-economic cohesion**. The Union cannot be built permanently on disparities and inequalities of its members. It is essential to make the historic "enlargement" also an economic success, which is only possible through European Solidarity. After long years of continual policy reforms and the big enlargement which has taken place the EU today needs time for consolidation.

31. The EU has to finance strategic processes in the area of research & development as well as education, science, foreign and security policy, and still has to continue to work of realizing the **Lisbon Strategy**.

32. Today economic forces are not enough to function as a viable and vital polity. The EU needs a firmer foundation. The EU must become more and more a creation of a **common democratic will** (l'Europe comme une volonté) fulfilling the visions of the founding fathers of the European Integration Process – what one could call the "European Dream" (Rifkin).

33. One crucial question has also to be risen in this historical context: Did "enlargement" bring a watering down of the **benchmarks** set by **Art. 6 TEU**[2]? What would mean the admission of future members which do not fulfil the political criteria? How could the area of Law, Security and Freedom function if the constitutionally established standards are disregarded and the rule of European Law and European political standards are not ensured any longer?

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[2] Art 6 TEU: "The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law; these values are common to all Member States".

Common spiritual and cultural roots of European Identity

34. For the further continuation of the successful process of integration it is necessary to work towards a greater socio-cultural **cohesion** of the EU members, as it is an important precondition for political, economic and social solidarity within the EU. The EU therefore needs urgently to become conscious of its common socio-cultural basis. And therefore it is both legitimate and necessary to refer back to history in order to find orientation and inspiration in our age.

35. The spiritual and cultural **heritage** of Europe is a combination of Greek Philosophy, Roman Law, Christianity, Humanism and Enlightenment. Freedom, human dignity and responsibility and solidarity are the central values to be protected and strengthened by our democratic institutions. All those elements are part of our common spiritual and cultural heritage and there is no cause to ponder among them. Nevertheless, it cannot be disputed that Christianity is a core part of the European identity. European society has been moulded by Christianity and the European Union has been created to a large extent by Christian democratic statesmen. Karl Jaspers formulated in this sense: "Europe is the bible and the antiquity."

36. These are key elements of the European society and – to a large extent – they determine the identity of Europe and the EU. This **common heritage** has continued to exist despite of the bloodiest wars and the different "-isms" <u>Europe has experienced and suffered and also these experiences formed the basis of modern European societies.</u>

37. Karl Jaspers said: "The alternative for Europe is balkanisation or **helvetisation**." Balkanisation means a mixture of conflicts and hostilities; helvetisation refers to the building of such political identity that overcomes the diversity of national origins and languages.

38. Europe is a spiritual and cultural Community as it has been seen by Ernst Robert Curtius, Denis de Rougemont, Arnold Toynbee, Hendrik Brugmans and Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.

39. **Spiritually** seen, the "European Political Thinking" is inspired by the teachings of the patristic tradition of the 4th century. For example, **Augustine** united Judeo-Christian religiosity with Platonic dialectics developing the fundaments of what we call today "European". As far as Christian Theology and European Political Thinking are

concerned, <u>we </u>have to name Augustine as a founding-father. His radical idea about principal difference between Faith and Interest, between Church and State, between Religion and Politics, together with his interpretation of religion as something reasonable can be regarded as embryonic cells for what we call - in a prominent Christian normative context - "Enlightenment".

40. Similar to Augustine, The modern teachings of the **School of Salamanca** in the 16th Century in Spain are very similar to the Augustinian view. It introduced a "social contract" concept implying human dignity, human rights, individual freedom and solidarity and international law – but again in an eminent Christian normative context.

41. **Philosophically** seen, the "European Political Thinking" is substantially based on a unique mutual exchange and influence of three different, classical and modern approaches:

42. The first one is the **Franco-Rationalistic** approach (e.g. Descartes), based on abstract Platonism, deductivism and spiritualism. This concept is based on the notion that ideas are the only really existing entities and, that all reality is only based on "logical concepts".

