CULTURE REPORT

Reset Europe

**Time
for culture
to give
Europe
new
momentum?**

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The image that Europe is currently presenting could hardly be more contradictory: isolationism, populism, scepticism about EU institutions are all mixed in with a newly blossoming euphoria about the European idea. Does Europe need a reset? At the moment it mainly needs a direction. In the face of democratic crises, climate change, structural change and the hate that exists in society, the people of Europe need new ways of solving pressing problems. Can culture help to win back the trust of Europe's citizens and create a European public sphere? Can it generate more unity and defend Europe's existential values of human rights, multilateralism, freedom of the press and opinion? The contributors to this Culture Report look for answers to these questions.

Foreword
Preventing nationalism and promoting a European public sphere *By Sebastian Körber*

Chapter 1: DEMOCRACY ON THE BACK FOOT – IN DEFENCE OF FREEDOM

Is it conceivable that there could once again be war in Europe? Berlin photographer Edgar Zippel visits the border area between Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina and his photos reveal the traces of the destruction that was wrought by the Yugoslav civil war. Looking at the people, it feels as if the fighting has only just ended, and they have not shaken off the horror and trauma that it brought to their lives. Zippel comments: 'My photos document the destruction of this region and its people and remind us of a war that raged in the heart of Europe 20 years ago, but that is still far from over elsewhere in the world'.

Preventing nationalism and promoting a European public sphere

by Sebastian Körber

What defines Europe's identity? The euro, Schengen, or the Champions League? In this latest volume, German/French writer Alfred Grosser shares his belief that the EU institution with the greatest potential to create identity should be the European Parliament. He outlines the development of the EU from its origins to today and strikes back at the fundamental evil that is now more current than ever: the finger-pointing at others, the bad ones, the Muslims, women, Jews, Germans or refugees. Other contributors to this book also discuss how the fake news and disinformation that is spread on social media, bypassing the established media with their fact-checkers, editors and professional codes, along with an ongoing loss of trust in established political parties and rule-of-law institutions is posing a fundamental threat to liberal societies, not only in Europe but worldwide. However, the European Union is at particular risk because of its fragile cohesion, as has been highlighted by the series of recent crises, from the global financial and sovereign debt crisis to the refugee crisis and now, above all, the coronavirus pandemic.

Progress and shortcomings

Progress Europe is the tenth edition of the Culture Report, which ifa launched in conjunction with other European foundations in 2007 as a means of exploring progress and shortcomings in the field of cultural relations. Many prominent writers have contributed over the years, from Wim Wenders to Umberto Eco, Inge Feltrinelli to Reinhold Messner, and Timothy Garton Ash to Slavoj Zizek. We have published a total of 252 articles from 53 countries in up to five languages. For eight years, the Culture

Report was also the Yearbook of EUNIC (Europe's network of national cultural institutes) and published in German and English in conjunction with Steidl-Verlag. Martin Schulz, former President of the European Parliament, looks back at the progress that has been made in Europe, how enemies have become friends, dictatorships given way to democracies, borders opened, and the largest and most prosperous internal market in the world has been created. Like Federica Mogherini, the former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, whose term in office included working with the European Commission to present a strategy for international cultural relations, Martin Schulz stresses the importance of not questioning what has been achieved to date and suggesting that Europe is worse than it really is.

Preservation of liberal democracy

However, right from the very first edition of the Culture Report, its contributors have repeatedly highlighted the lack of a European public sphere. A few years ago, there was a sense of optimism that the Erasmus and Easyjet generation would lead to this problem resolving itself, and we were used to Europe leaving cucumber curvature issues to the experts and technocrats in Brussels. But now there is a widespread realisation that the lack of citizen-orientation is not just a PR problem, but one that strikes at the very heart of cohesion.

It is about nothing less than the preservation of liberal democracy, as underlined by political scientist Francis Fukuyama in this volume. The European Community was founded in 1951 as an antidote to the exclusively national definition of identity.

But it remains clear whether Europe has an identity that is stronger than the national variants. "Europe is a refuge, but not necessarily a preferred destination." Fuyukama's analysis revolves around the desire for identity and recognition. Liberal democracies have been good at providing peace and prosperity. Between 1970 and 2008, the world's output of goods and services quadrupled, while inequality soared because globalisation had produced significant populations of people who were left behind by the overall growth. Political leaders began to call for the dignity that was being lost. According to Fukuyama, economic grievances become much more acute when they are attached to feelings of indignity and disrespect. This is when people are susceptible to the promises and slogans of populist movements.

Platform for mass communication

When the internet first became a platform for mass communication, many observers believed it would be an important force for promoting democratic values. Information is a form of power and if the internet increased everyone's access to information, it should also distribute power more broadly. But, since then, social media has succeeded in accelerating the fragmentation of liberal societies. Isolated from each other in our filter bubbles, we dig our own tunnels: "The public sphere as we know it has gone. It's not that it will disappear in the future – it has already disappeared", says Austrian writer Eva Menasse. "Ten years of internet for all, with your phone in your hand" have sufficed to make us forget the important achievements of civilisation. Other opinions no longer serve to make us examine our own views – but to identify our opponents.

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Cultural experts Jan and Aleida Assmann also note the loss of the public sphere. The technology for manipulating images, films and sound recordings is becoming ever more sophisticated. But what is truth and what is manipulation? The answer to this question is increasingly hard to find. What happens to cultural memory? And what about the printed book? The two authors stress how we rely on particular principles – such as truth, credibility and responsibility – for our peaceful coexistence. According to Anatol Itten of the Disrupted Societies Institute in Amsterdam, this is exacerbated by a dangerous longing to 'take back control', as reflected in the Brexit battle cry. Turkish author Ece Temelkuran is critical of how the 'shady desire of I to melt into We', the 'retrolust for totality', is downplayed as 'rising populism', concealing the right-wing ideological content of the movements in question.

Bogdan Góralczyk, Director of the Centre for Europe at the University of Warsaw, describes it as an epidemic of nationalism and a circle-the-wagons mentality. Diplomacy and the old ideals have been replaced by pure power politics, a return of history with all its demons.

Vocabulary of pandemics

What can we do to prevent the spread of nationalism? We are suddenly all too familiar with the vocabulary of pandemics. Political scientist Ulrike Guérot sees contemporary populism as the harbinger of a European revolution: few things are more fragile than the European narrative today. 'Fifty years of European integration now seem like a thin veil which is being torn back to reveal a historical abyss.' When rotten systems finally collapse, it usually happens faster than anticipated. 'And the ruthlessness with which they are brought down by those who never profited from the old system is also always underestimated.' Guérot makes the case for a radical solution: saying farewell to the nation state and creating a European Republic. Utopia is within our reach. Nobody will miss the Brussels technocracy. Welcome to the European Republic.

Hey presto! Europe

Journalist Heribert Prantl is not convinced about a 'hey presto!' kind of Europe. Even before the outbreak of the coronavirus, he recognised that an institutional crisis exists when we are in a situation of 'carry on regardless'. 'Determination is the key. So the first imperative of EU policy in times of crisis is: no time, no time. The second: spending even more billions even faster. The third: ignore parliaments. The fourth: markets first, people second. The fifth: the old democratic rules are unfit for the new Europe.' This is how he summed up tough 'Alexander politics', well before the start of the coronavirus pandemic. He does not accept the accusation that democracy works too slowly. It is 'an old topos from the arsenal of anti-democratic thinking'. It is about trust in the democratic process. It is undemocratic to yearn for leaders who will cut the Gordian knot with a single blow. So how can Europe gain new strength? Prantl believes this will come from social policies that will turn a symbiotic community for businesses and banks into a community that protects its people.

Emmanuel Macron's vision of a Europe of cafés, debates, universities, translation and the movement of artworks based on truth and the democratic confrontation of ideas

also reveals the fragility of this idea, even if such exchange is physically limited in times of pandemic.

In this volume, it is the literary authors who display the greatest sense of optimism. For, Canadian author Margaret Atwood, reading a book is the most intimate experience we can have of the inside of another human being's mind. Norwegian author Åsne Seierstad asks how it is possible to write in times of war and disaster. When all the questions have been asked and the interviewee has nothing more to say, the news reporter goes off and writes the story. 'But the writer stays put. Because the real story begins when the person stands up and gets on with their life.' Ilija Trojanow, the 'Collector of Worlds', extols the do-gooder, saying that only cynics use it as a synonym for fool.

No excessive promises

Herta Müller sensitively recalls the fate of refugees and their 'homesickness for the future'. Future is an abstract term, while refuge is specific. For refugees, escape is the gateway to the future. The contributors who make no excessive promises about the effects of culture also echo the humility that Indian writer Pankaj Mishra demands from Europeans. For him, the idea of Europe as the embodiment of reason and freedom belongs to the past. Such flattering self-perceptions are drenched in blood, and any claims to moral and political pre-eminence on the part of Europeans are, according to Mishra, at best provincial.

It is Francis Fukuyama, of all people, who reminds us of George Orwell's 1984, that symbol of a powerful totalitarian future. Despite all the gloomy predictions about

the state, and faced by surveillance systems that Orwell himself could never have imagined, he hopes this book has helped to immunise us against authoritarianism. Despite all the disillusionment and conspiracy theories that it disseminates, the internet creates a co-existence that is not characterised by physical barriers but by belief in a community. Perhaps we should understand the title of this book, Reset Europe, not in a destructive sense of starting all over again but in the sense of joining together. The cultural scene has shown that it is ready and willing to play its part. Or, to quote Johannes Hillje, whose contribution to Platform Europe highlights a third way between data capitalism and data authoritarianism: 'If disinformation is used as a political tool, then this should apply even more to information.' In this spirit, I wish you an interesting and thought-provoking read.

Chapter 1
Democracy on the back foot
Loss of trust in the political establishment

The rise of nationalism and populism
are global phenomena, but they present
a particular threat to the cohesion of
Europe. They are an attack on the
Union's fundamental values: the rule of
law, media freedom, freedom of
expression and scientific freedom.
How is the continent responding
to these threats?
What can be done to combat
Euroscepticism, fake news and increased
polarisation? Does the EU need to become
more democratic?
And finally, what has become of the
European idea?
What really holds Europe together?

The fight for liberal democracy

With Brexit, populism has triumphed in the birthplace of capitalism. How has it come to this? The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama takes us on a tour of 50 years of globalisation. He believes the master concept is the demand for recognition of one's identity. People who feel they have been left behind and ignored by their political representatives are receptive to the promises and slogans of populist movements. *By Francis Fukuyama*

US President Donald Trump represents a broader trend in international politics, toward what has been labelled populist nationalism. Populist leaders seek to use the legitimacy conferred by democratic elections to consolidate power. They claim direct charismatic connection to 'the people', who are often defined in narrow ethnic terms that exclude big parts of the population. They don't like institutions and seek to undermine the checks and balances that limit a leader's personal power in a modern liberal democracy: courts, the legislature, an independent media, and a nonpartisan bureaucracy. Other contemporary leaders who could be put in this category are Vladimir Putin of Russia, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, Jaroslaw Kaczynski of Poland, and Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines.

The global surge toward democracy that began in the mid-1970s has gone into what my colleague Larry Diamond calls a global recession. In 1970, there were only about 35 electoral democracies, a number that steadily increased over the next three decades until it reached nearly 120 by the early 2000s. The greatest acceleration came from 1989 to 1991, when the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union led to a democratic wave throughout that region. Since the mid-2000s, however, the trend has reversed itself, and total numbers have declined. Authoritarian countries, led by China, have meanwhile grown more confident and self-assertive. It is not surprising that new would-be democracies such as Tunisia, Ukraine, and Myanmar should be struggling to build workable institutions, or that liberal democracy failed to take root in Afghanistan or Iraq after the U.S. interventions in those countries. It is disappointing, though not wholly surprising, that Russia has reverted to authoritarian traditions.

What was far more unexpected was that threats to democracy should arise from within established democracies themselves.

Hungary had been one of the first countries in Eastern Europe to overthrow its Communist regime. When it entered both NATO and the European Union, it appeared to have rejoined Europe as what political scientists characterised as a 'consolidated' liberal democracy. Yet under Orbán and his Fidesz party, it has been leading the way toward what Orbán has labelled 'illiberal democracy'. But a far bigger surprise yet were the votes in Britain and the United States for Brexit and Trump, respectively. These were the two leading democracies that had been the architects of the modern liberal international order, countries that led the 'neoliberal' revolution under Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s. Yet they themselves appeared to be turning away toward a more narrow nationalism.

Liberal democracies have been pretty good at providing peace and prosperity (though somewhat less so in recent years). These wealthy, secure societies are the domain of Nietzsche's Last Man, 'men without chests' who spend their lives in the endless pursuit of consumer satisfaction, but who have nothing at their core, no higher goals or ideals for which they are willing to strive and sacrifice. Such a life will not satisfy everyone. Megalothymia thrives on exceptionali-

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ty: taking big risks, engaging in monumental struggles, seeking large effects, because all of these lead to recognition of oneself as superior to others. In some cases, it can lead to a heroic leader like a Lincoln or a Churchill or a Nelson Mandela. But in other cases, it can lead to tyrants like Caesar or Hitler or Mao who lead their societies into dictatorship and disaster.

Demand for recognition

Since megalothymia has historically existed in all societies, it cannot be overcome; it can only be channelled or moderated. This problem was fully recognised by the American founding fathers. In their effort to create a republican form of government in North America, they were aware of the history of the fall of the Roman Republic and worried about the problem of Caesarism. Their solution was the constitutional system of checks and balances that would distribute power and block its concentration in a single leader.

Demand for recognition of one's identity is a master concept that unifies much of what is going on in world politics today. It is not confined to the identity politics practiced on university campuses, or to the white nationalism it has provoked, but extends to broader phenomena such as the upsurge of old-fashioned nationalism and politicised Islam. Much of what passes for economic motivation is, I will argue, actually rooted in the demand for recognition and therefore cannot simply be satisfied by economic means. This has direct implications for how

we should deal with populism in the present. According to Hegel, human history was driven by a struggle for recognition. He argued that the only rational solution to the desire for recognition was universal recognition, in which the dignity of every human being was recognised. Universal recognition has been challenged ever since by other partial forms of recognition based on nation, religion, sect, race, ethnicity, or gender, or by individuals wanting to be recognised as superior. The rise of identity politics in modern liberal democracies is one of the chief threats that they face, and unless we can work our way back to more universal understandings of human dignity, we will doom ourselves to continuing conflict.

Sometime in the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century, world politics changed dramatically. The period from the early 1970s through the mid-2000s witnessed what Samuel Huntington labelled the 'third wave' of democratisation as the number of countries that could be classified as electoral democracies increased from about 35 to more than 110. In this period, liberal democracy became the default form of government for much of the world, at least in aspiration if not in practice. In parallel to this shift in political institutions was a corresponding growth of economic interdependence among nations, or what we call globalisation. The latter was underpinned by liberal economic institutions such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and its successor, the World Trade Organisation. These were supplemented by regional trade agreements such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement. Throughout this period, the rate of growth in international trade and investment outpaced global GDP growth and was widely seen as the major driver of prosperity.

Between 1970 and 2008, the world's output of goods and services quadrupled, and growth extended to virtually all regions of the world, while the number of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries dropped from 42 percent of the total population in 1993 to 17 percent in 2011. The percentage of children dying before their fifth birthdays declined from 22 percent in 1960 to less than 5 percent by 2016. This liberal world order did not, however, benefit everyone. In many countries around the world, and particularly in developed democracies, inequality increased dramatically, such that many of the benefits of growth flowed primarily to an elite defined primarily by education.

Since growth was related to the increasing volume of goods, money and people moving from one place to another, there was a huge amount of disruptive social change. In developing countries, villagers who previously had no access to electricity suddenly found themselves living in large cities, watching TV or connected to the internet via ubiquitous cell phones. Labour markets adjusted to new conditions by driving tens of millions of people across international borders in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families, or else seeking to escape intolerable conditions at home. Huge new middle classes arose in countries such as China and India, but the work they did

replaced work that had been done by older middle classes in the developed world. Manufacturing moved steadily from Europe and the United States to East Asia and other low-labour-cost regions. At the same time, women were displacing men in an increasingly service-dominated new economy, and low-skilled workers were being replaced by smart machines. Beginning in the mid-2000s, the momentum toward an increasingly open and liberal world order began to falter, then went into reverse. This shift coincided with two financial crises, the first originating in the U.S. subprime market in 2008 that led to the subsequent Great Recession, and the second emerging over the threat to the euro and the European Union posed by Greece's insolvency.

In both cases, elite policies produced huge recessions, high levels of unemployment, and falling incomes for millions of ordinary workers around the world. Since the United States and the EU were the leading exemplars, these crises damaged the reputation of liberal democracy as a whole. The democracy scholar Larry Diamond has characterised the years after the crises as ones of a 'democratic recession', in which the aggregate number of democracies fell from their peak in virtually all regions of the world.

A number of authoritarian countries, led by China and Russia, became much more self-confident and assertive: China began promoting its 'China model' as a path to development and wealth that was distinctly undemocratic, while Russia attacked the liberal decadence of the European Union and the United States.

A number of countries that had seemed to be successful liberal democracies during the 1990s slid backward toward more authoritarian government, including Hungary, Turkey, Thailand, and Poland. The Arab Spring of 2011 disrupted dictatorships throughout the Middle East, but then profoundly disappointed hopes for greater democracy in the region as Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria descended into civil war. The terrorist upsurge that produced the September 11 attacks was not defeated by the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Rather, it mutated into the Islamic State, which emerged as a beacon for profoundly illiberal and violent Islamists around the world. What was as remarkable as ISIS's resilience was that so many young Muslims left lives of comparative safety elsewhere in the Middle East and Europe to travel to Syria to fight on its behalf. More surprising and perhaps even more significant were the two big electoral surprises of 2016, Britain's vote to leave the European Union and the election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States. In both cases, voters were concerned with economic issues, particularly those in the working class who had been exposed to job loss and deindustrialisation.

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But just as important was opposition to continued large-scale immigration, which was seen as taking jobs from native-born workers and eroding long-established cultural identities. Anti-immigrant and anti-EU parties gained strength in many other developed countries, most notably the National Front in France, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, the Alternative for Germany, and the Freedom Party in Austria. Across the Continent there were both fears of Islamist terrorism and controversies over bans on expressions of Muslim identity such as the burka, niqab, and burkini.

Twentieth-century politics had been organised along a left–right spectrum defined by economic issues, the left wanting more equality and the right demanding greater freedom. Progressive politics centred around workers, their trade unions and social democratic parties that sought better social protections and economic redistribution. The right by contrast was primarily interested in reducing the size of government and promoting the private sector. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, that spectrum appears to be giving way in many regions to one defined by identity. The left has focused less on broad economic equality and more on promoting the interests of a wide variety of groups perceived as being marginalised—blacks, immigrants, women, Hispanics, the LGBT community, refugees, and the like. The right, meanwhile, is redefining itself as patriots who seek to protect traditional national identity, an identity that is often explicitly connected to race, ethnicity, or religion. A long tradition dating back at least

as far as Karl Marx sees political struggles as a reflection of economic conflicts, essentially as fights over shares of the pie. Indeed, this is part of the story of the 2010s, with globalisation producing significant populations of people left behind by the overall growth that occurred around the world. Between 2000 and 2016, half of Americans saw no gains to their real incomes.

The politics of resentment

The proportion of national output going to the top 1 percent went from 9 percent of GDP in 1974 to 24 percent in 2008. But as important as material self-interest is, human beings are motivated by other things as well, motives that better explain the disparate events of the present. This might be called the politics of resentment. In a wide variety of cases, a political leader has mobilised followers around the perception that the group's dignity had been affronted, disparaged, or otherwise disregarded. This resentment engenders demands for public recognition of the dignity of the group in question. A humiliated group seeking restitution of its dignity carries far more emotional weight than people simply pursuing their economic advantage. Thus, Russian president Vladimir Putin has talked about the tragedy of the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and how Europe and the United States had taken advantage of Russia's weakness during the 1990s to drive NATO up to its borders. He despises the attitude of moral superiority of Western politicians and wants to see Russia

treated not, as President Obama once said, as a weak regional player, but as a great power.

Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian prime minister, stated in 2017 that his return to power in 2010 marked the point when 'we Hungarians also decided that we wanted to regain our country, we wanted to regain our self-esteem, and we wanted to regain our future'. The Chinese government of Xi Jinping has talked at length about China's 'one hundred years of humiliation', and how the United States, Japan, and other countries were trying to prevent its return to the great power status it had enjoyed through the past millennia of history. When the founder of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, was fourteen, his mother found him fixated on Palestine, 'tears streaming down his face as he watched TV from their home in Saudi Arabia'. His anger at the humiliation of Muslims was later echoed by his young coreligionists volunteering to fight in Syria on behalf of a faith they believed had been attacked and oppressed around the world. They hoped to re-create the glories of an earlier Islamic civilisation in the Islamic State.

Resentment at indignities was a powerful force in democratic countries as well. The Black Lives Matter movement sprang from a series of well-publicised police killings of African Americans in Ferguson (Missouri), Baltimore, New York, and other cities and sought to force the outside world to pay attention to the experience of the victims of seemingly casual police violence. On college campuses and in offices around the country, sexual assault and sexual harassment were seen as evidence of men not taking women seriously as equals. Sudden attention was paid to transgender people, who had previously not been recognised as a distinct target of discrimination. And many of those who voted for Donald Trump remembered a better time in the past when their place in their own societies was more secure and hoped through their actions to 'make America great again'. While distant in time and place, the feelings among Putin's supporters over the arrogance and contempt of Western elites were similar to those experienced by rural voters in the United States who felt that the urban bicoastal elites and their media allies were similarly ignoring them and their problems. The practitioners of the politics of resentment recognise one another. The sympathy that Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump have for each other is not just personal but rooted in their common nationalism.

Viktor Orbán explained, 'Certain theories describe the changes now taking place in the Western world and the emergence on the stage of a U.S. president as a struggle in the world political arena between the transnational elite—referred to as 'global'—and patriotic national elites', of which he was an early exemplar. In all cases a group, whether a great power such as Russia or China or voters in the United States or Britain, believes that it has an identity that is not being given adequate recognition—either by the

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outside world, in the case of a nation, or by other members of the same society. Those identities can be and are incredibly varied, based on nation, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. They are all manifestations of a common phenomenon, that of identity politics.

The terms identity and identity politics are of fairly recent provenance, the former having been popularised by the psychologist Erik Erikson during the 1950s, and the latter coming into view only in the cultural politics of the 1980s and '90s. Identity has a wide number of meanings today, in some cases referring simply to social categories or roles, in others to basic information about oneself (as in 'my identity was stolen'). Used in this fashion, identities have always existed. Identity grows, in the first place, out of a distinction between one's true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognise that inner self's worth or dignity.

While the economic inequalities arising from the last fifty or so years of globalisation are a major factor explaining contemporary politics, economic grievances become much more acute when they are attached to feelings of indignity and disrespect.

Over the past two generations, the world has seen a large number of spontaneous uprisings against authoritarian governments, from the protests that brought down Communist regimes in 1989, to the South African transition from apartheid, to other citizen mobilisations in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s, to the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine in the early 2000s in which

recognition of basic human dignity was a central issue. One of those uprisings, indeed, came to be known as the Revolution of Dignity. In November 2013 Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych announced that he was suspending his country's attempt to finalise an association agreement with the European Union and would seek instead closer cooperation with Russia and Russian president Vladimir Putin's Eurasian Economic Union.

The battle for dignity

The choice between aligning with the EU or with Putin's Russia was seen as a choice between living under a modern government that treated people equally *qua* citizen and living under a regime in which democracy was manipulated by self-dealing kleptocrats behind a veneer of democratic practice. Putin's Russia represented the epitome of this kind of mafia state; closer association with it rather than Europe represented a step into a world in which real power was held by an unaccountable elite. Hence the belief that the Euromaidan uprising was about securing the basic dignity of ordinary citizens.

But the effective recognition of citizens as equal adults with the capacity to make

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political choices is a minimal condition for being a liberal democracy. Authoritarian governments, by contrast, fail to recognise the equal dignity of their citizens. They may pretend to do so through flowery constitutions such as those in China or Iran that list copious citizen rights, but where the reality is different. In relatively benevolent dictatorships, such as those of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore or China under Deng Xiaoping, the state adopted a paternalistic attitude toward its citizens. Ordinary people were regarded as children who needed protection from a wise parent, the state; they could not be trusted to run their own affairs. In the worst dictatorships, such as those of Stalin and Hitler, large swaths of the population—kulaks (rich peasants), the bourgeoisie, Jews, the disabled, non-Aryans—were regarded as subhuman trash that could be discarded in the name of collective good. The desire for the state to recognise one's basic dignity has been at the core of democratic movements since the French Revolution. A state guaranteeing equal political rights was the only rational way to resolve the contradictions that Hegel saw in the relationship between master and slave, where only the master was recognised. This is what drove Americans to protest during the civil rights movement, South Africans to stand up against apartheid, Mohamed Bouazizi to immolate himself, and other protesters to risk their lives in Yangon, Burma, or in the Maidan or Tahrir Square, or in countless other confrontations over the centuries.

Ernest Gellner was a major theorist of nationalism, and he suggested that modern Islamism needed to be seen through a similar lens of modernisation and identity. Both nationalism and Islamism are rooted in modernisation. The shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* has been occurring in the contemporary Middle East, as peasants or bedouin have left the countryside for cities such as Cairo, Amman, and Algiers. Alternatively, millions of Muslims experienced modernisation by migrating to Europe or other Western countries in search of better lives, settling in Marseille or Rotterdam or Bradford and confronting there an alien culture. In other cases, the modern world came to them in their villages via satellite TV from stations such as Al Jazeera or CNN International. People living in traditional villages with limited choices are suddenly confronted with a pluralistic world with very different ways of life in which their traditional norms are not respected.

