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Is Europe Failing?

Europe finds itself in an existential crisis and the list of acute problems is getting longer and longer:

For one, there is the lack of willingness by the European national states to implement EU decisions once taken. Right-wing parties are increasingly intensifying this problem for the national governments.

In addition, there is the doubtlessly existing complexity of European politics with the consequence that simple or even plausible solutions are almost never feasible: Where is the breaking point when it comes to refugees, what kind of financial assistance to weaker member states are viable, and when do they start to become illicit? Which consequences does the low-interest-rate-policy of the European Central Bank carry? What are the consequences of a possible exit of Great Britain for the British and the EU? What should be done if the pan-European common interest is contradictory to the national common interest? Where does the European sovereignty start and where does the sovereignty of the nations end?

The complexity and insecurity is also fed by new and to most people incomprehensible inventions by the international financial sector: Who knows about and needs hedge funds, derivatives, short selling, binary options? They apparently have equally difficult effects as did in the past large inventions like the loom, the assembly line, or computers and the internet on the real economy. In many areas it looks as if until a few year ago Europe exported stability and now in reverse it is importing instability.

All these difficulties have led to increasing scepticism towards the European Union by its citizens. One understands too little about Europe and the international complexity. Many by now believe that the solution lies in the retreat back to the national level. Will the European project capitulate against these large difficulties or even fail?

A failure of Europe would directly threaten the stability, peace and prosperity especially for us Germans. The voice of Europe in concert with the large global powers would become soft and other powers would have more influence on us with their ideas. After all, Europe is a dwarf judged by expanse and number of inhabitants. So, what to do?



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1. As part of a large learning process the critical public and the citizens have to become aware that the European compromises cannot align themselves to a (national) common good, but have to be formulated in consideration of the different interests of all 28 member states. The Austrian emperor, Franz Joseph, once described this problem for his multinational state as follows: “I will have made the right decision if all my nations are moderately dissatisfied.” – More is not possible for Europe either, because the basic sense about the correctness of political decisions is often still very different.

2. The political elites of Europe still have to much better explain the European reality. The media also carries a special responsibility in this: They should much more often and in a fair manner report about Europe and its problems. Fair in this case means to point out that Europe in its current state of development cannot simply regulate its issues »per ordre de mufti« and give orders to the national states. But one thing can also be noted: The constant negative whining in the so-called social networks must not deter us from the right path.

3. Europe has to become better: Decisions have to be made faster and justified better. And above all, Europe has to bid farewell to all the little detailed regulations. The internal market also functions if not all the details are regulated equally. In this case the standards of the neighbour have to be accepted within the framework of bilateral cross-border acceptance. The principle has to be: Europe is large in regards to the large questions and small in regards to the small problems.

The mental answer starts with the look at the European history: Where do we come from? What makes us who we are? For me there is a continuous line, leading from Jerusalem 2000 years ago via Constantinople and Rome into the Christian-Western Europe of the 21st century. On the way through the centuries all the central decisions were made, based on the Christian-Jewish fundamental truths, that now make up the basis for our existence as a state:

This includes the separation of state and church, the inalienable dignity of each human being, the reformation (with the courage to demand justice as an individual from emperor and pope), stemming from this the freedom of religion, but also the governmental separation of powers, the social market economy, democracy as the form of rule, the equality of all before the law, the equality of men and women, and the care for the weaker based on the commandment of charity. Against this backdrop we can sense our European-Western identity, which quite naturally complements and extends the national and regional identity.

Almost all beneficial decisions after World War II were made possible and easier through European collaboration: This holds true for the German Reunification, the downfall of communism, the reconciliation with our neighbours, the elimination of



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dictatorships in Europe, the reintroduction of Germany into the circle of respected nations, and last but not least our good economic situation. And I am convinced that also the large challenges expected for the future, namely the fight against terrorism with the respective exchange of data, the handling of the Islam, more justice between rich and poor, the climate change, the refugee issue, the globalisation, the economic stability, and the internal and external security will be met much better by the European group than by national solo efforts. A propos Islam: We have to take notice that in the Koran there are two roots of Islam; one that very similarly to the Christian heritage preaches charity and tolerance, and a second one that fights everything heathen by violence. This second root of Islam neither belongs to Germany nor to Europe. And it is this second root that also serves as justification to the radical Islamic terror.

With knowledge and regard to our 2000 years of intellectual development it is essential to courageously look towards the future and to trust that the European story of success can be continued, because it lies in the logic of history and because it poses a smart and viable answer to the challenges of the 21st century. A future with Europe will continue to confront us with difficult problems from time to time, but a future without Europe would throw us back into a dark past. To make Europe better instead of whiningly giving up is the narrow, but right path for us and our children.