43. The second one is the **Anglo-Empiristic** approach (e.g. Locke), originates from naturalistic Aristotelism, inductivism and materialism. This concept is based on the idea that matter is the only really existing entity and that all reality is only based on "hard facts". Morality is part of the sentimental world and can be seen only with the help of feelings and emotion.

44. The third one is the **Germano-Idealistic** approach (very influential in the Central European [Hungarian and Slavonic] political tradition), which tries to combine these two other concepts: German Idealism is inspired by the Philosophy of Plato, prompted by the teachings of David Hume and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, based on Kant's radical Critiques of Theoretical and Practical Reason (Transcendentalism) and is refined by Hegel's Dialectics.

45. **Kant** developed his theory so as to reform the metaphysically misleading one-sidedness of the pure rationalistic and the over-distilled empiristic approach. If they are regarded as separated they lead to "ideology": neither pure rationalistic deductivism nor pure materialistic inductivism meets the challenge of providing an adequate theory

on mankind, society or state. These two aspects – rationalism and empirism – have to be taken as moments of a comprehensive process of mutual **recognition** and responsibility based **freedom**.

46. What was the particular contribution of **German Idealism** for the European Identity debate? This last step of Enlightenment-movement (1770-1830) already started to prevail the metaphysical one-sidedness of pragmatic efficiency-only and egoistic ("libertarian") market-only economy concepts and also the pure vision and ratio-only based aspects of centrally controlled paternalistic ("mercantilistic") welfare concepts. Both ideologies are finally based on an essentially mechanistic and atomistic understanding of society which automatically leads towards dogmatic relativism. This relativism – according to Benedict XVI – is the central problem of today's Europe, so to say "Europe's Illness".

47. **German Idealism**[3] first started a freedom-responsibility-solidarity oriented concept of enlightened reason-based modernity. This concept demands a certain degree of cultural homogeneity and socio-economic convergence and leads to a modern community based concept of society, reinterpreting Aristotle from a rationalistic point of view (=Hegel).

48. The intention of **Hegel** was especially to overcome the early-capitalist approach of Locke and his semi-religious overemphasis of (Roman Law based) personal property. Contrary to that, Hegel speaks about the structural necessity of socially responsible property concepts (inspired by and based on Rousseau's concept of "volonté générale"), which results e.g. in the German Grundgesetz asserting: Individual Property is bound by Public responsibility in the sense of "**Common Good**". In the last consequence, this concept leads to an affirmative approach towards statehood as the institutional (Kant) – freedom as responsibility managing – social framework for the "Common Good" – Solidarity of the "European Concept"

49. What Hegel – based on Aristotle and Rousseau – demands in order to provide a living concept – and not an imposed one – of this "European Model" is to have a **common cultural basis** for the necessary "Political" Union within Europe. This is the crucial precondition for the "European Concept". And this is why for the future of the

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[3] Based [as Martin Luther's, Scandinavian and modern Communitarian concepts of Society] on the old Germanic "Community" traditions broadly reactivated in the Political Romanticism movement in the 19th Century.

European Union the question of "Identity" is of more than only academic interest – it is a vivid and existential question for Europe to find its specific common spiritual and cultural roots.

50. For further continuing a successful process of integration it is necessary to work towards a greater socio-cultural cohesion of the EU members, which is also conceptually an important **precondition** for political, economic and social solidarity within the EU. The EU therefore needs urgently to become conscious of its common socio-cultural basis.

Strategic Suggestions

51. The European Union is understood as a community based on common values. In this sense, there are certain obligations which the EU has to act in line with. The political leaders have the special duty to implement common values in practical politics. Political action in conflict with our shared values risks the loss of public support and, as a consequence, can endanger the whole European project. Democracy is never imaginable without the demos.

52. At present, the EU has reached and perhaps already **overstretched** its absorbing capacity. Thus, it is essential to define the borders and limits of European Union. In doing so, a number of basic issues have to be defined: How far does the internal cohesion of the political unity reach? What is necessary to maintain and intensify internal cohesion? What is the measure for the framework of solidarity within Europe? Which are those structural and functional limits of the Union's enlargement which would already destabilize the Union and would endanger the whole process of European integration? In this respect the European Union has to develop and manage such policies that are inevitable to organize the relationship with its new neighbourhood more effectively. Therefore the Union will have to develop new forms of strategic partnerships. This would be an essential step towards assuring the Union's global capacity to act.