One of the striking characteristics of global politics in the second decade of the twenty-first century is that the dynamic new forces shaping it are nationalist or religious parties and politicians, the two faces of identity politics, rather than the class-based left-wing parties that were so prominent in the politics of the twentieth century. Nationalism may have been sparked initially by industrialisation and modernisation, but it has in no way disappeared from the world, including in those countries that have been industrially developed for generations. A host of new populist nationalist leaders claiming democratic legitimacy via elections have emphasised national sovereignty and national traditions in the interest of 'the people'. The-

se leaders include Russia's Putin, Turkey's Erdoğan, Hungary's Orbán, Poland's Kaczynski, and finally Donald J. Trump in the United States. The Brexit movement in the United Kingdom has not had a clear leader, yet here too the basic impulse was a reassertion of national sovereignty.

Populist parties are waiting in the wings in France, the Netherlands, and all over Scandinavia. Nationalist rhetoric has not been limited to these leaders, however; Prime Ministers Narendra Modi of India and Shinzo Abe of Japan have both been identified with nationalist causes, as has Xi Jinping of China, who has emphasised a socialism with distinctively Chinese characteristics. Iraq, Islamist movements continue to spread in countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand, and the Philippines. In Indonesia, the popular Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), was attacked for alleged blasphemy by increasingly self-confident Islamist groups and eventually jailed after narrowly losing his re-election bid.

Islam is not the only form of politicised religion, however. Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is explicitly based on a Hindu understanding of Indian national identity. A militant form of political Buddhism has been spreading in South and Southeast Asian countries such as Sri Lanka and Myanmar, where it has clashed with Muslim and Hindu groups. And religious groups form part of the conservative coalition in democracies such as Japan, Poland, and the United States. In Israel, a political order that had been dominated for more than a generation after independence by two Eu-

ropean-style ideological parties, Labour and Likud, has seen an ever-greater proportion of votes going to religious parties such as Shas or Agudath Israel. The old class-based left has, by contrast, been in long-term decline around the globe. Communism collapsed in 1989–91, though versions of it hang on in North Korea and Cuba. Social democracy, one of the dominant forces shaping Western European politics in the two generations following World War II, has been in retreat. The German Social Democrats, who received over 40 percent of the vote in 1998, fell to just over 20 percent by 2016, while the French Socialist Party all but disappeared in 2017. Overall, centre-left parties declined from 30 to 24 percent of the vote between 1993 and 2017 in Northern Europe, 36 to 21 percent in Southern Europe, and 25 to 18 percent in Central Europe. They are still major players, but a trend is clear.

Left-wing parties throughout Europe shifted to the centre in the 1990s, accepting the logic of the market economy, and many became hard to distinguish from their coalition partners on the centre-right. There were always Communist and other leftist groups in the Middle East during the Cold War; a self-styled Communist regime even came to power in South Yemen. Since then, however, they have been totally marginalised and left behind by Islamist parties. The decline has happened more slowly in other parts of the world: left-wing populism made a strong showing primarily in parts of Latin America in the 1990s and 2000s, with the rise of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil, and the Kirch-

'The shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* has been occurring in the contemporary Middle East, as peasants or bedouin have left the countryside for cities such as Cairo, Amman, and Algiers. Alternatively, millions of Muslims experienced modernisation by migrating to Europe or other Western countries in search of better lives.'

ners in Argentina. But this wave has already retreated, with the self-immolation of Venezuela under Chávez's successor, Nicolás Maduro. The temporarily strong showings of Jeremy Corbyn in the United Kingdom and Bernie Sanders in the United States may be harbingers of a recovery, but parties of the left are nowhere the dominant forces they were through the late twentieth century. The global weakness of the left is in many ways a surprising outcome, given the rise of global inequality over the past three decades. By global inequality, I am referring to the rise of inequality within individual countries, rather than between countries.

The gap between rich and poor countries has closed as high levels of growth have occurred not just in East Asia but in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. But as the economist Thomas Piketty has shown, within-country inequality around the world has seen a large increase since 1980; contrary to the long-accepted theory of the economist Simon Kuznets, rich-country incomes have been diverging rather than converging. Hardly a single region of the world has not seen the rise of a new class of oligarchs—billionaires who use their wealth politically to protect their family interests. The economist Branko Milanovic has devised a widely cited 'elephant graph', which shows the relative gains in per capita income for different segments of the global income distribution. The world grew much richer through productivity gains and globalisation from 1988 to 2008, but these gains were not equally distributed.

Within the developed world, inequality has been the most pronounced in Britain and the United States, the two countries that led the 'neoliberal', pro-free market revolution of the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. In these two countries, deindustrialisation had ravaged the old working class. In the former, the financial crisis spawned the left-wing Occupy Wall Street movement and the right-wing Tea Party. The former marched and demonstrated, then fizzled out, while the latter succeeded in taking over both the Republican Party and much of Congress. In 2016, voters failed to endorse the most left-wing populist candidates, choosing nationalist politicians instead.

The future of liberal democracy is at stake. The contemporary European struggle over national identity begins with the founders of the European Union, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, who understood that exclusive ethnic definitions of national identity had been at the root of the two world wars that Europe experienced. As an antidote, they created the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, composed of France, Belgium, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, which was designed to prevent German rearma-

ment while facilitating trade and economic cooperation in a formerly integrated region that had been ripped apart by war. The idea that Germany and France, the two main antagonists of the world wars, would ever go to war with each other is vanishingly remote today. A stratum of young, usually well-educated Europeans are now born in one member state, get their education in another, marry someone from yet another country, and work in multiple locations within the EU and farther afield. They retain an awareness of their birth nationality, but their lives are tied to the EU as a whole.

But whether 'Europe' has an identity stronger than the old national identities it was supposed to supersede is not clear. In the EU's early decades, it was not politically acceptable to celebrate national identity too loudly at a member-state level. This was particularly true for countries such as Germany and Spain that had fascist pasts: citizens did not wave national flags, sing national anthems, or cheer too loudly for their country's sports teams. For them Europe was a refuge, but not necessarily a preferred destination. But the leaders of the EU were not in a position to invest much effort in building an alternative new identity. They did not create a single European citizenship; rules for citizenship remained the province of individual member states. The symbols of nationhood such as a flag and an anthem came late, and the EU's diverse membership had no common civic education. But the most important failure was in the democratic accountability of the EU itself. The most powerful institution within the EU was the Europe-

an Commission, an unelected technocratic body whose main purpose was to promote a single market within Europe. It was answerable to the people only indirectly, via the Council of Ministers, which represented the individual member states. A directly elected European parliament had rather limited powers, which has consequently failed to generate significant voter turnout or enthusiasm.

Citizens of Europe knew that the important votes they cast were still those at the member-state level, and their chief energies and emotional attachments were directed there. As a result, they felt little sense of ownership or control over the institutions governing Europe as a whole. So while the elites talked of 'ever-closer union' within the EU, the reality was that the ghosts of the older national identities hung around like unwanted guests at a dinner party. This was particularly true among older, less educated voters who could not or would not take advantage of the mobility offered by the new Europe. These ghosts started to emerge at critical junctures, where they have created an existential threat to the EU as a whole.

This was vividly illustrated by the crisis over the euro, in which the common currency, issued first in 1999, allowed Greece to

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borrow profligately during the boom years of the 2000s. The Germans, who were perfectly willing to support their less well-off fellow citizens with an expansive welfare state, were not inclined to be so generous with the Greeks when the latter threatened to default. Greece indeed had very different approaches to savings, debt and practices such as public-sector patronage than did Germany. Berlin, as Greece's chief creditor, was able to impose crushing austerity on Athens with help from international institutions such as the European Central Bank and the IMF, a situation that persists to the present.

The euro crisis exposed a deep rift within the eurozone's northern and southern members, who today are far more aware of their national differences than they were prior to the outbreak of the crisis. But the more significant conflict emerged over the related questions of immigration and refugees. Levels of foreign-born residents began to rise dramatically in the 1990s and 2000s for a number of reasons. First, the guest workers from Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco did not return home as initially expected; rather, they brought their families, had children, and started to settle in to their adopted countries.

The new Eastern European member states of the European Union were even less willing to accept culturally different newcomers than the original founding countries. The Soviet occupation of the region after 1945 and its imposition of Communism on them froze their social and political development. Unlike West Germany or Spain, they were not forced to wrestle with

their nationalist pasts, nor did they make an effort to entrench liberal values in their citizens. They had virtually no experience with immigration and were among the least diverse societies in the developed world. After 1989 they gladly threw off Communism and rushed into the EU, but many of their citizens did not embrace the positive liberal values embodied in the new Europe. As a result, Hungary's Viktor Orbán could declare that Hungarian national identity was based on Hungarian ethnicity, just as Adolf Hitler had declared that German identity was based on German blood. Brussels was seen by many new Eastern European leaders as a threat, primarily because it opened the door to unlimited immigration from the Middle East and Africa.

Another EU member state that had never fully accepted a European identity was Britain. For years, Britain was the one key EU country that possessed a loud Eurosceptic fringe, represented by important parts of the Conservative Party and by newer groups such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) under Nigel Farage. Britain's unexpected vote to leave the European Union in June 2016 was predicted to have disastrous economic consequences, but the issue for many Leave voters was on of identity rather than economics.

Those national identities are tenacious and vary tremendously among themselves, ranging from relatively open ones that could accommodate diverse populations, like that of France, to others that create deliberate barriers to the assimilation of immigrants, such as the one espoused by Hungary. The

region is not threatened by immigrants so much as by the political reaction that immigrants and cultural diversity create. The anti-immigrant, anti-EU demons that have been summoned are often deeply illiberal and could undermine the open political order on which the region's prosperity has been based. Dealing with this backlash will depend not on a rejection of identity itself, but on the deliberate shaping of national identities in ways that promote a sense of democratic and open community.

Compared to most European countries, the United States has had a longer experience with immigration and has developed a national identity better suited to assimilating newcomers. But this identity was the product of political struggles over prolonged periods and even today is not settled. It has been sharply contested by some since the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016. Trump built his campaign around opposition to immigration, especially from Mexico and the Muslim world. Like their anti-immigrant counterparts in Europe, many of Trump's supporters assert they want to 'take back their country', a claim that implies their country has somehow been stolen from them.

Unlike their parents, young people growing up in Eastern Europe today have no personal experience of life under communism and can take the liberties they enjoy for granted. This allows them to focus on other things: the hidden potentialities that are not being permitted to flourish and the way that they are being held back by the social norms and institutions around them. Being a

citizen of a liberal democracy does not mean, moreover, that people will actually be treated with equal respect either by their government or by other citizens. They are judged on the basis of their skin colour, their gender, their national origin, their looks, their ethnicity, or their sexual orientation. Each person and each group experiences disrespect in different ways, and each seeks its own dignity. Identity politics thus engenders its own dynamic, by which societies divide themselves into smaller and smaller groups by virtue of their particular 'lived experience' of victimisation.

Confusion over identity arises as a condition of living in the modern world. Modernisation means constant change and disruption, and the opening up of choices that did not exist before. It is mobile, fluid, and complex. This fluidity is by and large a good thing: over generations, millions of people have been fleeing villages and traditional societies that do not offer them choices, in favour of ones that do. But the freedom and degree of choice that exist in a modern liberal society can also leave people unhappy and disconnected from their fellow human beings. They find themselves nostalgic

'In both Europe and the United States, that debate is currently polarised between a right that seeks to cut off immigration altogether and would like to send current immigrants back to their countries of origin and a left that asserts a virtually unlimited obligation on the part of liberal democracies to accept migrants.'

for the community and structured life they think they have lost, or that their ancestors supposedly once possessed.

The new populist right, for its part, looks back nostalgically at a fading national culture that was based on ethnicity or religion, a culture that was largely free of immigrants or significant diversities. In the United States, identity politics has fractured the left into a series of identity groups that are home to its most energetic political activists. It has in many respects lost touch with the one identity group that used to be its largest constituency, the white working class. This has spawned the rise of a populist right that feels its own identity to be under threat, abetted by a president whose personal vanity is tied to the degree of anger and polarisation he can stoke.

Ideally, the EU should create a single citizenship whose requirements would be based on adherence to basic liberal democratic principles, ones that would supersede national citizenship laws. This has not been politically possible in the past, and it is much less thinkable now with the rise of populist parties across the Continent. It would help if the EU democratised itself by shifting powers from the Commission to the Parliament and tried to make up for lost time by investing in European identity through the creation of the appropriate symbols and narratives that would be inculcated through a common educational system. This too is likely to be beyond the capability of a union of twenty-eight members, each of which remains jealous of its national prerogatives and stands ready to veto such a programme. Any

action that takes place will therefore have to happen, for better or worse, on a member-state level.

Those laws of EU member states still based on jus sanguinis need to be changed to jus soli so as not to privilege one ethnic group over another. It is perfectly legitimate to impose stringent requirements for the naturalisation of new citizens, something the United States has done for many years. In the United States, in addition to proving continuous residency in the country for five years, new citizens are expected to be able to read, write, and speak basic English, to have an understanding of US history and government, to be of good moral character (i.e. no criminal record), and to demonstrate an attachment to the principles and ideals of the US Constitution by swearing the naturalisation oath of allegiance.

Dual citizenship has become increasingly widespread today as migration levels have increased. For many people who travel or have family in different countries, having multiple passports is a great convenience. But if one takes national identity seriously, it is a rather questionable practice. Different nations have different identities and different interests that can engender potentially conflicting allegiances. The most obvious problem involves military service: if the two countries of which one is a citizen go to war with each other, one's loyalties are automatically in question. This may seem a moot issue with the reduced likelihood of war in most of the world, but we unfortunately cannot assume that military conflict will not occur in the future. Even short of such contingen-

cies, dual citizenship raises serious political problems. In Germany's 2017 election, for example, Turkey's authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, encouraged German citizens of Turkish origin to vote for politicians who would favour Turkish interests, rather than voting for those they thought were best for Germany. Those who were citizens of both countries might have a harder time deciding how to vote than those who had forsworn loyalty to Turkey.

In addition to changing the formal requirements for citizenship, European countries need to shift their popular understandings of national identity away from those based on ethnicity. In the early 2000s, a German academic of Syrian origin named Bassam Tibi proposed *Leitkultur*, 'leading culture', as the basis for German national identity. *Leitkultur* was defined in liberal Enlightenment terms as belief in quality and democratic values. Yet his proposal was attacked from the left for suggesting that those values were superior to other cultural values; in so doing the left gave unwitting comfort not just to Islamists, but also to the right that still believed in ethnic identity.

Germany needs something precisely like Leitkultur, a normative change that would permit a Turk to speak of him- or herself as German. This is beginning to happen, but slowly. Down the road, something like a pan-European identity may someday emerge. Perhaps this needs to happen outside the cumbersome and bureaucratic decision-making structures that constitute the contemporary EU. Europeans have created a remarkable civilisation of which they should be proud, one that can encompass people from other cultures even as it remains aware of the distinctiveness of its own.

Compared to Europe, the United States has been far more welcoming of immigrants because it developed a creedal identity early on, based on its long history of immigration. Compared to Europeans, Americans have been proud of their naturalised citizens and typically make a great deal out of the naturalisation ceremony, with colour guards and hopeful speeches by local politicians. As the political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset used to point out, in the United States one can be accused of being 'un-American' in a way that once could not be said to be 'un-Danish' or 'un-Japanese'. Americanism constituted a set of beliefs and a way of life, not an ethnicity; one can deviate from the former but not the latter. The creedal national identity that emerged in the wake of the American Civil War today needs to be strongly reemphasised and defended from attacks by both the left and the right.

On the left, identity politics has sought to undermine the legitimacy of the American national story by emphasising victimisation, insinuating in some cases that racism, gender discrimination, and other forms of systematic exclusion are somehow intrinsic to the country's DNA. All these things have been and continue to be features of American society, and they need to be confronted in the present. But a progressive narrative can also be told about the overcoming of barriers and the ever-broadening circles of people whose dignity the country has recognised, based on its founding principles. This nar-

rative was part of the 'new birth of freedom' envisioned by Abraham Lincoln, and one that Americans celebrate on the holiday he created, Thanksgiving.

While the United States has benefited from diversity, it cannot build its national identity around diversity as such. Identity has to be related to substantive ideas such as constitutionalism, rule of law, and human equality. Americans respect these ideas; the country is justified in excluding from citizenship those who reject them. Once a country has defined a proper creedal identity that is open to the de facto diversity of modern societies, the nature of controversies over immigration will inevitably have to change. In both Europe and the United States, that debate is currently polarised between a right that seeks to cut off immigration altogether and would like to send current immigrants back to their countries of origin and a left that asserts a virtually unlimited obligation on the part of liberal democracies to accept migrants.

The real focus should instead be on strategies for better assimilating immigrants to a country's creedal identity. Well-assimilated immigrants bring a healthy diversity to any society, and the benefits of immigration can be fully realised. Poorly assimilated immigrants are a drag on the state and in some cases constitute dangerous security threats. Europeans pay lip service to the need for better assimilation but fail to follow through with an effective set of policies. The reform

'Liberal democracies benefit greatly from immigration, both economically and culturally. But they also unquestionably have the right to control their own borders.'

agenda here is highly varied since individual European countries approach the problem very differently.

A country's creedal identity

Many countries have in place policies that actively impede integration, such as the Dutch system of pillarisation. Britain and a number of other European countries provide public funding for Muslim schools, just as they support Christian and Jewish schools. To some extent this simply reflects the geographical concentration of immigrant communities and was done in the name of equal treatment. If assimilation is the goal, however, this whole structure should be replaced by a system of common schools teaching a standardised curriculum. As in the Netherlands, it is a reach to think that this would be politically feasible, yet that is the kind of approach that would be needed were countries to take integration seriously.

In France, the problem is somewhat different. The French concept of republican citizenship, like its American counterpart, is creedal, built around the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity coming out of the French Revolution. The 1905 law on *laïcité* formally separates church and state and makes impossible the kinds of publicly funded religious schools operating in Britain or the Netherlands. The French problem is threefold. First, whatever French law says, a lot of discrimination in French society remains, which holds back opportunities from immigrants. Second, the French eco-

nomy has been under-performing for years, leading to overall unemployment rates that are twice those of neighbouring Germany. For France's immigrant youth, the numbers are reaching 35 percent, compared to 25 for French youth as a whole.

One important thing that France needs to do to integrate immigrants is to get them jobs and increase their hope for a better future, for instance by liberalising the labour market, as Emmanuel Macron has sought to do. Finally, the very idea of French national identity and French culture has been under attack as Islamophobic; assimilation itself is not politically acceptable to many on the left. Defence of republican ideals of universal citizenship should not be left to parties like the National Front.

In the United States, an assimilation agenda begins with public education. The teaching of basic civics has been in long-term decline in the United States, not just for immigrants but for native-born Americans, and this needs to be reversed. Like Europe, the United States too has policies that impede assimilation, such as the thirteen or so different languages taught in the New York City public school system. Bi- and multilingual programmes have been marketed as ways of speeding the acquisition of the English language by non-native speakers. But it has developed a constituency of its own, with the educational bureaucracy defending its prerogatives regardless of actual outcomes for English acquisition.

Assimilation of immigrants may require even more active measures. In recent decades, courts in the United States and other developed democracies have gradually eroded the distinction between citizen and noncitizen. Non-citizens enjoy many legal rights, such as the right to due legal process, freedom of speech, association and religion, and the right to use public services such as education. Noncitizens also share duties with citizens: they are expected to obey the law and must pay taxes, though only citizens are liable for jury duty in the United States. The distinction between noncitizens who are documented and those who are not is sharper, since the latter are liable to deportation, but even the undocumented possess due process rights. The only major right that is conveyed solely by citizenship the right to vote; in addition, citizens can enter and exit the country freely and can expect support from their government when travelling abroad. Small as they are, it is important to hold on to these distinctions. Basic human rights are universal, but full enjoyment of rights actively enforced by state power is a reward for membership in a national community and acceptance of that community's rules. The right to vote is particularly important, since it gives individuals a share of state power.

As a human being, I may have an abstract right to citizenship and political representation, but as an American citizen I would not expect to be able to vote in Italy or Ghana, even if I lived in one of those countries.

'By undermining traditional media's editors, fact-checkers and professional codes, social media facilitated the circulation of bad information and deliberate efforts to smear and undermine political opponents.'

Contemporary liberal democracies do not demand a lot in return for state protection of their citizens' rights, and in particular the right to vote. The sense of national community might be strengthened by a universal requirement for national service. Such a mandate would underline the fact that citizenship requires commitment and sacrifice to maintain. One could do it by serving either in the military or in a civilian capacity. This requirement is actually articulated in the American naturalisation oath, which enjoins willingness to bear arms on behalf of the country, or to work in a civilian service as required by law. If such service was correctly structured, it would force young people to work together with others from very different social classes, regions, races and ethnicities, just as military service does today. And like all forms of shared sacrifice, it would be a powerful way of integrating newcomers into the national culture. National service would be a contemporary form of classical republicanism, a form of democracy that encouraged virtue and public-spiritedness rather than simply leaving citizens alone to pursue their private lives. A policy focus on assimilation also means that levels of immigration and rates of change become important, for both Europe and the United States.

Self-sufficient immigrant communities

Assimilation into a dominant culture becomes much harder as the numbers of immigrants rise relative to the native population. As immigrant communities reach a certain scale, they tend to become self-sufficient and no longer need connections to the groups outside themselves. They can overwhelm public services and strain the capacity of schools and other public institutions to care for them. While immigrants will likely have a positive net effect on public finance in the long run, this will happen only if they get jobs and become taxpaying citizens or legal resident aliens. Large numbers of newcomers can also weaken support for generous welfare benefits on the part of native-born citizens, a factor in both the European and the American immigration debates.

Liberal democracies benefit greatly from immigration, both economically and culturally. But they also unquestionably have the right to control their own borders. A democratic political system is based on a contract between government and citizen in which both have obligations. Such a contract makes no sense without delimitation of citizenship and exercise of the franchise. All people have a basic human right to citizenship, something that, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, cannot be arbitrarily taken away from them. But that does not mean they have the right to citizenship in any particular country. International law does not, moreover, challenge the right of states to control their borders, or to set criteria for citizenship. What refugees are owed is sympathy, compassion and support. Like all moral obligations, however, these obligations need to be tempered by practical considerations of scarce resources, competing priorities, and the political sustainability of a programme of support.

For Europe, this implies that the EU as a whole needs to be able to control its external borders better than it does, which in practice means giving countries such as Italy and Greece both material help and stronger authority to regulate the flow of migrants into Europe. The organisation charged with doing this, Frontex, is understaffed, underfunded and lacks strong political support from the very member states most concerned with keeping migrants out. The Schengen system of free internal movement will not be politically sustainable unless the problem of Europe's outer borders is somehow solved.

The situation in the United States is somewhat different. The country has been very inconsistent in the enforcement of its immigration laws over the years. This enforcement is not impossible but is a matter of political will. While levels of deportations began rising under the Obama administration, the often arbitrary nature of these actions does not make for a sustainable long-term policy. Enforcement does not require a border wall; a huge proportion of undocumented aliens have entered the country legally but have remained on expired visas. Rather, the rules could be better enforced through a system of employer sanctions, which requires a national identification system that will tell employers who is legitimately in the country. This has not happened because too many employers benefit from the cheap labour that immigrants provide and do not want to act as enforcement agents. It has also not come about because of a uniquely American opposition to a national ID system, based on a suspicion of government shared by left and right alike. As a result, the United States now hosts a population of some 11 to 12 million undocumented aliens. The vast majority of these people have been in the country for years and are doing useful work, raising families, and otherwise behaving as law-abiding citizens.

The new groups vociferously opposing immigration are actually coalitions of people with different concerns. A hard-core group are driven by racism and bigotry; little can be done to change their minds. They should not be catered to, but simply opposed on moral grounds. But others are concerned whether newcomers will ultimately assimilate. They worry less about there being immigration than about numbers, speed of change, and the carrying capacity of existing institutions to accommodate these changes. A policy focus on assimilation might ease their concerns and peel them away from the simple bigots. Whether or not this happens, a policy focusing on assimilation would be good for national cohesion. Policies related to immigrants, refugees and citizenship are at the heart of current identity debates, but the issue is much broader than that. Identity politics is rooted in a world in which the poor and marginalised are invisible to their peers. Resentment over lost status starts with real economic distress, and one way of muting the resentment is to mitigate concerns over jobs, incomes and security. Particularly in the United States, much of the left stopped thinking several decades ago about ambitious social policies that might help remedy the underlying conditions of the poor. It was easier to talk about respect and dignity than to come up with potentially costly plans that would concretely reduce inequality.

For much of the twentieth century, politics in liberal democracies revolved around

broad economic policy issues. The progressive left wanted to protect ordinary people from the vagaries of the market, and to use the power of the state to more fairly distribute resources. The right for its part wanted to protect the free enterprise system and the ability of everyone to participate in market exchange. Communist, socialist, social democratic, liberal and conservative parties all arrayed themselves on a spectrum from left to right that could be measured by the desired degree of state intervention, and commitment alternatively to equality or to individual freedom. There were important identity groups as well, including parties whose agendas were nationalist, religious or regional in scope. But the stability of democratic politics in the period from the end of World War II up to the present revolved around dominant centre-left and centre-right parties that largely agreed on the legitimacy of a democratic welfare state.

This consensus now represents an old establishment that is being hotly contested by new parties firmly rooted in identity issues. This constitutes a big challenge for the future of democratic politics. While fights over economic policy produced sharp polarisation early in the twentieth century, democracies found that opposing economic visions could often split the difference and compromise. Identity issues, by contrast, are harder to reconcile: either you recognise me or you don't. Resentment over lost dignity or invisibility often has economic roots but fights over identity often distract us from focusing on policies that could concretely remedy those issues. In countries such as the United States, South Africa, or India, with racial, ethnic, and religious stratifications, it has been harder to create broad working class coalitions to fight for redistribution because the higher-status identity groups did

not want to make common cause with those below them, and vice versa.

The rise of the politics of identity has been facilitated by technological change. When the internet first became a platform for mass communication in the 1990s, many observers (myself included) believed that it would be an important force for promoting democratic values. Information is a form of power, and if the internet increased everyone's access to information, it should also have distributed power more broadly. Moreover, the rise of social media in particular seemed likely to be a useful mobilisation tool, allowing like-minded groups to coalesce around issues of common concern. The peer-to-peer nature of the internet would eliminate the tyranny of hierarchical gatekeepers of all sorts, who curated the nature of information to which people had access. And so it was: any number of anti-authoritarian uprisings, from the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine to the failed Green Revolution in Iran to the Tunisian revolt and the Tahrir Square uprising in Egypt, were powered by social media and the internet. Government operations were much harder to keep secret once ordinary people had technological means of publicising abuses; Black Lives Matter would likely not have taken off in the absence of ubiquitous cell phones and video recordings.

But over time authoritarian governments such as that of China figured out how to control use of the internet for their own populations and to make it politically harmless, while Russia learned how to turn social

media into a weapon that would weaken its democratic rivals. But even absent these external players, social media has succeeded in accelerating the fragmentation of liberal societies by playing into the hands of identity groups. It connected like-minded people with one another, freed from the tyranny of geography. It permitted them to communicate and to wall themselves off from people and views that they didn't like in 'filter bubbles'. In most face-to-face communities, the number of people believing a given outlandish conspiracy theory would be very limited; online, one could discover thousands of fellow believers. By undermining traditional media's editors, fact-checkers and professional codes, it facilitated the circulation of bad information and deliberate efforts to smear and undermine political opponents. And its anonymity removed existing restraints on civility. Not only did it support society's willingness to see itself in identity terms; it promoted new identities through online communities, as countless subreddits have done.

Fears about the future are often best expressed through fiction, particularly science fiction that tries to imagine future worlds based on new kinds of technology. In the first half of the twentieth century, many of these forward-looking fears centred around big, centralised, bureaucratic tyrannies that snuffed out individuality and privacy. George Orwell's *1984* foresaw Big Brother controlling individuals through the telescreen, while Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* saw the state using biotechnology to stra-

tify and control society. But the nature of imagined dystopias began to change in the later decades of the century, when environmental collapse and out-of-control viruses took centre stage. However, one particular strand spoke to the anxieties raised by identity politics. Cyberpunk authors such as Bruce Sterling, William Gibson and Neal Stephenson saw a future dominated not by centralised dictatorships but by uncontrolled social fragmentation that was facilitated by a new emerging technology called the internet.

Our present world is simultaneously moving towards the opposing dystopias of hypercentralisation and endless fragmentation. China, for instance, is building a massive dictatorship in which the government collects data on the daily transactions of every one of its citizens and uses big-data techniques and a social credit system to control its population.

On the other hand, different parts of the world are seeing the breakdown of centralised institutions, the emergence of failed states, polarisation and a growing lack of consensus over common ends. Social media and the internet have facilitated the emergence of self-contained communities, walled off not by physical barriers but by belief in shared identity. The nice thing about dystopian fiction is that it almost never comes true. That we can imagine how current trends will play themselves out in an ever more exaggerated fashion serves as a useful warning: *1984* became a potent symbol of a totalitarian future we wanted to avoid and

helped inoculate us from it. We can imagine better places to be in, which take account of our societies' increasing diversity, yet present a vision for how that diversity will still serve common ends and support rather than undermine liberal democracy. Identity is the theme that underlies many political phenomena today, from new populist nationalist movements, to Islamist fighters, to the controversies taking place on university campuses. We will not escape from thinking about ourselves and our society in identity terms. But we need to remember that the identities dwelling deep inside us are neither fixed nor necessarily given to us by our accidents of birth. Identity can be used to divide, but it can and has also been used to integrate. That in the end will be the remedy for the populist politics of the present.

Francis Fukuyama, born 1952 in Chicago, teaches Political Economy at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Harvard University and was a member of the US State Department's Policy Planning Staff as an expert on Eastern Europe. In 1989 he unveiled his famous theory on the 'End of History', which he revoked years later. Fukuyama has taken a stand on the most important topics of recent world politics, and has repeatedly addressed the question: how much culture does man need – and how much state? This text is based on his book *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, September 2018.

Europe's identities What defines Europe's identity? The euro, Schengen or the Champions League? French/German writer Alfred Grosser believes the EU institution with the greatest potential to create identity should actually be the Parliament. He outlines the development of the EU from its origins to today and strikes back at that fundamental evil that is now more current than ever: the finger-pointing at others, the bad ones, the Muslims, women, Jews, Germans or refugees. *By Alfred Grosser*

W hat does Europe mean to different people? Let's take PEGIDA, 'Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident'. Its followers probably think Europe and the Occident are one and the same thing. This is the Europe that caused the deaths of millions of people in 1914/1918 and 1939/1945, committed mass murder against the Jews and other ethnic groups, promoted slavery, permitted genocide in Central America in the 16th century, and later went on to practically wipe out the native peoples of North America thanks to the advent of European immigrants. But mention that to a PEGIDA supporter and they react with outrage and astonishment. So let's start somewhere else!

Apparently, borders are places manned by police and customs officers. But it's not that simple. Borders can also be delineated by beliefs. Google Maps tries to be neutral by basing its maps on the UN's boundaries. But schoolchildren in India and China are given totally different maps, with the same area marked as Indian in one and Chinese in the other. Once they grow up, they'll be all set to take up arms and defend 'their' territory. So what about Europe – both internally and externally?

Europeans have often imposed borders on other regions of the world, not only in Africa. IS regularly invokes the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which was secretly signed by France and Britain on 16 May 1916 and in which they set about carving up the Middle East. Even a country like France can't be described as purely European. The French Republic includes the départements d'outre-mer: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane and La Réunion. In geographical terms, only a tiny part of Turkey belongs to Europe, yet Europe includes a huge swathe of Russia. But where does it end?

For De Gaulle, it was: 'L'Europe de l'Atlantique à l'Oural' – from the Atlantic to the Urals. But when he actually flew over the fairly low Ural Mountains, he realised that although Siberia was on the other side, it was still part of Russia. The continent is made

up of different nations, and within some of these nations there are groups of people who do not feel they really belong. One country that deserves a special mention here is Poland. People have a very strong sense of belonging, partly because the country has been wiped off the map several times in the course of history, yet the Polish people have continued to exist in the face of oppression. It is also due to the way the border was redrawn between 1939 and 1945, resulting in losses to the east and territorial gains to the west, both of which involved forced expulsions.

The preamble to the German–Polish Border Treaty of 14 November 1990 states that the unification of Germany as a state with final borders makes a significant contribution to peace in Europe, 'In full knowledge of the fact that 45 years have passed since the end of the Second World War and conscious that the extreme which resulted from that war, in particular in terms of the large number of German and Polish people who were either expelled from, or had to evacuate their homes, is something which should not be forgotten and constitutes a challenge to the establishment of peaceful relations between these two peoples and their respective states…'

How many people in today's Germany know that many of the Poles who settled in Silesia were themselves expelled from the Ukrainian or Russian part of pre-war Poland? And how many people in Poland know that the victorious powers were largely unaware

'How many people in Poland know that the victorious powers were largely unaware that there was an Eastern and Western Neisse? Between the two lay Silesia and the city of Breslau, today's Wroclaw.'

that there was an Eastern and Western Neisse? Between the two lay Silesia and the city of Breslau, today's Wrocław.

It was not too difficult for the people and nation to identify with the new territory. But Poland had three other identities. The first of these barely penetrated the public consciousness, either in Poland itself or in its neighbouring states. Three million Jews were exterminated in Poland: Polish Jews and Jews from other countries who were brought to Treblinka, Sobibór, Majdanek, Chełmno and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Around 1980, Poland's identity was transformed into that of a country with the first freedom movement to score a victory in the Soviet sphere of influence. Lech Wałęsa became the embodiment of his nation. But things have changed since then.

The power that oppresses freedom in Poland and thus violates the fundamental values of the European Union now wears the face of Jarosław Kaczyński. His name is no longer uttered in the same breath as Lech Wałęsa, but instead with Viktor Orbán, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The weight of history continues to shape the spirits of today. In Belgium, for a long time it was the Walloons who dominated social and economic life. Since then, the desire to emphasise the superiority of Flanders has been to some extent fuelled by feelings of revenge. In Ireland, the great famine of the 19th century was blamed on London. It caused countless deaths and mass migration to the United States and is at the heart of Ireland's sense of identity.

It is questionable whether Belgium still actually exists. Two political communities with two different languages live side by side. Brussels constitutes a third area, the location of the

rather powerless government that is supposed to somehow try to live up to Belgium's motto: unity makes strength. Spain is a federal country, but is Catalonia still truly a part of it? The reforms of 1979 and 2016 have brought its regional autonomy closer to independence, but this is still strongly rejected by Madrid in the name of the Spanish constitution. But what can it do if Barcelona decides to ignore the constitution and take further steps towards independence?

Catalan is also spoken across the border with France. But it's not this border that is important to the French. The border between Spain and France that divides a region lies in the Basque Country. The often violent Basque autonomy movement has many supporters in France, but this does not pose a real problem for the unified nation of France. The same applies to the many Bretons who are seeking more recognition of Brittany's particular characteristics, including its transnational sense of Celtic solidarity. Every year hundreds of thousands flock to Lorient for the Festival Interceltique.

Corsica and Alsace are the real issues. Corsican nationalists won the regional elections in 2015 – on an island that became part of France in 1768, one year before Napoleon was born. Speaking in Corsican, the President of the Regional Council described France as a 'friendly nation'. Of course, all Corsica's – innumerable – privileges should be preserved (no inheritance tax, fiscal gifts, subsidies, light punishments for acts of violence against homeowners and other people from 'continental France' and more). The Corsican-French contradiction is comparable to a Poland that wants less and less EU while still receiving the same subsidies from Brussels.

Since the recent regional reform, Alsace has been part of the Région Grand Est, along with Champagne. Strasbourg is the region's capital, but nobody has an answer to the question: 'What Alsatian characteristics will be preserved?' The Concordat signed by Bonaparte in 1801 has applied ever since the separation of church and state in France in 1905, at a time when Alsace belonged to the German Empire. Priests, pastors and rabbis are paid by the state, and Strasbourg and Metz Universities are home to the only theology faculties in France. The social security system here is also different from the sécurité nationale ('la Sécu') in the rest of the country. Even a series of laws introduced by Bismarck remain in force. How is it possible to justify these special rights within a unitary state like France? The Constitutional Council has come up with a rather strange argument in this respect: the situation can remain because no-one has ever objected to it! But should Champagne now also be covered by the local laws that apply in Alsace? Or should there be two different regimes within the same region? In parallel, cross-border relations are growing stronger. Strasbourg and environs are building ever closer ties with the district of Ortenau in Germany. We could say that Lorraine is split in two. Metz goes with Luxembourg and Saarland, while Nancy is with Freiburg and Basel.

There is an annual rugby tournament called the Six Nations. The six teams are England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland (including

'The Corsican-French contradiction is comparable to a Poland that wants less and less EU while still receiving the same subsidies from Brussels.'

Northern Ireland), France and Italy. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is not united in every way, particularly when it comes to sport – Wales nearly beat England in the European Football Championship. The same applies to Brexit, with the majority of Scots wanting to stay in the EU. A new referendum on Scottish independence is in the air. The 51.3% who voted to leave the EU contains relatively few Scottish voters. The United Kingdom has 65 million inhabitants, of which Scotland has only 5.3 million and 'Celtic' Wales just less than 3 million. A border between England and Scotland would be conceivable, in view of their history and the oil resources in the North Sea – though these are declining and mean less and less in terms of real wealth.

The antithesis of Hitler's Europe

The Federal Republic of Germany has no such problems. The term 'Free State' used by Saxony and Bavaria is meaningless. Bavaria's past no longer plays a major role, otherwise one would have to thank Napoleon for creating the Kingdom of Bavaria and never refer to Germany's Basic Law, which Bavaria rejected. No one still wants to annex the Palatinate, and it is easy to forget that the Protestant region of Franconia is also part of Bavaria. There is just one Bavarian law that has never been forgotten and is present throughout Germany: on 17 September 2016 Munich's Oktoberfest was opened under the auspices of the *Reinheitsgebot*, the famous purity law that was enacted 500 years previously on 23 April 1516. This is how Bavaria's identity is secured.

Only the CSU seems to believe that Bavaria has been granted a special path beyond the community of Germany's other federal states.

There's no doubt that Europe's identity would have been very different had it not been for Jean Monnet – with three more men before him, three men beside him, a historical fact and a human influence. The Union of European Federalists was founded in 1947. Its three co-founders had all fought against Hitler and Mussolini, and two had been severely punished for it. The Frenchman Henri Frenay, born in 1905, had headed up a major resistance movement called Combat. The Italian Altero Spinelli, born in 1907, was sentenced to twelve years in prison in 1927. Until his death in 1986, he played a leading role in Europe, particularly in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. German-born Eugen Kogon, born in 1903, was held prisoner in the Buchenwald concentration camp from September 1939 until it was liberated in 1945.

These three men were living proof that post-war Europe would be the antithesis of Hitler's Europe and have a radically different identity. Three older men from the same countries aided and abetted Monnet. It is still said that they are united by their Catholic identity. But that was less important than their identity of being born on a border, which is why they were determined to overcome borders. Born in Cologne in 1876, Konrad Adenauer experienced and survived many things without ever leaving the Rhineland. The Italian Altiero de Gasperi was born in 1881 in Pieve Tesino, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and now in the autonomous province of Bolzano des Alto Adige in South Tyrol. Frenchman Robert Schuman was born in Luxembourg in 1886 to a father who had become German by annexation. His studies led him to Bonn, Berlin, Munich and Strasbourg, and he became a French citizen in

1919. He had already played a political role at the Catholic Day in Metz in 1913 and acted as spokesman for the Francophone participants. It is hardly surprising that these three became the first statesmen to promote a transnational Europe.

More than any other, Jean Monnet felt his calling was to work to achieve transnationalism. During the First World War and after working with the British on equipment issues, he became coordinator of the allied economic cooperation in 1916. From 1920 to 1923 he was Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations. In June 1940 he wrote the text of a proposal that was then brought to London by Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle. A Franco-British nation was to be created, with a common parliament and joint army. De Gaulle made little mention of this proposal in later years.

In 1955, Jean Monnet stepped down as president of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community in order to take an unusual step towards moving Europe forward as a community. The Action Committee for the United States of Europe was not a statute-based organisation. Jean Monnet brought together political parties and trade unions from the six founding countries until, in 1968, the three main British parties with George Brown, Denis Healey, Roy Jenkins and Edward Heath, accepted the committee's invitation to join. Jean Monnet's main success in terms of influence was converting the SPD to Adenauer's European policy. The DGB (German Trade Union Confederation) no longer needed to be converted. Walter Freitag, Hans Oskar Vetter and Otto Brenner were on the committee, which also included Erich Ollenhauer, Willy Brandt and Herbert Wehner, together with Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, Helmut Kohl, Franz Josef Strauss and Walter Scheel.

This unofficial body discussed and drew up the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Jean Monnet's Europe has never been fully realised, but his influence has shaped Europe's new, more limited identity.

How many Europeans know that they are citizens of the Union? It is stated in the treaties: 'Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union.' At the request of France, the following was added: 'Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship and shall not replace it.' Who has ever felt or described themselves as a citizen of Europe? Part of the growing Euroscepticism is based on people's ignorance about European institutions. The word Brussels has a negative connotation: it's the home of ignorant, harmful officials. In fact, there are 33,000, of whom 22,000 work in Brussels. Let's dare to compare this with the city of Hamburg, which pays salaries to 70,000 people. What are the powers of the Council, the Commission, Parliament and the Court of Justice? How do they exert them?

But apparently 'Brussels' isn't always a bad word. It's good if it abolishes the regulations on milk production. But if that doesn't work, Brussels is only good if it reintroduces the regulations! Of course, the average person can't be expected to read and digest all 358 articles of the Lisbon Treaty, but they should be able to understand a simplified version, particularly if – laudably – they vote in the European Parliament elections. But would that be enough to give the European Union a clear identity – if only in the eyes of voters? They certainly see it as a whole to which Germany is not affiliated, but by which it is enclosed. That's why school textbooks should contain

Article 10 of the thick German Reunification Treaty, with its two fundamental observations: 1. All European law applies to the enlarged Germany. 2. Legislative acts of the European Communities whose implementation or execution comes under the responsibility of the Länder shall be implemented or executed by the latter through provisions under Land law.

The European Union is made up of institutions, but which of them provide it with an identity? Certainly not the hard-to-understand difference between the European Council and the Council! The former 'shall not exercise legislative functions', while the latter 'shall, jointly with the European Parliament, exercise legislative and budgetary functions.' The European Council shall 'provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and shall define the general political directions and priorities thereof.' One of the Council's tasks, on the other hand, is 'to carry out policy-making'. The European Council comprises the heads of state or government of the Member States and takes its decisions 'by consensus'. Its president has no vote, is elected for two-and-a-half years and may be re-elected once. The post was taken up by Herman Van Rompuy, the Belgian Prime Minister, in 2010, and he was succeeded by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in 2015.

The powerful president of the Council is faceless because the presidency is held for a six-month term in turn by each Member State. Germany will take its turn again in the second half of 2020. The Union's real power lies with the Council in the various formations of the Committee of Ministers. Decisions are taken by qualified majority, which means at least 55% of the members of the Council, comprising at least 15 Member States if they represent 65% of the population of the Union. In reality, the Council takes decisions on the basis of proposals from what is perhaps the most important body in the Union, COREPER (the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Member States). The fact that governments have the main say in the EU will be explained later. This may look strange in important areas and actually weakens the common identity. This applies in particular to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). However, little progress has been made on security. The preamble to the Lisbon Treaty states: It is resolved 'to implement a common foreign and security policy including the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defence...'

So the treaty decides nothing in this area and points to a dual future! Foreign policy is different, but not much better. Of course, the Office of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was created, with a seat as Vice-President of the Commission and a large administrative apparatus. From 2009 to 2014, the post was held by Lady Catherine Ashton, an Englishwoman with no sense of transnationality, no prior international experience and no language skills. On 30 August 2014, the Council appointed the Italian Federica Mogherini to a five-year term. She had been Foreign Minister in the Matteo Renzi government since February of

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that year. She settled into the job more quickly and was more 'visible' than her predecessor, but anyone who believes Berlin, Paris or even Rome would allow her to dictate their national foreign policy – such as relations with Russia or the US – had another think coming.

The EU institution with the greatest potential to create identity should actually be the Parliament. It is the only parliament in the world that can truly be called transnational.

The deputies are elected in the different Member States, but they work in cross-national political groups rather than in national factions. The fact that social democratic and centre-right parliamentary groups make up 55% of the 751 MEPs, with 191 and 221 seats respectively, has an impact on every aspect of the Parliament's work. The number of MEPs from each country is largely determined by population, so Germany has 96, France 74, Italy and the UK 70, Spain 54, Poland 51 and up to 6 each for Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta. Each treaty has progressively expanded the powers of the European Parliament. By its eighth parliamentary term (2014–2019) it had become one of the cornerstones of the 'institutional triangle' that shapes the EU's legislation. It also conducts hearings of Commissioners-designate for the Commission in Brussels and can bring down the whole Commission by vetoing just one of them. Parliament also elects the President of the Commission. The German Social Democrat politician Martin Schulz became President of the European Parliament in January 2012 and did a great deal to raise awareness of Parliament and its powers, and to enforce them. The Parliament is in a worse position now that Schulz has returned to German politics.

After some undignified backroom dealings, his successor was decided upon in such a way that the new President lacked prestige and no longer exercised any power. It was the Italian Antonio Tajani, who co-founded the not exactly moderate Forza Italia party with Silvio Berlusconi. He acted as Berlusconi's spokesman before becoming an EU Commissioner and later Vice-President of the Parliament. The Commission now plays a stronger role, because it alone has the power to propose new regulations. It is these regulations that – even though they have to be approved by the Council and Parliament – govern many aspects of the daily lives of citizens, organisations and Member States.

Undignified backroom dealings

After Jean Monnet, the second 'father of Europe' was Jacques Delors. He achieved great things in Brussels between 1985 and 1995, including the Charter of Social Rights, the Single European Act, and the report that paved the way for the Maastricht Treaty and the single currency. Delors was able to act because he had the consistent backing of Mitterrand and Kohl. From Brussels, he also did his utmost to bring about German reunification. That's why he was the only foreigner to sit among the German politicians in the Reichstag building for the unification ceremonies and to be formally thanked by German President Richard von Weizsäcker.

The Commission is visible, while the European Court of Justice is less so, although few other European institutions have done more for unification – at times by exceeding its powers. This greater unity in the field of law has caused many questions to be raised to Germany's Constitutional Court, particular-

ly relating to the supremacy of Luxembourg over Karlsruhe – just as the German Central Bank is subordinate to the European Central Bank. In any event, the ECJ has generally managed to establish Europe's legal identity.

There should still be talk of economic identity. Mario Draghi, whether admired or opposed, can be seen as a kind of embodiment of economic Europe, based on the euro. For many decades, Wolfgang Schäuble has argued in favour of the creation of a multi-speed Europe. Those who are keen to move forward should be free take the initiative, provided that the institutions established in this way are open to all other Member States. Today, 19 of the 28 Member States have the euro as their currency. Malta (2008), Slovakia (2009), Estonia (2011) and Latvia (2014) are the most recent countries to adopt it. No country that adopted the euro has ever reverted to its national currency. So the attractiveness of an EU that is in a state of becoming is stronger than generally realised.

The UK has never 'sacrificed' the pound to the euro. But the Brexit referendum of 23 June 2016 highlights how the number of EU members has steadily increased, while the UK's withdrawal is the first of its kind. When the remaining 27 met for an 'informal meeting' in Bratislava on 16 September 2016, they realised that, despite their differences, they formed a single European entity. The word 'euro' is on everyone's lips, and 'Schengen' even more so. Why? Because the question of greater in-

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ternal unification for Europe has, as a result of the refugee issue, increasingly given way to concerns about protecting its borders. As with the euro, the number of members of the Schengen Area has grown steadily. In 1995, there were seven. It is named Schengen after the town where the Agreement was signed, in the Germany/France/Benelux triangle.

The Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties have changed the content (obligations and rights) of the Schengen Agreement. Along with most EU Member States, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland are also part of the Schengen Area. 54.6% of the Swiss population voted to join the Area in 2004, but the UK and Ireland have never joined. Its borders include domestic airports, and cooperation between members encompasses the police authorities. One of the articles in the Agreement that is gradually becoming more important allows members to carry out 'temporary' border checks. Schengen should be the embodiment of Europe's harmonious unification, but instead the word has become part of the vocabulary used against an overly lax Europe that despises nation states.

As a pair, are Germany and France a European institution in themselves? The answer should be a clear yes! Of course they aren't, but they should be. Grassroots partnerships have expanded steadily since the 1950s, along with scientific collaboration. The Elysée Treaty of 22 January 1963 led to the establishment of many institutions or paved the way for them to be established later, including the Franco-German University in Saarbrücken. This is not a university in its own right, but it manages or establishes joint study programmes. The setting for signing the treaty had a cer-

tain irony. Seated in the middle, like Europe's emperor, was Charles de Gaulle, flanked by his two heads of government, Adenauer and Pompidou. Then there were the two foreign ministers Maurice Couve de Murville and Gerhard Schröder (from the CDU). The Bundestag was not able to change the text of the treaty. On June 15, 1963, it passed a preamble to the law allowing ratification. This contained pretty much everything that was directed against de Gaulle's policies: the hope of Britain's accession, a close relationship with America, and defence within the framework of NATO.

The Franco-German friendship

The Franco-German Elysée Treaty covers close cooperation between the two armies at general staff level and below, along with co-operation between all ministries. Ministers and senior officials are required to have regular meetings, which has greatly encouraged direct collaboration during (and after) personal meetings. It was originally planned that heads of state and government would meet twice a year – in fact this has become more frequent – and foreign ministers every three months. Since 2003, the Franco-German summits have been replaced by the Franco-German Council of Ministers, attended twice a year by all cabinet ministers of the two countries. Unfortunately, it has increasingly become little more than a box-ticking exercise. The Franco-German Youth Office is probably the best institution to come out of the Elysée Treaty, and it does more than simply tick the boxes. Its work has been and

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remains outstanding and is now encompassing many more young Europeans than even a few years ago – the children of workers and employees. This, despite the fact that its structures have, sadly, changed.