53. In order to foster the cohesion necessary for political unity European politics must allow and nurture genuine **European identity** which means the creation of a European civil society. Political culture of Europe must be compatible with the sense of community rooted in a common European culture, as well.

54. We have been discussing "European identity" since the beginning of the European integration process, but we have never defined it so far. Determining European identity, for long, has not been **necessary** because the European integration **never went beyond its "natural" borders**. Up to the last round of "enlargement" the integration process was not a process of "enlargement" towards unknown frontiers, but a unification and re-unification which resulted in bringing together what had already been linked for centuries in different ways and forms.

55. If one wants to define its own identity a **number of questions** arise: Who I am? Who we are? Where do we come from? Where are we going? How can our communities be

integrated? There are things which bind us, and we have a common vision of the future and also tasks which we have to face.

56. In sociological terms, common identity means having a common definition of a **common situation** which links us and establishes solidarity. This sociological approach leads us to the structural concept of community-based "**Euro-Regions**", which could be based on geography, language, religion and culture. Euro-Regions would let local communities manage their home affairs, realising the principle of Subsidiarity appropriately.

57. In a global perspective identity is also created by being **different from others**. Thus identity is also created by negation (Hegel).

58. A third constitutive element is the **capability to take action** as a European Entity that means developing the Union towards a Polity, which is capable to perform efficiently in the global scale. For this process of Polity building it is essential for the Union to become conscious of its Identity.

59. **Polity building** means building a "polis" as it is understood by Aristotle which needs in order to function a basic socio-cultural cohesion. In order to succeed with this, we have to set free or/and re-innovate this socio-cultural common understanding in Europe. This means we have to become more aware of our roots, our spiritual and cultural heritage. In this sense, we must re-explore our history and the history of our culture.

60. The building of a common **European Identity** is a permanent and also future-oriented process. The feeling of belonging together can be initiated as it has been in the process of national states by elites, but it must embrace in the long term large parts of the European society in order to create a permanent basis for European identity. European identity is not a static and final situation but a dynamic, open process where members of the European society agree on common perceptions of themselves and others. We need milestones to identify and discover more and more the developing identity of Europe practically and emotionally. Ascertaining, synthesizing and evaluating common spiritual, culture and moral values within the territory of the EU is therefore an essential element of developing a genuine European identity.

61. It is important to strengthen the development of **European solidarity**, but solidarity presupposes that we are bound together and have common visions and tasks and the will to act together.

62. The EU up to now has been built largely on the **concept of a social market economy** as it had developed on the European continent. In the framework of such a model and in the political project of the EU there is a convincing case for socio-economic solidarity, however, not in a purely market-driven neo-liberal economic model. In the socio-economic area solidarity is a conscious political decision to correct conditions resulting from uncontrolled market forces for the sake of what we could call "**Common Good**".

63. The social market economy, based on values, allows the individual to benefit form the achievements and rewards of economic activity. It guarantees personal freedom, private property, willingness to perform and social security. The social market economy is the expression of a system which is based on the principle of personal freedom of the individual but recognizes also that the human being as a "zoon politikon" needs the solidarity of the community. The social market economy can also become a concept for a global economic order. The processes of globalization cannot be exclusively driven and regulated by market forces. Politics must set the framework and the rules for market forces to function.

64. The social market economy is therefore not only an economic model, but a model of society, too. Our time is also challenged to assume responsibility for the consequences of today's actions for the future and for the opportunities of future generations. The European Union cannot let economy tower above the importance of culture and allow economics dominate completely the global and European agenda.

As a result of our reflection on European values and identity we cannot longer ignore the true political finality of the European Integration Process and stay apart from contributing for Europe and the world to orientate and civilize globalisation. Within the European Union it is indispensable to develop and implement coherent strategies and policies with taking priorities into consideration. Europe cannot continue with the present practice of setting ambitious objectives without taking the necessary actions