The 'Franco-German friendship' is constantly evoked, usually in the context of commemorative events. But the Chancellor was serious when, in the wake of the Paris attacks, she said in the Bundestag on 16 December 2015: 'The Franco-German friendship is part of our historical responsibility. It is an unshakable part of our foreign policy and it is fundamental to the process of European unification.' How does the rest of Europe feel about this? The idea of Franco-German rule in Europe, of a Franco-German steering wheel, has rightly been rejected, but the role of the Franco-German engine is often underestimated. The community would have achieved little without Franco-German initiatives. If an engine lacks the fuel of new proposals, it grinds to a halt. The most creative times were during the pairings of Helmut Schmidt/ Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Kohl/ François Mitterrand. How have things been under Angela Merkel? Nicolas Sarkozy would take the Chancellor's proposals and announce them as if they were his own ideas. Attempts have been made to come up with joint proposals for Europe with François Hollande and Emmanuel Macron, but the differences between them are still too great in at least three key areas:

1. Accepting refugees. They both claim to share common ground, but this is simply untrue.

2. BREXIT. The German side is more lenient because of the country's huge economic interests in the United Kingdom. By contrast, the French side is more rigid because it has to show Marine Le Pen and other Eurosceptics that a FREXIT would bring major disadvantages.

3. TTIP/CETA. Transatlantic free trade negotiations threw up conflicts that have now been superseded due to Donald Trump's return to tough protectionist policies.

Negotiations are conducted by the EU Commission. The US has by no means abolished the Buy American Act of 1933, and when the French company Alstom sold TGV trains to California, it was subject to the condition that the carriages should be manufactured in America. Meanwhile, US companies can still manufacture goods in America and sell them to Europe! Even American films are already amortised when they come to Europe, which certainly justifies protective measures for French films.

The prominent Danish Commissioner Margrethe Vestager has been spearheading the EU's bid to force Apple to pay more tax. Does this create some kind of European economic identity? Hardly.

In fact, the opposite is implied. Not only because more and more European companies are being bought up by China, making China an important part of the European economy, but also because of the negative and positive role played by the US. For many years, Alan Greenspan, Chair of the US Federal Reserve, was a highly respected figure in both Europe and the US. But at the end of the day he was to blame for the 2008 crisis that is still affecting Europe today. He allowed countless families to get mortgages to buy houses that then declined in value, leading to mortgage delinquencies when the housing bubble burst. He also failed to save the first major American bank to slide into the abyss as a result of these loans. The misdemeanours and crimes of big banks are only punished in America, and not just the foreign ones. The list of fines imposed shows Bank of America at the top with $16.7 billion in fines, followed by Deutsche Bank with (provisionally) 14 billion and JP Morgan with 13 billion.

However, there is one area where Europe has an integrated economy: the Common Agricultural Policy, generally known as the CAP. It has been an integral part of the EU since its introduction in 1958. It has seen frequent reforms, each time involving protests by agricultural associations, which have accused every Commissioner for Agriculture of betraying them, starting with Dutch politician Sicco Mansholt. The main policy instrument was price support until 1992, when farmers' incomes were subsidised. At first it was still a case of modernising their production, which often led to a heavy debt load. In 1945 there were 28,000 tractors in France, while just a quarter of a century later this had risen to 1.2 million. Today, the CAP budget amounts to 50 billion euros per year, or 38% of the EU's total budget. Direct aid and market-related expenditure makes up 40 billion euros, while 10 billion is spent on 'rural development' (protecting rural areas and promoting biodiversity). Large, wealthy farmers receive more than their smaller, poorer counterparts. 80% of aid goes to 20% of producers, including large poultry and sugar companies.

Of course, farmers are in favour of the free market, but every farm has to be rescued

through subsidies if it goes under. Privatise profits, socialise losses – this principle is not limited to agriculture. That's why the CAP remains the largest economic point of reference in institutionalised Europe. Hang on a minute, isn't that the euro? Or the European Central Bank?

The answer is not simple. The ECB won a huge victory in July 2016. Germany's Constitutional Court approved the ECB's controversial bailout policy and, most importantly, granted the European Court of Justice the almost exclusive right to rule on European issues. For many plaintiffs to the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, their disappointment was mixed with bitterness. Is 'Super Mario' the saviour of the monetary unit and European agriculture? Mario Draghi has often been portrayed as a gravedigger, especially by the Bundesbank and its boss Jens Weidmann, and in almost the same terms by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. There's no doubt that his decision to save the euro at all costs did indeed save it. Isn't the large-scale purchase of government bonds dangerous for the European banking system? This money makes it possible to boost the economy through loans. Germany could be particularly happy about this. Calculated in billions of euros, purchases of government bonds by mid-2016 amounted to 238 in Germany, 189 in France, 164 in Italy and 118 in Spain.

But what if the economy doesn't recover? Does this fit in with the pressure that every country is under to restructure their public finances? Is the ECB being too lenient with Portugal, Spain and particularly France? The Bank is sticking to its policy of low interest rates, which makes it cheaper for people to buy houses, but harms pensioners and investors. What remains is that the euro will continue to create European identity – as long as its existence is not called into question. However, there are some experts who demand exactly that, albeit with the prediction that the new national currencies would then have to be devalued by 20%. I feel on even less solid ground in the dispute over phasing out nuclear power. No-one has yet clarified where and how nuclear waste should finally be stored, and decades after Chernobyl there is no unity in Europe on this issue. Even after the Brexit vote, France has allowed Britain to build a hugely expensive, state-of-the-art reactor. In Germany, nuclear reactors are gradually being shut down. A look at the distribution of nuclear reactors around the world shows that the issue is not just a European one. There are currently 402 reactors in operation in 31 countries worldwide. In the EU there are 127 in 15 countries, most of them in France. In Germany, all 18 are due to be shut down by 2022. The Fessenheim nuclear power plant on the French/German border was to be shut down because German experts identified a number of safety concerns. But Hollande failed to keep his promise, and the locals are protesting closure because it will lead to drastic job cuts in Fessenheim and the surrounding area.

The economy can only be part of the identity of an institutionalised Europe if social aspects are added to the mix. Europe is perhaps the world's wealthiest region, but it still has dramatic levels of youth unemployment. In July 2016, only 7.2% of under-25s

'What remains is that the euro will continue to create European identity – as long as its existence is not called into question.'

were unemployed in Germany, compared to 24.4% in France, 26.3% in Portugal, 39.2% in Italy, 43.9% in Spain and 50.3% in Greece. Only Iceland is better placed than Germany in this respect. Is this proof that Germany is ultimately the personification of Europe? This seems to be indicated by the economic data, the mix of admiration and envy felt by others and, last but not least, a secret army – more and more German civil servants are occupying the top positions in the EU Parliament and Commission. France has gradually abandoned its former, arrogant claim to leadership in Europe. At a press conference in 1964, Prime Minister Georges Pompidou stated: 'France should play the role of Europe' (not: 'a role in Europe').

There are also clear signs of change in the Franco-German relationship. Is it a coincidence that Airbus, the astonishingly successful joint project, now has a German CEO in Thomas Enders? In her speech to the Bundestag on 29 September 2015, Angela Merkel gave an impressive definition of what this Europe should really be: 'The European Union is a community of values and as such a community of law and responsibility.' It would be good if this definition could also have meaning for her and for Europe with regard to the ongoing refugee tragedy.

Before we look at the current problems, we need to remember how people have been driven from their homes in the past. Why was the population of Strasbourg forcibly evacuated before the start of the war in 1939? Because they got in the way of the Maginot Line, which was to defend France from invaders from the East? Perhaps because the people of Alsace would be happy to welcome the advan-

cing German armies? With very little luggage, they were transported in horse-drawn wagons to central France, where their welcome was not always warm. Some people viewed them as compatriots, others as strangers. Ever since 1947, Palestine and Israel have been arguing about whether Palestinians fled or were driven from their villages.

By 1945, millions of Germans had fled or been forced from their homes as a result of the advancing Red Army or expulsions from Silesia, the Sudetenland and Hungary. Erika Steinbach may not always say laudable things, but the basic principle behind her Centre Against Expulsions was a justifiable one. The exact content of the Beneš decrees continues to be disputed, but there is no disputing the violence and murder that accompanied the expulsions.

And today, when most of the victims of Islamic violence are Muslims, it may be concealed that IS is committing genocide against Christians in the territories that it holds. In 2015 there were 60 million refugees or displaced persons in the world. Some of them tried to come to Europe, and some arrived in Germany. It may be useful to make a few preliminary remarks before we get to the German problem.

The Turks who live in Germany have not been displaced, nor are they refugees. West Germany and Turkey signed an agreement on 30 October 1961 that led to 900,000 Turkish guest workers coming to Germany to be housed in uncomfortable, temporary accommodation. Most of them were male, but around one-fifth of the intake were female. The agreement came to an end with the 1973 oil crisis, and suddenly the Turks were immigrants. Today, 2.9 million people with Turkish roots live in Germany, including 1.5 million who are Turkish citizens. The fact that nationality is significant was aggressively

called into question by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in a speech in Cologne on 10 February 2008. For him, all Turks are Turks, even if they take German citizenship: 'I understand that you are sensitive about the issue of assimilation. No one can expect you to assimilate. Assimilation is a crime against humanity. You should be aware of that.'

A Landtag president with Turkish roots

Children who encounter the German language for the first time when they start school should master the language in order to advance in their careers. But they will still be Turkish. A survey conducted in July 2016 produced the following surprising responses: 'Do you feel close/very close ties to Turkey?' Yes: 85 percent 'Do you feel close/very close ties to Germany?' Yes: 87 percent. This is not a split identity. The same comparison could be carried out with Jews in Germany and Israel. It's just that a theoretically unsurprising result is treated as surprising in Germany. Muhterem Aras is 'the first Landtag president with Turkish roots'. At the opening of the Baden-Württemberg Parliament in May 2016, she said: 'A woman with a migrant background as the representative of this House. With this, you have sent out a clear signal. A signal of cosmopolitanism, tolerance and the success of integration.'

She could have added that she was the first Muslim woman to hold such an office. And the fact that she arrived in Stuttgart with her parents in 1978 at the age of twelve, not speaking a word of German, is more in the French style! Unfortunately, Erdoğan created a new identity issue in 2016. A section of Germany's Turkish population – supporters of Erdoğan – should regard themselves as enemies of other Turks, especially the Kurds,

who the Turkish leader branded as the enemy. His statement could be interpreted as a call to violence.

Xenophobia is associated with other, even more base feelings than nationalism. In Hungary, the public were incited to reject the arrival of refugees via a referendum, all shrouded in the terrible media campaign of lies spread by the Fidesz Party. Despite the fact that the referendum result was constitutionally invalid due to a voter turnout of less than 50%, Viktor Orbán announced that he would enact a law to enforce the xenophobic message of the referendum. Worse still, the Education Minister awarded a national Order of Merit to a journalist who wants to see the eradication of the 'Romani' (Sinti and Roma) complains that 'Jews are allowed to blow their dirty noses into our Hungarian swimming pools'.

It is not only new arrivals who suffer discrimination. African Americans are regularly killed by the police in the US. Before the election, African American author Valerie Wilson Wesley described Trump's language as violent and hate-filled. She said that different people live in the USA, but when people no longer respect different identities, all that's left is Trump. But, more hopefully, she noted that anyone who can survive slavery and the police will survive Trump!

Moving on to Angela Merkel, why should we begin with her and Germany when broaching the refugee question in Europe? First, because some 890,000 refugees arrived in Germany in 2015, with another 210,000 following in the first nine months of 2016. In other countries, this aroused feelings of admiration, envy and, above all, anger. This was because the refugee numbers were a re-

sult of the decision taken by the Chancellor on 4-5 September 2015. There are many theories about the reasons behind her decision, with the cynics never wanting to believe it was morally justified. But doesn't the statement that she made at the Bundestag on 24 September 2016 remain of fundamental importance, including with regard to the refugee issue? 'The European Union is a community of values and as such a community of law and responsibility.' It is true that she spoke of 'temporary border controls', of 'significantly faster asylum procedures', and of 'the repatriation of those who have no prospects of staying' (there were 21,000 deportations in 2015). But this does not mean she is contradicting herself. She also thanked everyone who has helped and is still helping in this crisis, from volunteers to civil servants.

German citizens were not unanimous in welcoming the refugees. Right-wing extremists and racists are increasingly turning to violence. From January to mid-September 2016, the police recorded 507 cases of xenophobic violence, twice as many as in the previous year. There were 78 cases of arson and seven people were killed. Germans are becoming increasingly fearful and hostile to refugees. They are afraid that terrorists are among the asylum seekers. They are afraid of being overrun by foreigners. They are afraid of 'Islamisation'. Violent disputes between Sunnis and Shiites have left Christian asylum seekers feeling uneasy. The positives and negatives should not be allowed to overshadow

'In Hungary, the public were incited to reject the arrival of refugees via a referendum, all shrouded in the terrible media campaign of lies spread by the Fidesz Party.'

the fundamental questions. Who are the refugees? Fleeing Syria and Afghanistan means escaping death. The children who are drowning off the coasts of Greece and Italy have a right to be taken in by Europe. But now a 'wave' of 'economic migrants' is coming to Europe from North and sub-Saharan Africa, and most of them want to go to Germany. What should be done? What can be done? Many of those who arrive find themselves at odds with refugees from other countries, even in refugee centres, where women can often be assaulted by men. A person's identity is not solely that of asylum seeker. What else are they seeking?

A new home, in the sense of the Latin phrase *ubi bene, ibi patria* (My homeland is where life is good)? Without any kind of 'Germanisation'? What is the meaning of the Chancellor's formula 'Germany is still Germany'? The new arrival is required to respect the fundamental rights and obligations of the Federal Republic of Germany. How many born-and-bred Germans do this impeccably? They are supposed to support the German culture of remembrance, so the burden of the Auschwitz legacy. It is no small thing to demand such a degree of assimilation. The newcomers are also expected to participate in Germany's Leitkultur. We will come back to what this is or should be a little later.

Let's move on to France. Why? It is certainly not a good example of how to welcome refugees. That's shown by the figures. Perhaps it's because the two biggest parties, Marine Le Pen's Front National and Les Républicains, previously headed up by Nicolas Sarkozy, were particularly harsh in their rejection of refugees? Or because I'm French and have stumbled upon my own identity – and have a guilty

conscience. As best I can, I fight for greater humanity in my writings and words.

But we haven't taken a refugee into our home. I admire the people and associations who have done it but haven't bothered to do it myself. We just give money to help the helpers. France mainly takes in refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Sudan. Those who are granted refugee status (*statut de réfugié*) sign a *contrat d'accueil et d'intégration* (immigration and integration contract) which guarantees them at least 120 hours of French lessons, vocational training, free medical care, family allowance and housing assistance. It is the issue of regroupement familial – family reunification – that provokes some of the most aggressive arguments against accepting refugees. The false figures that are circulating on this subject also include the women and children of French people who lived abroad, returned to France and want to bring their families back with them. Only 6% of these cases actually relate to refugees. There are growing claims that the nation is threatened by refugees.

The only difference is that the newcomers, such as the former Prime Minister, the Ministers of Education and Labour, and the Mayor of Paris, are totally normal members of the nation. The latter, Anne Hidalgo, faced strident protests about her plan to build reception facilities for refugees. The wealthy districts of Paris and its surroundings refuse to accept even a few refugees. The danger of letting terrorists into the country is undeniable, but the threat of an attack is not only from the outside. Two French girls aged between 15 and 20 were discovered preparing to carry out attacks, controlled remotely by IS. For many

'Who is actually on the bottom rung of society? In Spain, it was the chambermaids, who went on strike because they felt more and more exploited. All the benefits they had acquired were simply taken away because hotels decided to stop treating them as employees but as independent contractors – external service providers.'

of France's communes, the slogan is 'Not here'.

Large numbers of unaccompanied minors arrive in Marseille every week. All the city's reception facilities are overflowing, and orders from the authorities to organise their reception lead to nothing. In times of high unemployment, do refugees take the jobs of French people? Very few of them actually get a work permit. Like in Germany, most of them work illegally. The jobs that are open to them are usually the jobs that local people don't want to do. But, like in Germany, there is a constant need to prove that helping refugees is not done at the expense of the indigenous poor. So what is the key issue for the European Union? 'When is the boat full?' The Visegrád countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) have already responded: Our boat is already full, right from the start, and the European Commission has no right whatsoever to set admission quotas, no matter how small. The others should continue to work on Frontex, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. Established in 2004, it is headquartered in Warsaw and headed

up by a Frenchman, Fabrice Leggeri. In its own words, 'Frontex helps EU countries and Schengen associated countries manage their external borders.'

Unaccompanied minors

In December 2015, the Commission transformed Frontex into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, with more responsibilities and greater resources. This was supported by the Council and Parliament. Frontex has often been accused of violating human rights as defined in the EU's legal texts. One thing we know for sure is that it is about sealing off the EU and the Schengen zone from people whose main identity is that of migrant. This is how to protect an averagely wealthy territory. But for how long? Will it be possible to permanently fend off every fresh refugee crisis? Every EU institution should be discussing the foreseeable future, because it is precisely this future that is likely to shake the identity of the European Union.

The EU also has to address economic and ethical issues. Every day brings fresh news of Chinese takeovers or partial acquisitions of companies. A totally undemocratic country where millions of people are being exploited to create its new wealth. Large European fashion and leather companies continue to exploit the miserably paid workers in Bangladesh so that their local customers can buy cheap goods. A hundred million dollars for Bernie Ecclestone, the head of Formula One. Josef Ackermann pays 3.2 million to settle the Mannesmann case. Fortunately, the super-rich have no need to fear a trial, because they have a strong community spirit. But there are two nice examples that deserve a mention: 86-year-old Warren Buffett has donated 95% of his enormous fortune to charity, saying his children will still inherit enough to lead privileged lives. The bulk of his fortune has gone to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates earned billions with Microsoft. In 1965 top earners earned 20 times more than the lowest paid, whereas today the ratio is 1:276!

In France, wealth tax is not allowed to exceed one year's income. It's easy to take out expensive life insurance or put money into bogus companies. Liliane Bettencourt, France's richest woman, paid zero euros rather than 81 million euros in wealth tax. Bernard Arnault, chief executive of the luxury-goods company LVLH should have paid 5 million, but in the end the state received just 179,000. In Germany, the debate about inheritance tax goes on and on. How low it should be in terms of sustaining a business or how high in terms of an unearned inheritance is unclear, even under a new law. Deutsche Bank is in a bad way, but Josef Ackermann received 64.5 million euros between 2006 and 2016. The two board members in 2009 who went on to become directors earned 50 and 29 million respectively ('earned'?). Deutsche Bank has committed real crimes and the US has fined it many billions of dollars. But it is 'too big to jail', unlike shoplifters and small-scale drug dealers who face prison sentences. And if the bank teeters on the brink, another principle kicks in, it is "too big to fail". After the Federal Reserve and US government failed to save Lehman Brothers on 15 September 2008, resulting in the global financial crisis, the state, i.e. the taxpayer, had to step in to plug the hole. 'Privatise profits, socialise losses' – we've heard this before.

What is a child? In Europe this is quite easy to define. But UNICEF estimates that

around the world 191 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are being forced to work or kept as slaves, not including child soldiers. In 2002, the International Labour Organisation recorded 352 million workers between the ages of 5 and 17. The World Day Against Child Labour was launched on 12 June 2002. In Europe, we shouldn't forget what it used to be like. The British government passed the Factory Act in 1833, which prohibited the employment of children under the age of 9 in the textile industry. In France, children as young as six were working in the mines until 1880. Children were able to crawl along coal seams that were too narrow for adults. Few people were bothered by the fact that they were often killed or crippled in the process.

Standing up for children's rights

After the liberation of Marseille in 1944, I was briefly employed by a port company. I saw at first-hand how hard the dockers worked to load and unload the ships. But then lifting gear came along, and today you don't need much muscle power to load a container! But that's not to say that no-one is left behind in our society. Big cities are full of homeless people. In Paris, public and private organisations are trying to help – particularly in winter.

Who is actually on the bottom rung of society? In Spain, it was the chambermaids, who went on strike because they felt more and more exploited. All the benefits they had acquired (such as paid holidays and the occasional weekend off) were simply taken away because hotels decided to stop treating them as employees but as independent contractors – external service providers. When they are no longer bound by the rules, companies can let them work long hours for low wages. The

women had little choice but to put up with it in a country where unemployment was over 20%. Until the aforementioned rebellion, which had some success.

In Germany there was the case of a cashier who was fired because she failed to hand in a small deposit voucher: 'She has lost the trust of her employer.' I wrote an open letter saying that I had lost my trust in the banks. Who could I fire? The underclass also includes many homeless people. The situation is particularly bad in the US, especially San Francisco. At least in France, the underclass includes the inmates of overcrowded prisons, where they are forced to live in inhumane conditions. This is stated by the European Court of Human Rights on an almost annual basis. In September 2016 it was revealed that the largest prison in the Paris area in Fresnes, which holds 2,700 prisoners (and is operating at 191% capacity!) is infested with rats, which contaminate everything with their droppings. Of course it is a place where real criminals are punished, but misery creates new criminals. For everyone 'right at the bottom', the debate about whether the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer has little significance. Being at rock bottom might be reality, or it might be false self-identification.

In Germany, as in France, we're constantly hearing: 'I'm on benefits, but the refugees who come here get more than me.' In fact, the figures prove the opposite, yet people still believe they are being disadvantaged. Are the rich getting richer and the poor poorer? There are many indications that the answer is 'yes', but not all the counterarguments are invalid. It is true that when the upper echelons earn more the average goes up and poverty

increases measured against this average. But anyone who loses their job because a company decides to make mass redundancies – often merely to increase its share price – should be called poor.

Being young in Europe

Being young has a different meaning in Germany compared to France. You can stay in the Junge Union or the Jusos – the youth organisations of the CDU and SPD – until you are 35. Amazing! But the two countries still have to answer the same basic questions. Let's look at just two of these. Young people who attend grammar schools are likely to have a brighter future than those who attend lesser schools. But that's not all. Later, as students, they have some major advantages in the cultural sphere, such as when visiting museums or attending concerts. They only have to show their student card to get a discount.

But there's no young worker's card. Should the ban on cannabis be lifted? This would disarm the dealers. But is it being spelled out to young people that there is clear evidence that cannabis use can seriously damage the brain of adolescents up to 18 years of age? And how many of them are habitual potheads while they are still at school? We have a strong 'grey lobby' that – particularly in politics – occupies and to some extent monopolises most of the positions and appointments. The issue of generational justice is attracting much

more attention in Germany than in France. One of the reasons for this is the fact that right and left alike are sweeping the dramatic debt problem under the carpet. Every year the national debt goes up. Interest is the second item in the national budget – after education and training and before defence. The burden of repayments is being shifted to future generations. Pension contributions have to rise, while future pensioners will get less. On the German labour market, the figures speak for themselves. The percentage of 15-34 years olds in low-wage, short-term or temporary employment is about three times higher than that of older people.

Children usually belong to the first half of people's lives, so we have to ask how the parent generation is treated. It is better for parents in France than in Germany. They get higher tax relief and better pensions, especially for civil servants (whose pension is calculated on the basis of their salary in the final six months, whereas for everyone else it is based on the average of the last 25 years). Let me cite my own example: with four children, my pension is not 75% of my final salary, but 86%. If you have seven children, you get 100%, so the eighth child is useless! In 2001 Germany's Constitutional Court ruled that large families 'have been disadvantaged in terms of consumption and wealth creation because of their upbringing', despite the fact that these children will end up paying the pensions of the childless. A generational injustice? After all, childless people have always had to pay more taxes.

What is the role of the media? 2016 saw the publication of a valuable collection of articles entitled *PEGIDA – Warnsignale aus Dresden*,

'The Brexit referendum in the UK demonstrated how opinions can be artificially manipulated through lies and a fictitious portrayal of the European Union.'

edited by Werner Patzelt and Joachim Klose. Over 500 pages, the contributors look at basic issues relating to the media. What do the PEGIDA people have to say? Do their statements correspond to reality? To what extent does fake news influence other people? This brings us to the opinion polls. Interesting questions bring an interesting volume of responses, just so the pollsters can influence the decision-makers. President Nicolas Sarkozy commissioned secret polls every day to find out what he should or shouldn't say. It has recently been revealed that the German Chancellor has been supplied with large numbers of unpublished surveys, which may or may not have influenced the content, but certainly the wording, of her policies. Fortunately, big decisions sometimes fly in the face of public opinion. If Angela Merkel had instructed polling company Allensbach to find out whether or not Germany should take in refugees, the answer would have been negative. The same applies to the treaties signed by Willy Brandt in Warsaw and Moscow in 1970.

The Brexit referendum in the UK demonstrated how opinions can be artificially manipulated through lies and a fictitious portrayal of the European Union. Boris Johnson claimed that the EU costs Britain 350 million pounds (404 million euros) a week, and that Turkey's accession was imminent. The three main tabloids, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, and *Sun*, with a combined daily readership of six million, outdid each other in the lies they printed, particularly about the 'wave of refugees', and even stating – seriously! – that Syria and Iraq would be joining the EU. According to the tabloids, the EU wanted to create a superstate that would make it impossible to try terrorists in British courts. And the Royal Navy would be subsumed into a European fleet. Without all these untruths there would have been no 'yes' to Brexit.

In Moscow, Putin rules the media even more consummately than his counterpart in Budapest. Both at home and abroad, he can feed false facts to his citizens with impunity. Of course, the EU and NATO are held accountable for all the sins of this world. Germany is also systematically portrayed in a false light. Donald Trump has set something of a world record for lying. He simply doesn't care whether what he says is true, he just wants to say things that incite others. Lies became the background and foreground of the election campaign, in line with the French proverb: *Plus c'est gros, plus ça passe* [The bigger the lie, the more it will be believed]. In France we also hear some gross distortions from the likes of Marine Le Pen and Nicolas Sarkozy. Libération, a daily newspaper that, unfortunately, is not read enough these days, has a section called Désintox (detox) in which it compares real facts and figures with the allegedly true ones. Laurent Wauquiez, the far-right head of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, contested that France constantly buys German locomotives while the Germans only buy German ones. Désintox revealed that most French locomotives are manufactured in France, and that Germany does not practise this French kind of 'economic patriotism' but has some of its locomotives manufactured in Poland and the Czech Republic.

More subtle, less aggressive methods are also employed. In 1974, when I was regularly writing columns for *Le Monde*, the newspaper's director, Jacques Fauvet, asked me why I was always criticising our paper. I replied that I would read them carefully for a month and then send him a report, which ended up running to 30 pages. I mentioned

some major issues, such as the derogatory tone always used in reports about Germany and the US, and the absence of any criticism of China. And more minor ones, such as the fact that the newspaper did not like a rally of 300 lawyers in the Palace of Justice, so it added the proviso 'out of 2,500 lawyers in Paris' in brackets after the number 300. I asked why similar reference numbers were never given for student or worker rallies. In April 2016, the newspaper wanted to prove that the Institute of Political Studies had been infiltrated by right-wing extremists. Hence the headline: 'Alain de Benoist welcomed with open arms at Sciences Po', and the sub-heading: 'Students invite the figurehead of the New Right.' But upon reading the article it became clear that the auditorium only had 50 seats and groups of at least 30 students at the Institute had the freedom to invite any speaker.

Mocking for all it's worth

A newspaper doesn't necessarily have the same identity for every reader. Since 1992, Sciences Po has had an Alfred Grosser Chair, which is filled every year by a different German professor. The Institute places an advertisement in the German newspaper *Die Zeit,* attracting around a dozen applicants. *Die Zeit* is the paper where German universities advertise! Like many provincial French newspapers, it is often said that it is an advertising

'The famous aria about slander in Rossini's Barber of Seville fades into insignificance compared to what happens today – at a time when most Facebook users have never heard of Rossini and his opera.'

paper broken up by the odd bit of journalism. But this is not the case *Le Canard enchaîné*, perhaps the most important French weekly newspaper. It accepts no advertising and has maintained the same price since 1991, yet it still makes a profit. In 2015, it had a weekly circulation of 392,000 copies and made net profits of 2.3 million euros, which are not shared out but kept in reserve to maintain its independence, even if things take a turn for the worse. Despite this, its editors are some of the highest-paid in the whole of France. Since World War I, *Le Canard* has focused on political satire, but it has also uncovered social and economic scandals that would otherwise have gone unnoticed and that have sometimes only been publicly recognised many years later.

The paper looks inside the world of the government and opposition, mocks it for all it's worth, explains a little more, and is read by the entire political spectrum and people who are interested in politics. After being banned under Vichy and the German occupation, for us in Marseille, its return to the press stage after liberation was proof that freedom really had returned. Paper was in short supply at that time, so copies were hard to come by. A group of us would rent a copy for an hour, read it and then virtuously return it to the newspaper vendor. Over recent years, *Le Canard* has almost never been found guilty of error or misrepresentation – and regularly wins all the cases brought against it. Like many others, I read it every week with a mixture of interest, admiration – and disgust. Because it focuses on the negative, the reader ends up thinking that the reality of politics and society is even more devastating than they thought.

To what extent is *Le Canard* similar to

Germany's *Spiegel*? The comparison is obvious, but a *Canard* editor has never ended up in prison for treason, as happened to Conrad Ahlers in 1962. I was particularly affected by this because I had known Ahlers since 1947, when he was doing a fine job as editor of the youth newspaper Benjamin, and anyway I disliked Franz Josef Strauss. In 1966, my colleague and former student Jürgen Seifert and I co-edited a book about this 'Spiegel Affair' entitled *Die Spiegelaffäre – Die Staatsmacht und ihre Kontrolle*. There were also skirmishes as a result of the sometimes controversial writings of Rudolf Augstein.

Who can say what the identity of a newspaper is? Germany still has many family-owned newspapers providing a wealth of information, while most of the newspapers in France – including larger regional publications – are barren places if you are looking for political and international news and comment. The same can be said of the main evening news broadcasts on TF1 and France2. In France, as in Germany, the information market is dominated by a few large media groups, though they do not necessarily dictate the line their newspapers should follow. In Germany, the Holtzbrinck Publishing

Group has a national and international breadth that has no counterpart in France. It seems to give the publications that it owns a great deal of editorial autonomy. It remains to be seen whether printed newspapers will continue to survive.

The worst thing about Facebook, the wonderful invention that made Mark Zuckerberg a billionaire, is not the way young people reveal the intimate details of their lives. It's the ease with which people can be identified and defamed. Before they even become aware of this defamation, the post has already been seen by hundreds of thousands of people. It's pointless to try and contradict it because no-

body can control who it has reached. The famous aria about slander in Rossini's Barber of Seville fades into insignificance compared to what happens today – at a time when most Facebook users have never heard of Rossini and his opera.

I learned what culture is in 1984. German news magazine *Stern* published a detailed survey carried out by the Allensbach Institute. 'What do you think is definitely a part of culture?' – Goethe: 84.5%, Mozart: 80.2%, television: 10.6%. 'What do you like to do most in your free time? – Television: 66.9%. No sign of Goethe or Mozart. What conclusion can we draw? Culture is something that other people do! Let's look at a more serious, and unusual, definition of culture. In 1967 I was very impressed by the book *Les enfants de Barbiana. Lettre à une maîtresse d'école* (An Italian book translated into many languages, in English *Letter To A Teacher)*. The text was written by former pupils of the famous school of Barbiana in Italy. They say to the teacher: Pierino, the doctor's son, has plenty of time to read fables. But not Gianni. He slipped out of your hands at fifteen. Now he's in a factory. He doesn't need to know whether it was Jupiter who gave birth to Minerva or vice versa. His Italian literature course would have done better to include the contract of the metalworkers' union. Have you ever read it, Miss? Aren't you ashamed? It means life for half a million families. You keep telling yourselves how well educated you are. But you have all read the same books. Nobody ever asks you anything different.'

The students are right. Knowledge of society should be part of culture.

But where does it end? A physicist who attends a lot of exhibitions is said to be cultured. But a musician who knows nothing about science is not called uncultured. To put it another way, if our two grandsons (22 and 23 years old) come to visit and realise that we are listening to Mozart or Bach, they say: 'Your music again!' (our three granddaughters don't all say that). One of our grandsons has read the complete works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, but his literary culture is not his musical culture. He was delighted when Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize. Why shouldn't Bruce Springsteen – who I also like a lot – also be considered culture? For young people, he's also a bit of an antique! Music-lovers are all so different. It would be hard for me to wave my arms in the air for hours on end and clap my hands every other minute like at a good rock concert.

The biggest French festival of this kind is held every year in a small village in Brittany. Les Vieilles Charrues (The Old Ploughs) brings together 300,000 rock fans every year. Am I happy when I'm in the audience for 'my' music? In concert certainly, but less so at the opera house. I get annoyed when the audience bursts into applause after an aria, demonstrating that they are not really moved by the drama. A third kind of audience, which I have often admired on television, is the 20,000 people who turn up to the Waldbühne in Berlin. They are so carefree as they sit or lie on the grass with their children, all listening, all happy, enjoying all kinds of music, and particularly when the Berliner Philharmoniker are playing and they are allowed to whistle along to *Das ist die Berliner Luft* at the end.

In both France and Germany, the youngest children are looked after in crèches or day-care centres – or maybe not. In Paris, there are so few places that parents have to enrol their kids before they are born. A German court ruled that the state had to pay parents compensation if there was no place available for their child. That's certainly not the case in France! Can schoolchildren have a cosmopolitan attitude at the age of six or seven? The answer is yes, if you act like the towns of Edingen-Neckarhausen, near Mannheim, and Plouguerneau near Brest, at the western tip of Europe. They have been twinned for more than 50 years. Every year, several hundred children spend weeks or even months in their twin town. What a joy it is to hear the little schoolkids of Plouguerneau singing German songs! The next generation of the twinning project is in place, and the little ones will learn a lot about Germany and Europe from a young age.

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Our global mess What can be done to counter populism and extremism? For Brazilian economist Ladislau Dowbor, culture means more than enjoying Mozart and gasping at Picasso. When it comes to getting organised as a civilised society, access to knowledge is the key. He makes a plea for a radical policy of open access. *By Ladislau Dowbor*

In case you haven't noticed, our challenges are ridiculously simple. We are destroying this only planet we have, for the benefit of the happy few, and the resources to do something about it are lingering in tax havens and other speculative drains. It is not only climate change and the dramas it is generating – not everyone has read Wallace-Wells' *The Uninhabitable Earth*, I imagine – but the general pollution of fresh water, the forests being taken down, the soil being sterilised by monoculture, excessive tilling and chemistry, the destruction of biodiversity (we have lost 52% of vertebrates between 1970 and 2010), the disappearance of bees and insects in general, the drama of overfishing, the antibiotics in our food and the appearance of resistant bacteria and so forth – all this stimulates our imagination.

When my father was born – I am speaking of my father, not ancient history – in 1900, we were 1.5 billion humans. Since then we have reached 7.7 billion and are growing by 80 million a year. We actually are good at some things. But if we put together this population boom with the fact that the common ambition in our lives is to buy more stuff, it is obvious that we are rapidly heading for a wall. There is no soft landing ahead, it is a question of inertia. As a brilliant American scholar had it, imagining we can indefinitely expand our consumption in a limited planet can only be imagined by an idiot, or an economist. So far for the planet.

Coming to the happy few, Crédit Suisse has been generous with figures on inequality, and Oxfam with spreading the word in simple figures. The elephant in the room, obviously, is the fact that 1% of the richest families have more wealth than the next 99%. And 26 families have more than the 3.8 billion in the bottom half of our world society, as was presented in Davos. They must be hugely productive, for we could not imagine they earned all these fortunes without deserving them. Have you read *Unjust Deserts: How the Rich are Taking our Common Inheritance*, by Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly? Very stimulating.

And to save you the task of facing the 720 pages of Thomas Piketty's study on capital in our century, I come to the basic fact: putting your money in financial papers paid roughly

between 7% and 9% in the last decades, while production of goods and services, as calculated in world GDP figures, shows a progress of only between 2% and 2.5%. You will not be surprised that capital is going to where it can earn a lot with little effort, rather than the opposite. And kindly consider this: a billionaire locating his billion in papers that pay a mere 5% a year is earning 137,000 dollars a day. And next day, he will be earning interest on a billion plus 137,000 and so on. In finance, it is called the 'snowball effect'. And the fellow doesn't need to produce anything, just call the hedge fund or the people in Panama now and then, to hear how things are going. Well, this is a free and democratic world, and anyone can participate, unless of course they do not have the money to begin with, which is quite unfortunate, literally. It is, of course, the huge majority.

So, these are our dramas: the environmental challenge, and the social challenge. We must cease destroying our natural world, and we must organise social and economic inclusion of the billions left behind. We know what we should be doing. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) organised this very neatly into 17 goals and 169 objectives. The New York and Paris summits in 2015 were a success, and generated enthusiasm, until the third summit, in Addis Ababa, tried to find the corresponding financial resources. You guessed it – it was a fiasco. But Paris did manage to approve the decision to generate 100

billion dollars a year to face the environmental drama. I remember my first reaction was that it was quite a commitment.

But then I compared it with the tax haven figures. In 2012, according to the Tax Justice Network, we had between 21 and 32 trillion dollars thus tucked away. The Economist rounded it down to 20 trillion, but this does not change my argument here: 20 trillion is 200 times as much as the 100 billion so ambitiously proclaimed as a goal in Paris. Tax haven money basically consists of tax evasion, money laundering, corruption and speculation. The commitment to raise 100 billion needed the participation of heads of state of the whole world, with laudable objectives. Putting 200 times as much in tax havens needed just the banking backrooms generously called 'tax optimisation departments'. Just next to the compliance departments. This is all a joke. And a bad one. We know what we have to do to reduce the environmental disaster, we know what we have to do to reduce inequality, we know where the money is, and we hardly do anything about it. I call it the modern Bermuda triangle, and the term is quite appropriate here.

Our main challenge is not discovering what to do, or what we should be doing, but generating the decision process, or power architecture, which would allow us to get the reins back into our hands.

Decision-making cacophony

I imagine the Titanic crew spotting the iceberg. Should we avoid it on the left or on the right? Should we wake the captain? Reverse or accelerate to gain manoeuvrability? Let us discuss the matter. Add in politicians and a lot of lawyers, speaking different languages, and promoting conflicting interests, and you

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have our world decision-making process. We are not only in an environmental, social and financial mess, we are in a decision-making cacophony. We not only have the problems, but we lack the instruments to face them. That is the real question.

Let me take the Venezuelan example. According to your stomach acids, the so-called gut-feeling, you are either appalled at the Maduro policies, or indignant at one more oil-grabbing American initiative. There is a quite a bit of both, of course, but take a few steps back. Why did Chávez show up in the first place? The Venezuelan elite never moved a finger to invest in their country's economy or in their population's welfare. They lived comfortably off the oil export royalties. And 'comfortably' here is an understatement, of course. Their political support was in the US, not in Venezuela. As the population grew, and consciousness spread, governance deteriorated. The prosperity bubble burst, Chávez took over, and started using the oil resources to fund cooperatives, technology and so forth.

But in Latin America you cannot just put the elites aside, the more so if you have huge oil reserves and strategic American interests next door.

The elites fought back, as they do in Brazil, in Argentina and other countries. In a way, you cannot govern with them, because they serve themselves so largely, and you cannot govern without them, because they have strong teeth to cling to their privileges. Thus, the basic issue is not whom we like most, whatever the sophisticated political arguments we invent to ease our gut feelings. The issue is that you cannot govern a country with abysmal inequality. The poor of the world are not a mass of uninformed individuals anymore, and they get mad at the obvious absurdity of not being able to feed their children, or of not having access to decent health facilities, pro-

per education and so forth. The masses are not a docile sleepy dormant pool anymore. They are mad and vote for anyone who promises to hit out at the system, who presents himself as a political outsider. And the rich are powerful and connected enough to make sure that any attempt at economic democracy is routed. It is a stalemate.

This planet has become too small, and the rich and poor too close to each other, and the information too leaky for us to imagine we can keep this unequal world in peace. You if you are reading this paper, and probably have a university degree, please remember that any kid in Soweto or in the Rocinha favela in Rio has the same intelligence as you, but not only has no opportunities, but is conscious of being deprived of them. This doesn't work. Not with billions trying to have a decent life, while idiots in Wall Street show exhilarated enthusiasm in chanting 'greed is good!'. They also have university degrees, and squander money precisely like idiots should. This is spaceship earth, and promoting success as the capacity to rip-off riches, instead of promoting activities which contribute to our common interests, leads to a dead end. You cannot have a working democracy and free societies if you do not have basic inclusive policies and sustainable development.

Inequality is an evident ethical scandal. It is a scandal from the point of view of the poor of the world, because having 850 million going hungry, 2.1 billion with difficult access to safe drinking water, 4.5 billion with no access to sanitation, not to speak of the roughly 20,000 children who die every day from hunger and connected causes, is simply sickening. We produce 80 trillion dollars of goods and services a year in the world, which is equivalent to 3,500 dollars a month per four-member family. This may look ridiculous for the Kardashians, but 59% of the world's po-

pulation, 4.3 billion people, live on less than 5 dollars a day. They are not responsible for their destitution. On the other side of the ethical coin is the fact that most of the huge fortunes are not earned by contributing to world prosperity, but basically through financial accumulation of wealth. Parasite capitalism, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman calls it. Extractive capitalism, according to Marjorie Kelly, Executive Vice-President of the Democracy Collaborative (TDC).

It is also a political and social absurdity. We have highlighted the Venezuelan example, but the gilets jaunes in France belong to the same basic logic. Being poor in a rich country is devastating. In the US, basic workers' income has scarcely budged in two decades, and they voted not against Clinton, but against the system, and for someone who yelled they had the right to be pissed. Brexit promised the Brits they would 'take back control', whatever that means. The Poles were promised they would have Law and Justice. The Hungarians were promised protection from the barbarian hordes coming from poor and conflicted countries. So many Muslim populations were promised the rule of God, and who would argue that it would be worse than the rule of their corrupt elites? In the Philippines Duterte mobilised the masses with his promise to kill the drug traffickers responsible for their woes, the Thailand generals are promising order, we can even have elected dictatorships. The list can go on. The common denominator is that instead of responding to the needs of

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their populations, the elites mobilise against whatever enemy is more visible. Scapegoats, rather than the lack of economic and social policies, are presented as the culprits. In Brazil we have even reinvented communists. In politics, it seems that navigating on hate and fears is much more productive than fighting for the necessary policies.

Last but not least, maintaining and reproducing inequality is economically stupid. Ex-President Lula generated a host of inter-ministerial social and economic inclusion policies, which expanded consumption capacity at the bottom of the social pyramid. Tens of millions had for the first time three meals a day. Twenty million formal jobs were created. The destruction of the Amazon forest fell from 28 to 4 thousand square kilometres a year, still a scandal but a revolution by Brazilian terms. (It is back to 10,000 in 1019 with Bolsonaro). Life expectancy soared and child mortality fell radically. And behold, concentrating the economy on the well-being of families, rather than of banks, actually worked. The effectively productive companies thrived, demand was expanding. It did not provoke inflation, because companies had been working much below their capacity. Producers do not need ideological discourses on 'free markets', they need demand for their products and cheap credit for their investments.

Money at the bottom of the pyramid generates demand, which stimulates production, which in turn generates jobs. Unemployment fell to 4.8% in 2010. The World Bank called this 2003-2013 period 'The golden decade of Brazil'. No deficit appeared, for stronger demand generated more taxes on consumption, while more economic activity generated more taxes on production, and the reduction of unemployment reduced social support expenditures. The policy was good for the population, good for business, and good for public

accounts. Well, not good enough for financial elites, who brought the system down through a thinly disguised coup. They claimed they took over to fix the deficit. It has been four years now, and Brazilian GDP is back to the 2010 level. Lula's only proven crime is that he was going to win the 2018 election. The Intercept papers exposed the righteous farce. So much for democracy. In other times, we needed generals to topple a government. With the present widespread erosion of democracy, a captain proved up to the task. Well, yes, Cambridge Analytica and industrial-scale fake news helped. We presently have technology-supported elegant necktie dictatorships.

Looking for culprits? When you have a structurally dysfunctional system, you have no individual culprits, the culprit is precisely the system. Are the German managers at Volkswagen bandits or idiots? And at Deutsche Bank? Wells-Fargo? HSBC? British Petroleum? Billiton? Big pharma? Facebook? The common denominator here is quite clear: the effectively working philosophy in the big corporations is not satisfying the customer, but making the most for the financial systems which control them. The American economist Joseph Stiglitz is quite clear: we have to rewrite the rules. Felicia Wong, President of the Roosevelt Institute, shows there are no divine laws which would prevent corporations from organising around the triple bottom-line, being economically viable but also environmentally sustainable and socially just, instead of concentrating only on short-term maximisation of financial gains. The American futurist and evolutionary economist Hazel Henderson even shows we could have Ethical Markets.

There's the rub, so to speak. The corporate managers (CEOs, CFOs, CMOs etc.) have their salaries and bonuses linked to what the financial investors above them are paid. Thus, the so-called institutional investors, in the financial speculative world, have created a solidarity bond with the managers. Martin Wolf is the chief economist for the *Financial Times*. He is well-placed to provide the reality shock we all need: 'Widely shared increases in real incomes played a vital part in legitimising capitalism and stabilising democracy. Today, however, capitalism is finding it far more difficult to generate such improvements in prosperity. On the contrary, the evidence is of growing inequality and slowing productivity growth. This poisonous brew makes democracy intolerant and capitalism illegitimate.'

Let's face it. The huge world-scale corporations have no-one to respond to, but the amount of resources they control, as well as the financial, technological, and political clout they have gained, make it unrealistic for us to get back on track without their participation. They do make us busy and even happy with our smartphones, but nature and society are breaking down. And nature and society means our world. I am not speaking of distant grand-children, history has accelerated, in case you haven't noticed.

What is culture? It is certainly not just enjoying Mozart and gasping at Picasso. As I see it, it is basically creating rich, balanced and supportive relations with our fellow hu-

'In other times, we needed generals to topple a government. With the present widespread erosion of democracy, a captain proved up to the task. Well, yes, Cambridge Analytica and industrial-scale fake news helped. We presently have technology-supported elegant necktie dictatorships.'

man beings. We certainly are very good at inventing new technologies, but extremely limited when it comes to getting organised as a civilised society. No fatalism here. Just a few generations ago reducing our fellow men into slavery seemed quite civilised. Having kings and aristocrats with rights over common people based on divine legitimacy seemed natural. Colonialism was brought down only a generation ago. Women in Switzerland gained the right to vote in the sixties. All the leaders who fought against slavery, colonialism, women's rights and democratic causes were at their times considered dangerous extremists or ridiculed as was so often the case with feminists. I have the impression we are very slowly leaving the dark ages. But with this radically more complex society, where decisions are taken far from communities, and social responsibility is diluted in so many hierarchies, things got deeply messed up. We are rapidly losing control.

We have to face this structural change. Just as deep as the transition from rural to industrial societies is the present transition to a society where knowledge has become the main factor of production. Industry captains are being controlled by bankers and institutional investors, factories and their machines by the so-called platforms, debt and financial systems are becoming the main mechanism of appropriation of social surplus. And of course, global flows are messing up the national economic and cultural boundaries. National governments are partly helpless, and the general feeling of insecurity is politically very dangerous. Tampering in elections has become routine, torture and murder are back – they never left us, but we did not proclaim them as values, as we do presently in Brazil.

And yet, with so much technology and scientific progress, and so much accumulated wealth, we do have a wide horizon of possibili-ties. First of all, we must reach out to despair: ensuring basic income for everyone is not only cheap, but when money reaches the poor it multiplies, stimulating local and national economies through demand, generating positive returns. Better than building walls. Second, we must expand access to the main production factor, knowledge, through overall open access policies. This also does not generate additional costs, as US sociologist Jeremy Rifkin has shown so well. Patents, copyrights and other forms of paywalls should be the exception, not the rule. And of course, control of finance will have to be democratised, so that money, presently just bits on computers, is brought back to its basic function, funding what is necessary. Am I dreaming? Certainly not, I am trying to avoid the nightmare. And the changes are too deep, the challenges too dramatic, for us to be content with cosmetics.

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Polarisation, identity and how it all went wrong

We are stuck in our echo chambers and polarised by ever-more radical campaigns. According to the author, nostalgia for the 'good old days' in Europe and the US ignores the negative consequences of exploitation and colonialism that are still with us today. *By Bernd Reiter*

Two American academics and public intellectuals have recently published books on the increased polarisation of many contemporary Western societies: Francis Fukuyama wrote *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* and Kwame Anthony Appiah published *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity: Creed, Country, Class, Culture*. Both books received widespread attention and were reviewed in the *New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books*, America's top highbrow media outlets, thus reaching a broad audience and cementing the image of both authors as important and influential public intellectuals.

Appiah is a philosopher and, in good philosophical tradition, argues that such labels as nation, race, religion, and class are just that: labels that do not correspond to reality. In reality, no discrete and neatly bound nations and races exist. Belonging to a class is equally ephemeral and non-essential. Appiah, who was born in Ghana but lives in New York City, argues for the need to embrace a more 'cosmopolitan impulse' – an impulse that he has certainly embraced ever since he moved to New York. In the final analysis, Appiah finds that adhering to false and narrow identities undermines our ability to live together as human beings who share more than contemporary identity politics would have us believe.

Dismanting falsehood and lies

Appiah's book is written in the tradition of dismantling falsehood and lies so that we can, at last, face reality as it really is. This is a theme that dwells in the old European tradition of the Enlightenment, which found in Jürgen Habermas its latest and most forceful defendant. Reason and rationality, so goes the narrative, will eventually prevail in human affairs. It is the job of enlightened scholars to detect myths and dismantle them by ex-

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posing them to the light of scientific reason. This approach is simultaneously idealistic, arrogant, and naïve because it believes that evil and irrationality cannot withstand the strong forces of reason (idealistic), while also believing that European, white-male dialogic culture contains the cure for the world (naïve and arrogant).

It is hardly surprising that a cosmopolitan scholar like Anthony Appiah embraces such a Eurocentric understanding of history in light of the way that philosophy is taught in colleges and universities around the globe: as a highly biased and Eurocentric approach to knowledge production, reducing the search for wisdom to the very narrow Western tradition, without questioning how Western this tradition really is and what other non-Western traditions should contribute to the universal quest for knowledge.

The political scientist Francis Fukuyama approaches the same issue not so much from an Enlightenment angle, but more in the style of a neo-conservative conspiracy theorist. For him, it is the political left that has unduly focused its attention too much on special rights, thus inspiring not just gay rights, but ultimately also white nationalism. Fukuyama believes this has led average white Americans to feel left out and that the same applies to the average European citizen.

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While Appiah does what he was trained to do by asking for ultimate causes and hidden truths, Fukuyama's approach tends to offer amorphous and impossible-to-prove theories such as a universal thymos (Greek for the human desire for recognition) to argue that, ultimately, leftist and multicultural social movements and minorities are the ones to blame for the current divisiveness that characterises many contemporary societies.

False labels

While it is clear that labels such as race, ethnicity, and nation are false in the sense Appiah proclaims, the problems only start there. Why is it that so many people fall for these false labels? Why are we so divided? It is true that entrenched and essentialised identities, in Appiah's terms, are indeed a problem of our contemporary European and north American realities – but are they the main problem that explains the emergence of contemporary polarisation and division? Going against both Appiah and Fukuyama, I venture to say: no.

I believe Appiah's and Fukuyama's approaches are both myopic in that they refuse to consider the broader, historical moment facing Western Europe and the United States and instead choose to focus on what is immediately in front of them. I would like to suggest that identity politics, multiculturalism, LGBT rights, and movements such a Black Lives Matter are not the cause but the result of longer trends of historical social change. I suggest that nasty white nationalism in the USA,

neo-Nazism in Germany, and widespread anti-immigrant sentiments and actions everywhere in Europe and the USA are better understood as a political backlash to the many advances that minorities and historically disadvantaged people and groups have achieved over recent years. Much of the current racist reaction in the United States was a response to having a black president – so much so that the Tea Party, one of the central outgrowths of this movement of political resentment, no longer exists under Trump.

Merkel's asylum policy

In Germany particularly, the very progressive asylum policy that Angela Merkel pushed through in response to the Syrian refugee crisis must be seen as the cause for the racist responses we are currently witnessing in Chemnitz and other, similar, places where neo-Nazis are dreaming of a comeback.

Having an Asian-American intellectual and a Ghanaian-born scholar support the idea that the very movements that fight for equality and human rights are the ones to blame for the current polarisation is, of course, a rare feat for the xenophobic, nationalistic, misogynistic, and racist right who find it difficult to recruit any serious academics to their cause.

The bigger questions that both these authors leave unaddressed about the polarisation of today's societies require a more historical view – different from that offered by Fukuyama when he detects a theme of Erlebnis vs. Erfahrung (sic.) in Rousseau and those he influenced.

I suggest considering that many of the nasty reactionary racists and anti-immigrant activists are 'old losers'. That is to say, they are part of a generation who have struggled to keep up with the rapid advances in technolo-

gy and job requirements of the past decades. They have indeed lost much of their social status and esteem – both internal and external. It is also worth noting that the truly nasty character of this group is not so much demonstrated by their anti-immigrant rhetoric and action, but by their anti-refugee and anti-asylum stance. It is one thing to debate whether previously unknown others should settle in a community, but another thing entirely to deny refugees fleeing civil war shelter at a time when their lives are threatened. All too often, these themes are muddled – mostly for strategic reasons – by the very same people who advocate 'Germany first', 'America first', 'Hungary first', 'Poland first' and so on.

Old losers

Surveys of Brexit supporters clearly highlight this demographic fraction as the most reactionary and resentful – and with reason, as a fast moving world that discards old people and those unable to compete indeed seems to transform older generations from being respected elders who maintain memories and offer the wisdom gained from a long life into dead weight that is a burden on our private and public coffers. Can minorities, immigrants, and progressive social movements be blamed for that? Hardly. It rather seems that capitalism is the central culprit here, as good old Karl Marx already realised in 1848: under capitalism, everything solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.

Of course, 'old losers' face other challen-

ges. Whites in the US are told by the media that soon they will become a minority in the USA, which for many seems to stir up considerable anxiety – an anxiety that probably reflects the fear that those minorities who have been systematically mistreated by the white majority might finally get a chance to get back at them. While there is no evidence that Latinos and blacks in the United States have such a mindset, whites are keenly aware that blacks have been subject to systematic genocide, enslavement, mistreatment, legal and illegal segregation, rape, and all kinds of imaginable and unimaginable abuse in the hands of whites, who, for 300 years constructed their wealth on the shoulders of black slaves who could be lynched in the most abhorrent way if they so much as dared to look at a white person.

So white anxiety, at least in the United States, is a historical anxiety – one that befalls those people who have missed the bus and fear that 400 years of systematic injustice will soon catch up with them. It is also the agony of a beast that is drawing its last breath. Whites will indeed soon become a minority, similar to other minorities in the United States and their absolute grip on political power is dying with them.

As urbanisation and access to education steadily advances, the proverbial rural 'deplorables' characterised by Hillary Clinton in her unsuccessful presidential campaign are indeed on the wrong side of history – and they know it, or at least they feel it. We should not

be surprised if these sections of the population who cannot compete, who receive no recognition or esteem from society and others, join up and form a movement. Calling them out as 'deplorables' will not help this situation.

There are, of course, also young deplorables, who feel equally left behind and jealous at the advances of others – particularly if those others look different from themselves or speak another language. Statistical projections, as far as we can trust them, show that millennials in the United States risk becoming the first generation in modern US history to earn less than their parents. This, to many, is quite anxiety-provoking. We are also told that US millennials have an average personal debt of US $33,000, mostly composed of student loans. Many of them think, and they are probably correct, that they will never be able to pay off their debt during their lifetime.

Societies of rights and entitlements

Like the old losers, many of them tend to blame their problems on others – and, once again, particularly if and when these others are non-white and/or come from somewhere else. Why? I fear that instead of conjuring something as mystical as Fukuyama's thymus, there is a much simpler explanation: it is easier to blame others for one's own misfortune. Doing so also offers emotional relief as it channels resentment away from oneself to another, thus contributing to one's own emotional wellbeing. It is also *à la mode* in socie-

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ties that define themselves more and more as societies of rights and entitlements – and less and less as societies of responsibilities toward others. More and more people in 'advanced' Western societies, particularly the younger generations, feel that society owes them something; that they have the right to happiness and fulfilment – without ever asking what they need to contribute for these rights to be upheld and ensured.

Let me be very clear: in former slave-holding societies, such as the United States of America, whites as a group have benefited from over 300 years of exclusive all-white affirmative action policies. They have enjoyed exclusive access to wealth, property, literacy, and social standing within their society. It is high time and an absolute moral imperative for all those who have suffered from enslavement, discrimination, misrecognition, and systematic mistreatment to gain equal treatment, respect, and an equal opportunity to succeed – and hence at times to win – in the very competitive systems they find themselves in today.

To achieve justice today requires a systematic undoing of the inequalities of the past so that all people can face each other as equals. Blaming those who stand up for their equal treatment for the current polarisation and division in many societies means blaming the victims. It is an undignified thing to do.

'The good old days'

In the European context, of course, today's resentments are not based on the enslavement of people who share the same living space, but on something very similar: the 'good old days' for Europe when 'everyone knew their place' and social, cultural and economic hierarchies went unchallenged. Here too, European colo-

nial powers benefited from an international division of labour that was entirely based on the artificial invention of 'race'. White Europeans were the colonisers and beneficiaries and different non-whites were the colonised, condemned to suffer under the systems put in place by European powers to oppress them. The colonised laboured for free or, later, almost for free in order to ensure the accumulation of wealth in the global north.

Colonialism, by most accounts, ended in the 1990s with the last colonies finally achieving independence (Hong Kong and Macau), but in many ways 'coloniality' prevails to this day. Not only have some former colonies never achieved independence (think Azores, Canary Islands, Ceuta, Melilla, Gibraltar, Greenland, Faroe Islands, French Polynesia, French Guyana, French Martinique, French Guadeloupe, Dutch Sint Maarten, Dutch Aruba, Dutch Curacao, Dutch Bonaire and Sint Eustasius, the US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, to name only those that come to mind); those countries that have achieved independence remain under the tutelage and indirect control of either their former colonisers or the corporations controlled by them.

Colonising nations did not allow their colonies to grow and develop national markets. Once market control and dominance was established worldwide those same former colonies were forced into a competitive world market where they have zero chance of success or recording the occasional win over their former colonial masters, thus making this situation similar to the one that former

slaves experience today in former slave-holding societies. Resentful Europeans believe that in the 'good old days' former slaves and colonials knew their place and stayed in the places that Europeans have exploited for centuries. Now that some of them have found the means to come to those places that are largely responsible for their own country's misery, the good old days are over.

Unearned privilege

Europeans are finally facing the kinds of injustice and misery that they have sown around the world over the last five centuries. Most immigrants simply come to work in a system where work can actually lead to a decent life, a life with dignity, but they are faced by those who have never questioned their own merits, their own contributions, and the flip side of their own prosperity. May the best women get the job – this now fuels a fear that, without the unfair burdens of racism, hetero-normativity, chauvinism, and sexism, the traditional winners might not win any more. That maybe those others are better – better trained, better equipped, more willing, and more eager to succeed in the very systems created by the global north: competitive market systems. This is the kind of anxiety that breeds resentment and concerted action to defend unearned privilege.

What are potential solutions to the today's problems of polarisation and division? One easy solution, following the reasoning here, would be: the good old days are over. Make

your peace with it. They were never good for the majority of people. It is time for those who always won in the rigged games of slavery and colonialism to finally lose once in a while. Justice would actually require losing systematically for the next 300 or 400 years until all those undue and unearned privileges constructed during the 'good old days' are undone. Get over it.

Or, more constructively: let us all make an effort to bring the full consequences of slavery and colonialism into everybody's consciousness through educational and cultural programmes so that, at least, those who now might lose once in a while understand why this is happening to them. Maybe this will help them to find it within themselves to accept it more readily. I actually doubt that knowledge leads to an acceptance of the loss of unearned privileges, but I also think it is worth a try.

No amount of nationalism or patriotism can undo the ills and disadvantages created in the past. All they can do is continue to shield the people who have reaped the benefits of yesterday's wrongs from having to face up to their own responsibility.

It requires taking on responsibility, however, to face the heavy legacies of the past. This is a political responsibility and it cannot thrive and develop under most current political systems, where political responsibilities are passed on to elected officials and political elites who then exercise political responsibility on behalf of the people – and only insofar as it earns them re-election – while the peo-

'The good old days are over. Make your peace with it. They were never good for the majority of people.'

ple insist on having rights and entitlements. Responsibility requires becoming political subjects (again) and doing politics instead of leaving it to politicians. Political responsibility is a responsibility for others and for the community – not the selfish defence of unearned privilege that characterises our current systems of political representation. Political responsibility also has legitimate limits – the limits of community, because we can only feel responsible for a limited number of people.

So if we want to fight against the much bemoaned polarisation of today's advanced capitalist countries, I suggest moving towards more direct and involved political systems where normal citizens get actively involved in political decision-making, take on responsibility for others, and are able to make political decisions for their own communities. Paradoxically, the path to greater solidarity with others requires more localisation.

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Maximising mistrust At the heart of the crisis of trust in politics, which is not only affecting Europe and the West, is the public's lack of trust in the political elite. Their proclaimed interest in the common good is viewed as mere cant when their every action is seen as being motivated by personal interest or dictated by lobbyists. *By Branko Milanović*

There is little doubt that the western world is going through a serious political crisis, which can be best described as a crisis of trust in its political institutions and governments. Two things often seem, though, to be overlooked. First, the crisis of trust in institutions is not limited to the west – it is general. The crisis in the west just receives more attention because western media are dominant and because it was assumed that economically more advanced liberal societies should not suffer such a disconnect between rulers and ruled.

Secondly, the crisis is longstanding: it goes further back in time than the 2008 financial crash and the malaise created by globalisation. Arguably, its source is the impressive and somewhat unexpected success of introducing capitalist relations into all domains of life,

including into our private lives and, importantly, into politics.

The neoliberal revolutions of the early 1980s, associated with the incumbent US president, Ronald Reagan, and UK premier, Margaret Thatcher – not forgetting the Chinese 'paramount leader', Deng Xiaoping – were supported by revolutions in economic thinking, such as public-choice theory and libertarianism, which explicitly began to treat the political space as an extension of everyday economics. Politicians were seen as just another set of entrepreneurs who, instead of taking their skills and risk-taking preferences to banking or software development, moved into politics. It was thought normal that goal-directed, self-interested rational behaviour need not be limited to the economic sphere, it was more general and embraced politics as well.

This view of the world was amazingly vindicated. Not only did politicians often behave in a self-serving manner (which perhaps they had often done in the past too), but such behaviour began to be expected of them. Not necessarily approved of, but expected in the sense that it was not considered odd or unusual that politicians would first and foremost think of their own financial interests.

They could cash out on the connection and power they had acquired in office by finding lucrative jobs in the private sector (José Manuel Barroso, Tony Blair, Jim Kim from the World Bank). They could give multi-million-dollar

speeches to corporate moguls (Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton). They could sit on a plethora of company boards.

Some, coming from the private sector (such as Silvio Berlusconi, or former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra), would openly advertise their political parties as clientelistic organisations: if you have a problem and want it solved, join the party. On the streets of Milan, I remember seeing such an advertisement by Berlusconi's Forza Italia – a movement whose lack of ideology, aside from economic self-interest, was reflected in its banal name, borrowed from football fans supporting Italy's national team.

The list of politicians who took their own (and their supporters') money-making to be the normal function of *homo economicus* once in office is long. We know some of its most prominent members, often by failure – when their activities went a bit too far or when they were unable fully to hide them. We know them through financial scandals and, at times, jail terms. For example, two out of the last three Brazilian presidents are in prison for bribery. All five former Peruvian presidents have been jailed for corruption, are under investigation, or are fugitives from justice. The daughter of Uzbekistan's late president has been imprisoned for multi-billion-dollar embezzlement schemes. The shadow of prosecution hangs over the former Angolan president's daughter, and chair of its state oil company, the richest woman in Africa, were she to return to the country.

In Europe, the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy has been subject to investigation in connection with a number of financial scandals, the most serious arising from reports of illicit financial support for his 2007 election campaign by the late Libyan dictator Muammar Gadhafi. The former German chancellor Helmut Kohl had to resign as honorary chair of the Christian Democratic Union in 2000 after revelations of secret party bank accounts over which he presided.

The US president, Donald Trump, has refused to disclose his multi-year tax returns and failed to put his business dealings into a blind trust to insulate him from external inducements. His Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, has been able to parlay political power into wealth way beyond his income.

Just another line of business

Politicians, east and west, north and south, have thus fully committed themselves to neoliberal 'economic imperialism', the idea that all human activities are driven by the desire for material success, that success in money-making is the indicator of our social worth and that politics is just another line of business.

'Not necessarily approved of, but expected in the sense that it was not considered odd or unusual that politicians would first and foremost think of their own financial interests. They could cash out on the connection and power they had acquired in office by finding lucrative jobs in the private sector.'

The problem with this approach, when applied to the political space, is that it breeds cynicism among the population, because the official lingo of politicians has to be centred on public interest and public service – yet the reality, and the ideological justification for that reality, are entirely different. The discrepancy is, moreover, easy to spot. Every government official then becomes seen as a hypocrite who is telling us that he is there because he is interested in the public good, whereas it is clear that he is in politics to line his pockets now or in the future – or, if already rich, to make sure no adverse political decisions are taken against his 'empire'.

Would it be so strange, then, if no trust were evinced by anything politicians say? If their every action were seen as being motivated by personal interest or dictated by lobbyists? Actually, both the market revolution of the 1980s and the dominant economic paradigm tell us that it should be precisely so. And that that is for the best.

The mistrust of governing elites is, therefore, due to the extremely successful projection of the capitalist mode of behaviour and operations into all spheres of human activity, including politics.

It just happens that, if one does so, one can no longer expect that people will believe that policies are driven by the ideal of public service.

The problem has no easy solution. To regain trust, politics needs to be subtracted from the fields where normal capitalist rules hold. But to do so requires politicians to re-ject the standard set of values implicit in the capitalist system – maximising one's financial interest. How and where are we to find such people? Should we, like Tibetans, look for the new leaders in faraway places untainted by hyper-commercialisation? Since this does not seem even remotely likely, I think we need to get adjusted to the idea of continued mistrust, and a wide chasm between the political elite and most of the population.

This could make politics very bumpy for a long time. It is the apogee of capitalism that is responsible for the bumpiness, and for our inevitable political malaise.

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The many ideas of Europe

For Indian writer and essayist Pankaj Mishra, no one continent or country can be the sole engine of global history. Europe's vision of itself as the embodiment of reason and freedom belongs in the past. Such flattering self-perceptions are drenched in blood and any claims to moral and political pre-eminence are at best provincial. *By Pankaj Mishra*
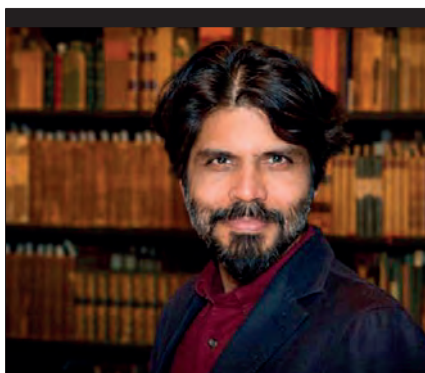
My book From the Ruins of Empire is not an account of events in Europe. It is actually set in India, China, Egypt, Iran and Turkey, and other countries subjugated by European powers in the 19th century. The book's leading figures are Asian intellectuals, writers and activists. It could be asked: in what way does learning about them advance Europe's self-understanding? One way of answering this question is to say that Europe has always been present in my own self-understanding—and that of hundreds of millions of Asians.

Though born in India, in a home where English was not spoken, my own ambition to be a writer was shaped by European books. Some of these were English. Many of them happened to be German, in English translation, such as Thomas Mann and Her-mann Hesse, and, later, Robert Musil and Hermann Broch. Germany's traumatic experience as a late modernizer – and the sociological insights generated by the work of Max Weber, Georg Simmel and the Frankfurt School – were, and remain, crucial in understanding many of the social and political aspects of the Indian nation state: its many economic crises, political volatility, and the widespread bourgeois and corporate longing today for an authoritarian leader. A decade ago, I embarked on a book about the Buddha. The memory of the man and his ideas had faded in India even as large parts of Asia grew receptive to them. My initial guides were Schopenhauer and Nietzsche who wrote often and mostly approvingly of the Buddhism. I knew these men as great European philosophers; the great prestige of their reputations validated and deepened my interest in an Indian philosophy largely forgotten in India. I also benefitted a great deal from the scholarship of German Indologists: Max Muellar, Hermann Oldenburg and Paul Deussen.

It may seem strange that in the late 20th century, an Indian writer should require the

help of 19th century German thinkers in an exploration of his own historical and intellectual tradition. But it was during the course of writing and researching a book about Buddhism that I came across another attempt at self-understanding that was also dependent on philosophies and literatures in another part of the world. I refer of course to the German fascination early in the 19th century with India, which was deeply connected to the project of German national self-determination.

Many of this period's greatest thinkers, from Herder to Friedrich Schlegel, sought to establish a German identity independent of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. They hoped for Germany to regenerate itself and the rest of Europe, and this attempt brought together many strains of thought – Romanticism, nationalism, and Indology. Indian religions with their pantheistic quality became attractive to Germans postulating the spiritual unity of the world and seeking to critique the dominant French culture of the Enlightenment.

The 'Indo-Germans' as many of these thinkers came to be called, sought explanations for the migrations of Germanic people in Indian texts; they connected German idealism to Hindu philosophy, and poetic inspiration for their Romantic outpourings

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in Sanskrit literature. His reaction against French Classicism led Friedrich Schlegel, the father of Indological Studies, to such claims as this one: 'Everything, yes, everything,' he said, 'has its origins in India.' Despite such exaggerations, German translations and interpretations of Indian philosophy helped make the latter became part of the larger wisdom of mankind in the 19th century; they greatly influenced the American Transcendentalists, Emerson and Thoreau, who were seeking to develop a new vision of the New World.

Romantic outpourings

Not all of this kind of self-understanding through the study of other traditions was benign. We know that German Indology, with its explicit obsession with racial origins, was to become complicit in the criminal project of National Socialism. But we have not paid much attention to a much more influential kind of self-understanding in which Europeans appear as a master race tasked with civilising the rest of the world – a vision that was derived through a denigration of other societies and cultures but has enjoyed a surprising degree of legitimacy to this day. I refer of course to the enduring image of countries like India and China defined by Hegel's dialectical system, the first ambitious attempt to describe the whole of human history, in which Asia was quickly relegated to the ranks of the hopelessly backward.

Hegel's view, in which European men

make the modern world and set the modalities and measures of progress, set a tone. Contempt for Asia's religion and culture became commonplace among the globalising European elite, replacing the early Orientalist interest in it. For even the famously liberal John Stuart Mill, India was a backward society, incapable of self-rule, which needed a period of European dominance.

Flattering self-perceptions

The swift expansion of British, French, and Dutch empires across Asia, Africa, and Latin America seemed to attest European claims to moral, intellectual and political pre-eminence. Such flattering self-perceptions ought not to have survived Europe's bloody fratricidal conflicts of the early 20th century. Yet recent years have witnessed a new kind of popular self-understanding in which Europe and the United States appear as the perpetual guarantors of individual liberty, and the repositories of reason, freedom and democracy.

Many of these confused self-images emerge from Western Europe's perennially fraught desire to define itself by marginalising or demonising its 'other': Jewish, Communist or Muslim. Early in the 20th century, a part of Europe determined to identify itself as Christian expunged the long centuries of Islam from its past. Spain's greatest modern thinkers, José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unanumo, presented Islam as an unfortunate irruption in the history of Europe, vigorously denying any Arab contributions to European culture. This instinct has grown stronger in the age of mass immigration from Muslim countries. Wishing to pin down Muslims as Europe's unassimilable 'other,' the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy actually claimed that France's roots were 'essentially Christian – as close to blasphemy you can get in a country that has claimed to be the product of the secular Enlightenment.

The idea of Europe as the embodiment of reason and freedom – an ideological notion that hardened during the long standoff between the so-called 'free' world and totalitarian Communism – was never and cannot be shared wholeheartedly by Asians. For them there is no one 'idea' of Europe. There are many 'ideas of Europe,' which include, in Asian eyes at least, imperialism as well as liberal democracy, racial and religious intolerance as well as individual liberties and struggle for justice. Many of us in South Asia, or East Asia, where the hatreds of the Second World War have come dangerously alive, can only marvel today at the peace between Germany and France after centuries of bloody conflict. But we cannot avert our eyes from the continent's longstanding political and moral challenge: how to accommodate social and cultural difference.

Europe's record on this score was discouraging well before the atrocities of the early 20th century. As my book shows, Europe's most eager imitators in Asia – Anglophile Indians or Francophile Vietnamese – quickly found themselves up against racial and

religious barriers. Permanent inferiority seemed the fate of even the Japanese, the quickest and keenest among Asians to adopt the ostensibly superior and rational laws and institutions of European civilisation. More recently, the Turks have known the bitter failure of non-Europeans trying to break into Europe's racially exclusive club.

The rise of far-right parties today hints that Europe is struggling again to cope with its minorities, many of these originally brought as cheap labour from countries it once ruled. It has been bewildering, and dispiriting, to see not only right-wing extremists but also many liberal politicians and intellectuals in Europe flirt with a majoritarian nationalism, recoiling from what by Asian standards at least seems an extremely limited experience of social diversity and political extremism.

A paradoxical moment

We stand today at an oddly paradoxical moment. The effects and consequences of globalisation, of unifying the world economically and intellectually, are clearer than ever before, but it has provoked intellectual

'We stand today at an oddly paradoxical moment. The effects and consequences of globalisation, of unifying the world economically and intellectually, are clearer than ever before, but it has provoked intellectual bewilderment and arrogance rather than clarity, modesty and insight.'

bewilderment and arrogance rather than clarity, modesty and insight. Britain, facing irreversible decline and secession, is as sterilely obsessed as ever with its great victories over Germany in the two world wars. Meanwhile, a rising Asia is producing its own partial narratives; the leaders of a rising China invokes a 'century of humiliation' by Western powers while asserting their power locally and internationally.

The political assertiveness of Islamic countries as well as the rise of Chinese nationalism has already exposed the interconnected but highly unequal world that European imperialism made. Certainly, the attempts to define the European self by violently detaching it from the other, and by setting up oppositions – civilised and backward, coloniser and colonised – cannot succeed in an age where the other also possesses the power to write and make history.

The ground has been cleared for more complex ways of self-understanding, shorn of self-congratulation, nationalist myth-making and racial triumphalism. Let me end by quoting a great European thinker, Paul Valéry, who sensed early in the 20th century that, contrary to what Hegel thought, no one continent or country could be the sole engine of global history: 'The system of causes,' he wrote, 'controlling the fate of every one of us, and now extending over the whole globe, makes it reverberate throughout at every shock; there are no more questions that can be settled by being settled at one point. 'Nothing,' he asserted, '*can ever happen again without the whole world's taking a hand'* (Valéry's italics).

If we accept Valery's insight, then our self-understanding must include all those societies and peoples who seem remote and disengaged from us: pre-modern as well as modern, Asian and African as well as European. With its account of shared experiences, dilemmas and conversations across political and geographical borders, *From the Ruins of Empire* was conceived as a modest invitation to Asians as well as Europeans to think beyond the ghettos of nationalist and imperial history that most of them find ourselves in. It is a fact that our self-understanding in such an intricately interconnected world – whether we are in Europe, Asia and Latin America – has to necessarily grow less parochial and more cosmopolitan; it has to keep up with our identities, which are always in flux, and open-ended.

Pankaj Mishra is an Indian essayist, literary critic and author. He gained international renown with his book *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana*, a sociological study of small-town India, and as an essayist for the *New York Review of Books*. His book *Age of Anger: A History of The Present* was published in 2017. He was awarded the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding for his 2014 book *From the Ruins of Empire.*

From figure of fun to terrifying autocrat The hip-sounding term that the mainstream intelligentsia chose to use for the retro lust for totality was 'populism'. According to the Turkish author, this term conceals the right-wing ideological content of the movements in question and ignores the troubling question of the shady desire of I to melt into We. 'Populism' portrays the twisted charismatic leaders who are mobilising the masses. *By Ece Temelkuran*

It doesn't matter if Trump or Erdoğan is brought down tomorrow, or if Nigel Farage had never become a leader of public opinion. The millions of people fired up by their message will still be there, and will still be ready to act upon the orders of a similar figure. And unfortunately, as we experienced in Turkey in a very destructive way, even if you are determined to stay away from the world of politics, the minions will find you, even in your own personal space, armed with your own set of values and ready to hunt down anybody who doesn't resemble themselves. It is better to acknowledge – and sooner rather than later – that this is not merely something imposed on societies by their often absurd leaders, or limited to digital covert operations by the Kremlin; it also arises from the grassroots. The malady of

our times won't be restricted to the corridors of power in Washington or Westminster. The horrifying ethics that have risen to the upper echelons of politics will trickle down and multiply, come to your town and even penetrate your gated community. It's a new zeitgeist in the making. This is a historic trend, and it is turning the banality of evil into the evil of banality. For though it appears in a different guise in every country, it is time to recognise that what is occurring affects us all.

'So, what can we do for you?' The woman in the audience brings her hands together compassionately as she asks me the question; her raised eyebrows are fixed in a delicate balance between pity and genuine concern. It is September 2016, only two months after the failed coup attempt, and I am at a London event for my book *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy*. Under the spotlight on the stage I pause for a second to unpack the invisible baggage of the question: the fact that she is seeing me as a needy victim; her confidence in her own country's immunity from the political malaise that ruined mine; but most of all, even after the Brexit vote, her unshaken assumption that Britain is still

in a position to help anyone. Her inability to acknowledge that we are all drowning in the same political insanity provokes me. I finally manage to calibrate this combination of thoughts into a not-so-intimidating response: 'Well, now I feel like a baby panda waiting to be adopted via a website.'

This is a moment in time when many still believe that Donald Trump cannot be elected, some genuinely hope that the Brexit referendum won't actually mean Britain leaving the European Union, and the majority of Europeans assume that the new leaders of hate are only a passing infatuation. So my bitter joke provokes not even a smile in the audience. I have already crossed the Rubicon, so why not dig deeper? 'Believe it or not, whatever happened to Turkey is coming towards you. This political insanity is a global phenomenon. So actually, what can I do for you?'

What I decided I could do was to draw together the political and social similarities in different countries to trace a common pattern of rising right-wing populism. In order to do this I have used stories, which I believe are not only the most powerful transmitters of human experience, but also natural penicillin for diseases of the human soul. I identified seven steps the populist leader takes to transform himself from a ridiculous figure to a seriously terrifying autocrat, while corrupting his country's entire society to its bones. These steps are easy to follow for would-be dictators, and therefore equally easy to miss for those who would oppose them, unless we learn to read the warning signs. We cannot afford to lose time focu-

sing on conditions unique to each of our countries; we need to recognise these steps when they are taken, define a common pattern, and find a way to break it – together. In order to do this, we'll need to combine the experience of those countries that have already been subjected to this insanity with that of Western countries whose stamina has not yet been exhausted. Collaboration is urgently required, and this necessitates a global conversation.

It's now May 2017, and I am first in London, then Warsaw, talking about *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy*, telling different audiences the story of how real people took over my country politically and socially, strangling all the others who they deemed unreal. People nod with concern, and every question-and-answer session starts with the same question: 'Where the hell did these real people come from?' They recognise the lexicon, because the politicised and mobilised provincial grudge has announced its grand entrance onto the global stage with essentially the same statement in several countries: 'This is a movement, a new movement of real people beyond and above all political factions.' And now many want to know who these real people are, and why this movement has invaded the high table of politics. They speak of it as of a natural disaster, predictable only after it unexpectedly takes place. I am

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reminded of those who, each summer, are surprised by the heatwave in Scandinavia, and only then recall the climate-change news they read the previous winter. I tell them this 'new' phenomenon has been with us, boiling away, for quite some time.

In July 2017, a massive iceberg broke off from Antarctica. For several days the news channels showed the snow-white monster floating idly along. It was the majestic flagship of our age, whispering from screens around the world in creaking ice language: 'This is the final phase of the age of disintegration. Everything that stands firm will break off, everything will fall to pieces.' It wasn't a spectre but a solid monster telling the story of our times: that from the largest to the smallest entity on planet earth, nothing will remain as we knew it. The United Nations, that huge, impotent body created to foster global peace, is crumbling, while the smallest unit, the soul, is decomposing as it has never been before. A single second can be divided up into centuries during which the wealthy few prepare uncontaminated living spaces in which to live longer while tens of thousands of children in Yemen die of cholera, a pre-twentieth-century disease.

The silent scream of the iceberg

The iceberg was silently screaming: 'The centre cannot hold'. The progressive movements that sprang up all around the world, from the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999 to the 2011 uprising in Cairo's Tahrir Square, were in many re-

spects a response to these fractured times. In a world where more people are talking, but fewer are being heard, they wanted to tell the rest of humanity, through their bodies, that regardless of our differences we can, and indeed must, come together to find collective answers to our age of disintegration, otherwise everything will fall apart. They demanded justice and dignity. They demanded that the world realise that a counter-movement is necessary to reverse the global course of events. They showed us that retreat is not the only response to the global loss of hope. Their answer to disintegration was to create new, invigorating, temporary and miniature models of loose collectives in squares around the world.

In several different languages they responded to the famous words of W.B. Yeats with the message that, if people unite, the centre can hold. As time passed, however, many of these progressive movements ended up suppressed, marginalised or swallowed back into the conventional political system. For several understandable reasons they couldn't accomplish what they started – not yet. However, their voice was clearly heard when they announced globally that representative democracy (abused by financial institutions and stripped of social justice) was undergoing its biggest crisis since the Second World War. Today we are witnessing the response to similar fears of an entirely different mass of people, one with a more limited vocabulary, smaller dreams for the world, and less faith in the collective survival of humanity.

They too say that they want to change the status quo, but they want to do it to build a world in which they are among the lucky few who survive under the leadership of a strong man. It is no coincidence that 'wall', whether literal or virtual, has become the

watchword among rising right-wing political movements. 'Yes, the world is disintegrating,' they say, 'and we, the real people, want to make sure we're on the sunny side of the dividing wall.' It is not that they want to stand by and watch babies die in the Mediterranean, it is just that they do not want to die as well. What we are hearing, as it carries from the provinces to the big cities, is the survival cry of those whose fear of drowning in the rising sea of disintegration trumps their interest in the survival of others. And so, ruthlessly, they move.

Political movements are promises of transition from actuality to potentiality – unlike political parties, which must operate as part of actuality, playing the game but standing still. This is why, from Turkey to the United States, including the most developed countries with their seemingly strong democratic institutions, such as France, the UK and Germany, we have seen people assemble behind relentless, audacious populist leaders, in order to move together and attack the actuality they call the establishment; to attack the game itself, deeming it dysfunctional and corrupt. A movement of real people is the new zeitgeist, a promise to bring back human dignity by draining the swamp of the stagnant water that politics has become. In other words, *les invisibles*, the masses, long considered to be indifferent to politics and world affairs, are globally withdrawing their assumed consent from the current representative system, and the sound of it is like a chunk of ice breaking off from Antarctica. The job of changing the global course of events is, of course, too big

a task for the fragile I, and so we is making a comeback in the world of politics and ethics. And this comeback is at the heart of the global phenomenon that we are witnessing. We want to depart from the mainland of political language, dismantle it and build a new language for the real people. If one wants to know who the real people are, one must ask the question, what is we? Or why is it that I don't want to be I any more, but we?

In his debut work of literature, *The Art of the Deal*, Donald Trump was already describing the 'truthful hyperbole' that would later put him in the White House. He must be proud to have demonstrated that in order to become the American president he had no need to read any books other than his own. Trump knew one simple fact about people that many of us choose to ignore: that even though individualism as a concept has been elevated for many decades, the ordinary man still needs a shepherd to lead him to greatness. He knew how diminishing and disappointing it can feel to realise that you are only mediocre, in a world where you have constantly been told that you can be anything you want to be.

'The job of changing the global course of events is, of course, too big a task for the fragile I, and so we is making a comeback in the world of politics and ethics. And this comeback is at the heart of the global phenomenon that we are witnessing. We want to depart from the mainland of political language, dismantle it and build a new language for the real people.'

He also knew that the call to break the imaginary chains of slavery preventing the real people from reaching greatness would resonate with his supporters, regardless of the fact that it sounded absurd to those who had had the chance to become what they wanted to be. 'It's not you', he told them. 'It's them who prevent us from being great.' He gave them something solid to hate, and they gave him their votes. And once he started speaking in the name of we – as has happened many times over the course of history – they were ready to sacrifice themselves. As Americans know very well from their own constitution, the words 'We, the people' can build a new country and bring empires to their knees. And believe it or not, even the British, a people who take pride in not being easily moved, are also not immune to the allure of we.

'We have fought against the multinationals, we have fought against the big merchant banks, we have fought against big politics, we have fought against lies, corruption and deceit ... [This is] a victory for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people.' Although this may sound like Salvador Allende, Chile's Marxist leader, speaking after his election victory in 1970, it was in fact Nigel Farage, the erstwhile leader of UKIP – and incidentally a former banker himself.

He uttered these words on the morning of 24 June 2016, the day after Britain's Brexit referendum. He too was using the age-old magic of speaking in the name of 'the people'. On the same day, however, many cosmopolitan Londoners, who were automatical-ly excluded from this inflaming narrative, found themselves wondering who these real people were, and why they bore such a grudge against the big cities and the educated.

And those who were old enough were beginning to hear echoes sounding from across the decades. After the horrific experiences of the Second World War, not many people in Western Europe expected the masses ever again to lust after becoming a single totality. Most happily believed that if humans were free to choose what they could buy, love and believe, they would be content. For more than half a century, the word I was promoted in the public sphere by the ever-grinning market economy and its supporting characters, the dominant political discourse and mainstream culture. But now we has returned as the very essence of the movement, burnishing it with a revolutionary glow, and many have found themselves unprepared for this sudden resurrection. Their voice has been so loud and so unexpected that worried critics have struggled to come up with an up-to-date political lexicon with which to describe it, or counter it.

The critical mainstream intelligentsia scrambled to gather ammunition from history, but unfortunately most of it dated back to the Nazi era. The word 'fascism' sounded passé, childish even, and 'authoritarianism' or 'totalitarianism' were too 'khaki' for this Technicolor beast in a neoliberal world. Yet during the last couple of years numerous political self-help books filled with quotes from George Orwell have been hastily written, and all of a sudden Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is back on the bestseller lists after a sixty-eight-year hiatus. The hip-sounding term that the mainstream intelligentsia chose to use for this retro lust for totality was 'rising populism'.

'Rising populism' is quite a convenient

term for our times. It both conceals the right-wing ideological content of the movements in question, and ignores the troubling question of the shady desire of I to melt into we. It masterfully portrays the twisted charismatic leaders who are mobilising the masses as mad men, and diligently dismisses the masses as deceived, ignorant people.

Strange fruit

It also washes away the backstory that might reveal how we ended up in this mess. In addition to this, there is the problem that the populists do not define themselves as 'populists'. In a supposedly post-ideology world, they are free to claim to be beyond politics, and above political institutions. Political thought has not been ready to fight this new fight either.

One of the main stumbling blocks is that the critics of the phenomenon have realised that 'rising populism' is the strange fruit of the current practice of democracy. democracy. As they looked deeper into the question they soon discovered that it wasn't a wound that, all of a sudden, appeared on the body politic, but was in fact a mutant child of crippled representative democracy. Moreover, a new ontological problem was at play thanks to the right-wing spin doctors. Academics, journalists and the well-educated found themselves included in the enemy of the people camp, part of the corrupt establishment, and their criticism of, or even their carefully constructed comments on, this political phenomenon were considered to be oppressive by the real people and the movement's spin doctors. It was difficult for them to adapt to the new environment in which they had become the 'oppressive elite' – if not 'fascists' – despite the fact that

some of them had dedicated their lives to the emancipation of the very masses who now held them in such contempt. One of them was my grandmother.

'Are they now calling me a fascist, Ece?' My grandmother, one of the first generation of teachers in the young Turkish republic, a committed secular woman who had spent many years bringing literacy to rural children, turned to me one evening in 2005 while we were watching a TV debate featuring AKP spin doctors and asked, 'They did say "fascist", right?'

She dismissed my attempt to explain the peculiarities of the new political narratives and exclaimed, 'What does that even mean, anyway? Oppressive elite! I am not an elite. I starved and suffered when I was teaching village kids in the 1950s.' Her arms, having been folded defensively, were now in the air, her finger pointing as she announced, as if addressing a classroom, 'No! Tomorrow I am going to go down to their local party centre and tell them that I am as real as them.' And she did, only to return home speechless, dragging her exhausted eighty-year-old legs off to bed at midday for an unprecedented nap of defeat. 'They are different, Ece. They are ...' Despite her excellent linguistic skills, she couldn't find an appropriate adjective.

I was reminded of my grandmother's endeavour when a seventy-something American woman approached me with some hesitation after a talk I gave at Harvard University in 2017. Evidently one of those people who are hesitant about bothering others with personal matters, she gave me a fast-forward version of her own story: she had been a Peace

Corps volunteer in the 1960s, teaching English to kids in a remote Turkish town, then a dedicated high school teacher in the USA, and since her retirement she had become a serious devotee of Harvard seminars. She was no less stunned than my grandmother at the fact that Trump voters were calling her a member of the 'oppressive elite'. She said, 'I try to show them respect' and complained that respect is a 'scarce commodity' in Europe. She claimed that only respect could save Europe.

Erdoğan likewise introduced excessive amounts of 'respect' into Turkish politics after he came to power in 2002. He repeatedly demonstrated to the Turkish people that respect no longer had to be earned, it could simply be unconditionally demanded. Whenever there were serious poll-rigging claims, he demanded respect for 'my people and their choices', just as he demanded respect for court decisions only when they resulted in his opponents being imprisoned. However, when the Constitutional Court decided to release journalists arrested for criticising him, he said, 'I don't respect the court decision and I won't abide by it.' As with Orbán, Trump and others, respect is a one-way street for Erdoğan: he only accepts being on the receiving end.

'[Respect] is what Putin really wants,' wrote Fiona Hill in a piece for the Brookings Institution's website in February 2015. She

> 'Whenever there were serious poll-rigging claims, he demanded respect for 'my people and their choices', just as he demanded respect for court decisions only when they resulted in his opponents being imprisoned.'

continued, 'He wants respect in the old-fashioned, hard-power sense of the word.'

'You come to me and say, "Give me justice!" But you don't ask with respect.' This quote comes not from another respect-obsessed political leader, but from Don Corleone, in the opening scene of *The Godfather*. One might easily mix them up, because the global circuit of exchanged respect (Geert Wilders respecting Farage, Farage respecting Trump, Trump respecting Putin, Putin asking for more respect for Trump, and all the way back round again, much as Hitler and Stalin once voiced their respect for one another) has started to sound like some supranational mafia conversation.

The web of respect among authoritarian leaders has expanded so much that one might forget that this whole masquerade started on a smaller scale, with a seemingly harmless question. It started when the ordinary people began transforming themselves into real people by demanding a little bit of political politeness: 'Don't we deserve some simple respect?'

But here's how the chain of events goes further down the line when respect becomes a political commodity. When the real people become a political movement, their initial, rhetorical question is this: 'Do our beliefs, our way of life, our choices not matter at all?' Of course, nobody can possibly say that they do not, and so the leaders of the movement begin to appear in public, and take to the stage as respected, equal contributors to the political discussion. The next password is tolerance, tolerance for differences. Then some opinion leaders, who've noticed social

tensions arising from polarisation in the public sphere, throw in the term social peace. It sounds wise and soothing, so nobody wants to dismiss it. However, as the movement gains momentum, tolerance and respect become the possessions of its members, which only they can grant to others, and the leader starts pushing the 'social peace' truce to the limits, demanding tolerance and respect every time he or she picks a new fight.

But at a particular point in time, respect becomes a scarce commodity. For Turkey, this invisible shift happened in 2007, on the election night that brought the AKP a second term in power. Erdoğan said: "Those who did not vote for us are also different colours of Turkey.' At the time, for many political journalists the phrase sounded like the embracing voice of a compassionate father seeking social peace. However, not long afterwards, Erdoğan started speaking Godfather. He stopped asking for respect and raised the bar, warning almost everyone, from European politicians to small-town public figures, that they were required to 'know their place'.

And when that warning was not enough, he followed it up with threats. On 11 March 2017, Turkey was mired in a diplomatic row with Germany and the Netherlands after they banned Turkish officials from campaigning in their countries in support of a referendum on boosting the Turkish president's powers. Erdoğan said, 'If Europe continues this way, no European in any part of the world can walk safely on the streets.' streets.' In threatening an entire continent, he'd become the cruel Michael Corleone of

The Godfather Part II.

Even for those countries that have only recently begun to experience a similar social and political process, this chain of events is already beginning to seem like a cliché. Nevertheless, the way in which the logic of contemporary identity politics serves this process is still relatively novel and is rarely discussed. In the twenty-first century it's much easier for right-wing populist movements to demand respect by wrapping themselves in the bulletproof political membrane of a cultural and political identity and exploiting a political correctness that has disarmed critical commentators.

Moreover, the use of a sacrosanct identity narrative turns the tables, shining the interrogator's lamp on the critics of the movement instead of on the movement itself, making them ask, 'Are we not respectful enough, and is that why they're so enraged?' As the opposition becomes mired in compromise, the movement begins to ask the probing questions: 'Are you sure you're not intimidating us out of arrogance? Can you be certain this is not discrimination?'

And we all know what happens when self-doubting intellect encounters ruthless, self-evident ignorance; to believers in the self-evident, the basic need to question sounds like not having an answer, and embarrassed silence in the face of brazen shamelessness comes across as speechless awe. Politicised ignorance then proudly pulls up

'The use of a sacrosanct identity narrative turns the tables, shining the interrogator's lamp on the critics of the movement instead of on the movement itself.'

a chair alongside members of the entire political spectrum and dedicates itself to dominating the table, elbowing everyone continually while demanding, 'Are you sure your arm was in the right place?' And the opposition finds itself having to bend out of shape to follow the new rules of the table in order to be able to keep sitting there.

'We become increasingly uncomfortable when people take advantage of our freedom and ruin things here.' These words came from a Dutch politician, but not the notorious xenophobe Geert Wilders. They are from his opponent, the Dutch prime minister and leader of the centre-right Liberal Party, Mark Rutte, in a letter to 'all Dutch people' published on 23 January 2017. Although the words seemingly referred to anyone who 'took advantage', they were in fact aimed at immigrants. Rutte's opposition to right-wing populism was being distorted by the fact that he felt obliged to demonstrate that he shared the concerns of the real people: ordinary, decent people. He must have felt that in order to keep sitting at the top table of politics, he had to compromise. And this is the man who two months later would bring joy to Dutch liberals by beating Wilders. Many Dutch voters accepted, albeit unwillingly, the new reality in which the least-worst option is the only choice. The manufactured we is now strong enough not only to mobilise and energise supporters of the movement by giving them a long-forgotten taste of being part of a larger entity, but to affect the rest of the political sphere by pushing and pulling the opposition until it transforms itself irreversibly. It creates

a new normality, which takes us all closer towards insanity.

'We are Muslims too.' This was the most frequent introduction offered by social democrat participants in TV debates in the first years that the AKP held power in Turkey. Just as what constituted being part of the we, 'the real, ordinary, decent people', meant supporting Brexit in Britain or accepting a bit of racism in the Netherlands, so did being conservative, provincial Sunni Muslim in Turkey. Once the parameters had been set by the original owners of we, everyone else started trying to prove that they too prayed – just in private. Soon, Arabic words most people had never heard in their lives before became part of the public debate, and social democrats tried to compete with the 'real Muslims' despite their limited knowledge of religion. The AKP spin doctors were quick to put new religious concepts into circulation, and critics were forever on the back foot, constantly having to prepare for pop quizzes on ancient scriptures.

A secular vs. religious catfight

One might wonder what would happen if you passed all the tests for being as real as them, as I did once. In 2013, after studying the Quran for over a year while writing my novel *Women Who Blow on Knots*, I was ready for the quiz. When the book was published I was invited to take part in a TV debate with a veiled AKP spin doctor – a classic screen charade that craves a political catfight between a secular and a religious woman. As I recited the verse in Arabic that gave the title to my novel and answered her questions on the Quran she smiled patronisingly and said, 'Well done'. I was politely reminded of the fact that I was at best an apprentice of the

craft she had mastered, and somehow owned. She made it very clear that people like me could only ever inhabit the outer circle of the real people. No matter how hard we toiled, we could only ever be members of the despised elite.

Any attempt to hang out at one of Nigel Farage's 'real people's pubs' or a Trump supporters' barbecue would doubtless end with a similar patronising smile, and maybe a condescending pat on the shoulder: 'Way to go, kiddo!'

One of the interesting and rarely mentioned aspects of this process is that at times the cynical and disappointed citizens, even though they are critical of the movement, secretly enjoy the fact that the table has been messed up. The shocked face of the establishment amuses them. They know that the massive discontent of the neglected masses will eventually produce an equally massive political reaction, and they tend to believe that the movement might have the potential to be this long-expected corrective response to injustice. Until they find out it is not. 'The insinuation that the exterminator is not wholly in the wrong is the secret belief of the age of Kafka and Hitler', says the authority on German literature J. P. Stern.

The limitless confidence of the movement is not, therefore, entirely based on its own merit; the undecided, as well as many an adversary, can furnish the movement with confidence through their own hesitations. After all, there's nothing wrong with saying the establishment is corrupt, right? By keeping its ideological goals vague and its words sweet, the movement seduces many by allowing them to attribute their own varying ideals or disappointments to it. What is wrong with being decent and real anyway?

The vagueness of the narrative and the all-embracing we allow the movement's lea-

der to create contradictory, previously impossible alliances to both the right and the left of the political spectrum.

The leader, thanks to the ideological shapelessness of the movement, can also attract finance from opposite ends of the social strata, drawing from the poorest to the richest. Most importantly, as the leader speaks of exploitation, inequality, injustice and consciousness, borrowing terminology and references from both right- and left-wing politics, growing numbers of desperate, self-doubting people, and a fair few prominent opinion-makers besides, find themselves saying: 'He actually speaks a lot of sense! Nobody can say that a large part of society wasn't neglected and dismissed, right?'

'I don't understand how they won. I'm telling you, lady, not a single passenger said they were voting for them. So who did vote for these guys?' This was the standard chat of taxi drivers in Turkey after the AKP's second election victory. As a consequence, 'So who did vote for these guys?' became a popular intro to many a newspaper column. Clearly neither taxi drivers nor the majority of opinion-piece writers could make sense of the unceasing success of the movement, despite rising concerns about it. After hearing the same question several times, I eventually answered one of the taxi drivers with a line that became the intro to one of my own columns: 'Evidently they all catch the bus.'

After the Brexit referendum, many people in London doubtless asked themselves a similar question. If I'd been a British columnist, the title for my column might have been 'The Angry Cod Beats European

'The vagueness of the narrative and the all-embracing we allow the movement's leader to create contradictory, previously impossible alliances to both the right and the left of the political spectrum.'

Ideals'. Among the groups who voted Leave in the referendum were Scottish fishermen, who have obsessed for many years over the fact that European fishermen were allowed to fish in Scottish waters, as well as pissed off about an array of other European things that are of next to no consequence to Scotland. Similarly, in countries such as Hungary and Poland where right-wing populism is in control of the political discourse there has always been a 'condescending Brussels elite', or 'the damn Germans', who stand in the way of better lives for ordinary men, as well as the nation's 'greatness'.

I am aware that what I have written above might seem like the condescending remarks of a cosmopolitan, unreal person, and that there is, of course, a real and solid sense of victimhood behind all of these new movements: many of their members are indeed the people who catch the bus, and who have seen the price of their fish and chips rise. It would therefore, as Greek economist and former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis says, be inconsequential mental gymnastics for intellectuals to analyse these movements only 'psychoanalytically, culturally, anthropologically, aesthetically, and of course in terms of identity politics'. And I agree with him on the fact that 'the unceasing class war that has been waged against the poor since the late 1970s' has been intentionally omitted from the narrative, and carefully kept outside the mainstream global discussion.

Moreover, these right-wing populist movements can, in fact, also be seen as newly-built, fast-moving vehicles for the rich, a means for the ruling class to get rid of the regulations that restrain the free-market economy by throwing the entire field of politics into disarray. After all, there is certainly real suffering, genuine victimhood behind these movements. However, they do not only emerge from real suffering, but also from manufactured victimhood. In fact, it is the latter that provides the movement with most of its energy and creates its unique characteristics.

Manufactured victimhood

In Turkey, the invented victimhood was that religious people were oppressed and humiliated by the secular elite of the establishment. For Brexiteers it is that they have been deprived of Britain's greatness. For Trump voters it is that Mexicans are stealing their jobs.

For Polish right-wing populists it is Nazis committing crimes against humanity on their soil without their participation and the global dismissal of the nation's fierce resistance to the German invasion in 1939. For Germany's AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) it is the 'lazy Greeks' who benefit from hard-working real Europeans, etc. etc. The content really doesn't matter, because in the later stages it changes constantly, transforms and is replaced in relation to emerging needs and the aims of the movement. And every time the masses adapt to the new narrative,

regardless of the fact that it often contradicts how the movement began in the first place.

In Turkey, the Gülen movement, a supranational religious network led by an imam who currently lives in Pennsylvania, was an integral part of Erdoğan's movement, until it was labelled terrorist overnight. The same AKP ministers and party members who had knelt to kiss the imam Fethullah Gülen's hand were, less than twenty-four hours later, falling over themselves to curse him, and none of Erdoğan's supporters questioned this shift. Doubtless Trump voters did not find it odd when the FBI, Trump's very best friend during the probing of Hillary Clinton's emails scandal, all of a sudden became 'disgraceful' after it started questioning whether Trump's election campaign had colluded with the Russian government. Instead, Fox News called the FBI a 'criminal cabal' and started talking about a possible coup, confident that Trump's supporters would follow the new lead, feeling, as their leader did, victimised by the disrespectful establishment. Once the identification of the masses and the movement with the leader begins, the ever-changing nature of the content of the manufactured victimhood becomes insignificant. And when the leader is a master of 'truthful hyperbole', the content even becomes irrelevant.

But how, one might ask, did the masses, dismissing the entirety of world history, start moving against their own interests, and against what are so obviously the wrong targets? Not the cheap-labour-chasing giant corporations, but poor Mexicans; not the cruelty of free-market economics, but French fishermen; not the causes of poverty, but the media. How did they become so vindictive against such irrelevant groups? Why do they demand respect from the educated elite, but not from the owners of multinational companies? And why did they do this by believing in a man just because he was seemingly 'one of them'? 'This is almost childish', one might think. It seems infantile. And it is. That's why, first and foremost, such leaders need to infantilise the people. Infantilisation of the masses through infantilisation of the political language is crucial. Otherwise you cannot make them believe that they can all climb into an imaginary car and travel across continents together. Besides, once you infantilise the common political narrative, it becomes easier to mobilise the masses, and from then on you can promise them anything.

In the barrios of Caracas

'... and that was when Chávez gathered his loyal friends under a fig tree on top of a hill. They all swore on the Bible. That's how and why the revolution started.' The Venezuelan ambassador to Turkey accompanied his closing words with a rehearsed hand gesture, indicating Heaven above, from whence the irrefutable truth had come. His finger lingered there for a dramatic moment, pointing to the ceiling of the Ankara Faculty of Law. His presentation was over, and as his fellow panellist it was my turn to address the question of how the Venezuelans managed to make a revolution.

This was 2007, a year after I'd published *We are Making a Revolution Here, Señorita!*, a series of interviews I'd conducted in the barrios of Caracas about how the grassroots movement had started to organise itself in

'The helplessness of rationality and language against the warped logic of populism has already created considerable demand in the politics market, and as a consequence martial-arts techniques for defensive reasoning are now being taught.'

communes long before Hugo Chávez became president. I was therefore quite certain that the real story did not involve mythical components like fig trees on hilltops and messages direct from Heaven. I had maintained a bewildered smile in silence for as long as I could, expecting His Excellency sitting next to me to apply a little common sense, but I found my mouth slowly becoming a miserable prune, as my face adopted the expression of a rational human being confronted by a true believer.

It was already too late to dismiss his fairy tale as nonsense, so I simply said: 'Well, it didn't really happen like that.' There were a few long seconds of tense silence as our eyes locked, mine wide open, his glassy, and my tone changed from sarcasm to genuine curiosity: 'You know that, right?' His face remained blank, and I realised, with a feeling somewhere between compassion and fear, that this well-educated diplomat was obliged to tell this fairy tale. Hugo Chávez's name was already in the hall of fame of 'The Great Populists'. He was criminalising every critical voice as coming from an enemy of the real people while claiming to be not only the sole representative of the entire nation, but the nation itself. Evidently he was also concocting self-serving tales and making them into official history, infantilising a nation and rendering basic human intelligence a

crime against the proceso, the overall transformation of the country to so-called socialism – or a version of it, tailored by Chávez himself. The ambassador looked like a tired child who just wanted to get to the end of the story and go to sleep. I didn't know then that in a short while grappling with fairy tales would become our daily business in Turkey, and that we would be obliged to prove that what everybody had seen with their own eyes had really happened.

'It is alleged that the American continent was discovered by Columbus in 1492. In fact, Muslim scholars reached the American continent 314 years before Columbus, in 1178. In his memoirs, Christopher Columbus mentions the existence of a mosque on top of a hill on the coast of Cuba.' On 15 November 2014, President Erdoğan told this tale to a gathering of Latin American Muslim leaders. The next day journalists around the world reported on the Turkish president's bombastic contribution to history, hiding their smirks behind polite sentences that confidently implied, 'Of course it didn't happen like that, but you know that anyway.' Neither Brexit nor Trump had happened yet. The Western journalists therefore didn't know that their smirks would become prunes when rationality proved helpless against not only the nonsense of a single man, but the mesmerised eyes of millions who believed his nonsense.

Had they been asked, Venezuelans or Turks could have told those journalists all about the road of despair that leads from a mosque on a Cuban hilltop to a hilltop

in Ankara where nonsense becomes official history, and an entire nation succumbs to exhaustion. They could also have explained how the populist engine, intent on infantilising political language and destroying reason, begins its work by saying, 'We know very well who Socrates is! You can't deceive us about that evil guy any more!' And you say, 'Hold on. Who said anything about Socrates?!'

'With populism on the rise all over Europe, we every so often face the challenge of standing up to populist positions in public discourse. In this workshop, participants learn to successfully stand their ground against populist arguments. By means of hands-on exercises and tangible techniques, participants learn to better assess populist arguments, to quickly identify their strengths and weaknesses, to concisely formulate their own arguments, and to confidently and constructively confront people with populist standpoints.' I am quoting from an advertisement for the Institut für Argumentationskompetenz, a German think tank. The title of the course they offer clients is 'How to Use Logic Against Populists'. Evidently the helplessness of rationality and language against the warped logic of populism has already created considerable demand in the politics market, and as a consequence martial-arts techniques for defensive reasoning are now being taught. The course involves two days of workshops, and attendees are invited to bring their own, no doubt maddening, personal experiences along.

Were I to attend the course with my sixteen years' worth of Turkish experiences, I would humbly propose, at the risk of having Aristotle turn in his grave, opening this beginner's guide to populist argumentation by presenting Aristotle's famous syllogism 'All humans are mortal. Socrates is human.

Therefore Socrates is mortal.'

Although the fallacies seem egregious, they did not appear childish to half of Britain when Boris Johnson and his ilk in the Conservative Party and the Leave campaign exercised them liberally during the Brexit debate. As Zoe Williams wrote in *The Guardian* on 16 October 2016: 'You'd hope for consistency and coherence; in its place the bizarre spectacle of a party claiming to have been against the single market all along, because Michael Gove once said so.'

In other words, argumentum ad ignorantiam. Michael Gove was the man who – bearing a striking resemblance to the populist driving Aristotle crazy above – declared that 'People in this country have had enough of experts!' It was comments like this that led the other half of Britain to believe that pro-Brexit arguments were too puerile to take seriously, and that only children could fall for them. Like millions of people in Europe, they also thought that if populist leaders were repeatedly portrayed as being childish, they would never be taken seriously enough to gain actual power.

'I will tell you one description that everyone [in the White House] gave – that everyone has in common. They all say he is like a child.' Almost a year after the Brexit referendum, Americans were exercising the same 'adult strategy' on the other side of the Atlantic. When *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* was published in the US in January 2018, its author Michael Wolf repeated this punchline in several television interviews. The concerned nods of the composed presenters, together with Wolf's

expression of someone bring bad news, created the impression of a parent-teacher meeting being held to discuss a problem child. Each interview emphasised

Trump's infantile behaviour, providing a comfortable underestimation of the situation for worried adult Americans. He's just a wayward child, you know, and we are grownups. We know better. For any country experiencing the rise of populism, it's commonplace for the populist leader to be described as childlike. Reducing a political problem to the level of dealing with a naughty infant has a soothing effect, a comforting belittlement of a large problem.

Portraying populist leaders as infantile is not the only trap that is all too easy to fall into. Scrutinising their childhoods to search for the traumas that must have turned them into such ruthless adults, and by doing so bandaging the political reality with some medical compassion that the populist leader didn't actually ask for, is another common ploy used by critics to avoid feeling genuine political anxiety. Poland's former populist prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński and Turkey's Erdoğan have both undergone such examinations in absentia by prominent psychiatrists and have likewise been described as broken children.

Elżbieta Sołtys, a Polish social scientist and psychologist, diagnosed Kaczyński as a traumatised child. In one interview she said it was probable that his low emotional intelligence was connected to his loveless and strict upbringing, adding that his current fury was an explosion following years of suppression. Erdoğan's diagnosis was similar. His father used to hang him by his feet in order to stop him swearing, and as a result an entire country now has to suffer his volatile mood swings.

The primary consequence of calling these leaders infantile and psychologising their ruthlessness, is simply to make their critics feel more adult and mentally healthy by comparison. It attributes childish politics entirely to the populist leader and his supporters. As if everyone else (including the writer of this book, and its readers) were completely immune to an infantilised perception of the world. Well, it's not like that. You know that, right?

'I drive an old Volkswagen because I don't need a better car.' It's November 2015, and the former Uruguayan president, José Mujica, is speaking on stage. I'm chairing what will come to be remembered as an almost legendary talk to an audience of five thousand people, most of them not actually inside the congress building in Izmir, but outside watching on a giant screen. Mujica wants to talk about how Uruguay needs meat-cutting machines (because in order to be able to export its meat the country needs to be able to cut it in accordance with the regulations of other countries), but the audience seems to prefer the fun stuff: the cute old Beetle, his humble house, and so on).

The next day, Mujica is described the same way in all the newspapers: 'The humblest of presidents who drives a Volkswagen

'His father used to hang him by his feet in order to stop him swearing, and as a result an entire country now has to suffer his volatile mood swings.'

Beetle and lives in a small house...' There is no mention of him being a socialist, no ideological blah blah, none of the boring adult content. He is like Bernie Sanders, portrayed as the wise, cool old man during the Democratic primaries, or Jeremy Corbyn, whose home-made jam and red bicycle got more attention than his politics. These are the dervishes of our time, reduced to the kindly old men of fairy tales: fairy tales that attract those who see themselves as the adults and mock the 'infantile' supporters of populist leaders.

Much of the literature on populism and totalitarianism interprets the infantile narrative of the populists, as well as that of the 'deceived' masses who support them and choose to think in their fairy-tale language, as a political reaction that is specific to them. However, it would appear to be neither a reaction, nor specific. Rather, it's a coherent consequence of the times we live in, and something that contaminates all of us, albeit in different ways. Although it may seem that the current right-wing populist leaders are performing some kind of magic trick to mesmerise the previously rational adult masses and turn them into children, they aren't the ones who opened the doors to infantilised political language. The process started long before, when, in 1979, a famous handbag hit the political stage and the world changed. That was the year a woman handbagged an entire nation with her black leather Asprey and said: 'There is no alternative!' When Margaret Thatcher 'rescued' a nation from the burden of having to think of alternatives, it resonated on the other side of the Atlantic with a man who perfected his presidential

'The infantile political language of today, which seems to be causing a regression across the entire political spectrum, from right to left, is not in fact a reaction against the establishment, but instead something that follows the ideological fault lines of the establishment that was created in the eighties.'

smile in cowboy movies. As the decade-long celebration of alternativeness turned into a triumphalist neoliberal disco dance on the remains of the Berlin Wall, the mainstream political vocabulary became a glitterball of words like 'vision', 'innovation', 'flexibility' and 'motivation', while gradually distancing itself from sepia, adult concepts like 'solidarity', 'equality' and 'social justice'. Because 'That's the way of the world'.

Meanwhile in Turkey, such terms, along with two hundred other 'leftist terms', were officially banned from the state lexicon, and removed from the state TV channel, after the military coup in 1980. Whether through violence or neoliberalist persuasion, the mainstream vocabulary used globally to talk about the world and our place in it – regardless of what language we speak – was transformed into a sandpit for us to play safely in: socialism and fascism on opposite sides as the improbables of politics, religion and philosophy on the other sides as the irrelevants of ethics.

Politics was reduced to mere administration, with people who knew about numbers and derivatives put in charge of taking care of us. It became the sort of bitter drink that children would instinctively avoid, but if

people did insist on having a taste, then bucketfuls of numbers were poured into their glasses to teach them a lesson. It is not surprising that Nigel Farage has said: 'I am the only politician keeping the flame of Thatcherism alive.' And though it angered many when Thatcher's biographer Jonathan Aitken said, 'I think she would have secretly cheered [Farage]' for his anti-refugee policies, it is nevertheless easy enough to picture Thatcher living down to her 1970s nickname by snatching milk out of the hands of Syrian children while saying, 'People must look after themselves first.'

Infantile political language

Ronald Reagan was likewise no less childlike when his team came up with the 'Let's make America great again' slogan for his election campaign in 1980. The infantile political language of today, which seems to be causing a regression across the entire political spectrum, from right to left, is not in fact a reaction against the establishment, but instead something that follows the ideological fault lines of the establishment that was created in the eighties. The only significant difference between the forerunners and their successors – apart from the illusory economic boom that made the former look more upstanding than they actually were, and the response to the flood of refugees that makes the latter look even more unpleasant than they actually are – is that today the voice of populist infantile politics is amplified through social media,

multiplying the fairy tales more than ever and allowing the ignorant to claim equality with the informed. They are, therefore, powerful enough this time around for there to be no limits to their attack on our capacity for political thought and basic reasoning. And we all know that they are definitely less concerned with manners.

'The use of coarse language stresses that he is in tune with the man on the street. The debunking style, which often slides over the edge into insult, emphasises his desire to distance himself from the political establishment. Although this description would fit Trump, Erdoğan, Geert Wilders and any other populist leader, it actually refers to Beppe Grillo, former comedian and the leader of the Italian Five Star Movement (as described by the two Italian political scientists Fabio Bordignon and Luigi Ceccarini). He is just another example of how the populists politicise so-called everyday language in order to establish a direct line of communication to the real people.

Once this connection is established the leader has lift-off, enabling him to appear not only to fly above politics, but as high as he wants to go: the sky is the limit. The perceived sincerity, or genuineness, of direct communication with the masses, and the image of the leader merging to become one with them, is a common political ritual of populism. Hugo Chávez did it every week on his personal TV show Alo Presidente!, Erdoğan has done it through his own media, Grillo performed the same stunt through his website, and Trump uses his famous tweets to have a heart-to-heart with his people, unfiltered by the media elite.

The one important trick the populist leader has to pull off is that of making his supporters believe he is rejecting the elitist snobs and their media. He does so by including the

media in his definition of 'the political elite', positioning it as an opponent – despite the fact that it is through the media that his connection to those masses is enabled.

This is a new political game that journalists are mostly unprepared for. It is a populist trick that Putin and Trump have both played on several occasions. On 7 July 2017, during the photo op before their one-on-one meeting at the G20 summit in Hamburg, Putin leaned towards Trump, gestured at the journalists in the room and asked: 'These the ones hurting you?' Trump did not hesitate to respond: 'These are the ones, you're right about that.' All at once it was as if the bully and the more established bully were preparing to take down some weaker kids in the playground. The journalists at the summit were shocked by this sudden and unprecedented switch of the spotlight. Not only were they themselves the story, they also found themselves portrayed as opponents on the political stage. The supporters of both leaders no doubt enjoyed the moment and relished the idea that a good wrestle – in either the American or the Russian style – was about to begin to knock out the spoiled media brats.

The global media probably wouldn't have been interested in what Thailand's prime minister, Prayuth Chanocha, had to say at a press conference on 9 January 2018 had he not put a lifesize cardboard cut-out of himself in front of a microphone and told the assembled journalists to 'Put your questions to this guy'. Then he left the venue with a swagger, the very image of the jolly populist leader who has already achieved a lot, and it wasn't even midday yet. The journalists were left smiling awkwardly, as if a child had just done something outrageous and there was nothing the adults present could do but hide their embarrassment by laughing. The BBC

used the same type of laughter in a trailer that shows Trump heckling a BBC reporter – 'Here's another beauty' – at a press conference while the other journalists present smile with raised eyebrows like intimidated adults in the school playground.

Ostentatious offensiveness

Erdoğan does it in a more Middle Eastern macho style, occasionally reprimanding the members of his own media, jokingly treating them like little rascals, but his little rascals, live on air, at which they giggle obediently every time. Numerous critics and analysts believe that by displaying such rudeness, populist leaders reject the notion that the media plays an integral role in democracy. However, looking at different examples around the globe, it seems that this ostentatious offensiveness is actually a requirement to establish direct communication between the leader and the masses. Furthermore, it is not actually a rejection of the media at all, but is rather a means of embracing and using them.

Journalists serve as a whipping boy who must be beaten whenever a display of 'These are my people and I don't give a damn what the establishment write about us' is required. The leader does not even have to talk about the hideous nature of loser Socrates; dismissing oppressive Aristotle works well enough.

As the prominence of progressive intellect is gradually reduced to point-scoring against an opponent on social media or on the TV screen, the question of respectability becomes a problem for the critics of popu-

lism. Meanwhile, as the populist movement gains in power, the number of intellectuals lining up alongside the populist leaders rises – not because supporting them becomes less embarrassing, but because it has become normal. This is why Donald Trump received a standing ovation from Congress for his State of the Union address in January 2018, something that would have seemed unimaginable to many Congress members only a year before, when he first entered the White House. The power of numerical normality encourages further departures from rationality and expands the limits of vulgarity until it has invaded the entire public sphere. One hardly realises how dire the damage to free thought and free speech is until the day comes when, for example, an important petition against the populist leader is launched, and you find yourself struggling to come up with prominent names who have not been tainted by the cage fight or driven crazy by the chaos. And in the end you come up with none. The critical voice becomes orphaned in the public sphere, and the opposing masses become a silent ship adrift without a lighthouse as they lose their opinion leaders. Their desperation deepens as they realise that the centrifuge of the do-

'Looking at different examples around the globe, it seems that this ostentatious offensiveness is actually a requirement to establish direct communication between the leader and the masses. Furthermore, it is not actually a rejection of the media at all, but is rather a means of embracing and using them.'

minant narrative has sucked in those they believed knew better. At the same time, the populist media discourse is amplified and repeated to such a degree that even opposing elements of society begin to lose track of its serial crimes against rationality. That's when you find yourself, finally, too exhausted to say, 'Well it didn't happen like that. You know that, right?'

There is no law to prevent right-wing populist political language invading and destroying the public sphere. Therefore, when dissident voices become choked with anger, exhausted by the tireless attacks of party apparatchiks and maddened by the slipperiness of the ever-changing populist discourse, their last resort becomes begging for simple ethical manners, and shouting in the street or on social media, 'Have some decency!'

At one point this might have worked, too. 'Have you no sense of decency?' asked the American lawyer Joseph Welch on 9 June 1954. Welch was serving as the chief counsel for the United States Army, which was under investigation for communist activities in the Army-McCarthy Senate hearings, and in one of the televised sessions Senator Joseph McCarthy launched an attack on a young man employed in Welch's Boston law office. As an amazed television audience looked on, Welch responded with the immortal lines that ultimately ended McCarthy's career: 'Until this moment, Senator, I think I have never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness.' When McCarthy tried to continue his attack, Welch angrily interrupted, 'Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of

decency, sir?' After a four-year-long communist witch-hunt, Welch's question led to the evaporation of McCarthy's popularity virtually overnight.

The world has altered dramatically since Joseph Welch changed American history simply by asking a question. And over the last decades the veins of rationality have become swollen with fury from calling – to no avail – for shame, while the populist has simply widened his grin and taken pride in his victory. We have finally lost what Albert Camus called 'the old confidence [that] man had in himself, which led him to believe that he could always elicit human reactions from another man if he spoke to him in the language of a common humanity'. And so it is no wonder that more and more people are surrendering to the weariness of the child who just wants to get to the end of the tale and go to sleep.

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Centre and periphery With its Three Seas Initiative, Poland is pursuing a project that goes against two-speed Europe, says Warsaw-based political scientist Adam Balcer. The country is not interested in a model in which the EU is divided into two zones: a prosperous centre bored by integration, and a poor periphery reduced to the role of passive spectators or, to express it in a less politically correct way, a metropolis and colonies. *By Adam Balcer*

The idea of cooperation between the countries bounded by the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black Sea is not a new one, and it is also more than an eccentric wish expressed by Poland's ruling PiS (Law and Justice) Party. Rather, it is deeply rooted in Polish history and geopolitical thinking. Paradoxically, however, it is the PiS that is standing in the way of this idea – despite the fact that the party is its strongest proponent – because it also has a serious problem with the European Union. The initiative would have to be integrated into the EU's structural framework in order to be successfully implemented.

The second Three Seas summit was held in Warsaw in early July 2017, bringing together representatives from 12 countries in the region (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary). The 2017 Summit was given additional kudos by the attendance of US President Donald Trump. The fact that Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas travelled to Bucharest for the Trimarium summit in September 2018 highlights Germany's willingness to work with the region. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2020, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged up to a billion dollars for the Three Seas initiative. In this way, the initiative – based on the idea of cooperation between the countries located between the Adriatic, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea – has moved to the heart of the PiS government's foreign policy (alongside its relations with the US).

In turn, the opposition accuses the PiS of supporting an idea that is unrealistic, a pipe dream, and detrimental to Polish interests. As always, the truth is a little more complicated. Under the PiS government, Poland has significantly increased its activities within the Trimarium project, but the region itself is not a tabula rasa for Warsaw. Many initiatives had already been launched by the previous government or even earlier, because the Trimarium idea is deeply rooted in Polish history and geopolitical thinking.

Equally important for the success of the entire project is the consideration of the

Trimarium as an integral part of Europe as a whole, including – particularly today – the European Union. The crucial question is whether Poland, the main proponent of this idea, can view it in this way, that is to say as an integral part of the European project.

The Trimarium region is very heterogeneous. Half of the associated countries are in the euro zone (Austria, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), while the others have their own currency (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Hungary) but have fundamentally different attitudes towards adopting the euro. The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are sceptical about joining the euro zone – unlike Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania. Some of the Trimarium countries are not part of the Schengen area (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania). With the exception of Austria, all Trimarium countries are members of NATO, but they have widely differing defence budgets based on the strength of their economies. On the one hand there is Poland and Estonia with 2% of GDP, while Austria, Slovenia and Hungary have budgets of 0.7 to 0.8% of GDP.

As a result of this mosaic-like structure, it is necessary to accommodate a broad spectrum of opinions on key issues such as how to deal with Russia and forms of European integration.

The presidents of Austria and the Czech Republic did not attend the Three Seas summit in Warsaw. The Czech Republic's sole representative was the president of the House of Deputies, while Austria sent its ambassador. The absence of their heads of state seems to bear testament to the fact that these countries are maintaining a certain distance from the Three Seas initiative. But their absence weakens the project because they are the region's strongest economies (after Poland) with the highest per-capita GDP. Their combined GDP is only marginally smaller than that of all the other Trimarium countries (excluding Poland) combined.

So when President Trump attended the Warsaw Summit it is no coincidence that he barely touched on the subject of military security and focused on energy issues, and particularly their economic aspects. This attitude is due to the serious differences that exist between the Trimarium countries.

At the summit, the Polish side stressed the vital importance for this region of more diversification in gas supplies (reduced Russian involvement) by purchasing liquefied natural gas from the US, transporting it to existing or planned LNG terminals and then supplying it to other countries in the region. However, just before the Three Seas summit in Warsaw, Hungary signed a contract with the Russian Gazprom group regarding its participation in the Turkish Stream project, to which Bulgaria already belongs. Austria and Slovakia also signalled their interest in joining the project.

Russia's 'pocket advocate'

The aim of the Turkish Stream project is to increase Russian gas supplies to Central Europe while bypassing Ukraine. Hungary is currently one of the EU countries with the closest ties to Russia and could be described as Russia's 'pocket advocate' in the EU. A similar conciliatory Russia policy is also being pursued by Slovakia, Austria and Bulgaria. The counterweight to this is provided by Romania, Poland and the Baltic states, which

'As a result of this mosaic-like structure, it is necessary to accommodate a broad spectrum of opinions on key issues such as how to deal with Russia and forms of European integration.'

are fundamentally opposed to the Kremlin's neo-imperial policies.

Despite their different leanings, the Trimarium countries still clearly have a majority that is able to agree a common position on key issues. For example, even the most pro-Russian Trimarium states are not prepared to veto the sanctions that the EU have imposed on Russia. Of course, it is true that the larger the coalition of countries, the smaller the common denominator on which they can all agree. If the Three Seas initiative is to function as a diverse and dense network, it also requires good bilateral relations between the countries that belong to it, and this is not always the case. We only have to look at the recurring tensions between Hungary and its neighbours (currently Romania) or relations between Poland and Lithuania.

The internal heterogeneity of the Trimarium states is due to a lack of a common state tradition that could unite the countries in this region. They have no common heritage of an empire or union of states. The Jagiellonian dynasty, whose representatives ruled over the vast majority of the countries in the region (around the year 1500, their vast empire extended from Saxony to the Black Sea) came closest to unifying the entire Trimarium region.

Warsaw's ruling Vasa dynasty also dreamt of a great Reconquista of the Ottoman Balkans. In the 19th century, Prince Adam Czartoryski – the leader of Polish political emigrés – focused on harnessing British, French and Turkish support to restore a Polish Republic in a federation with the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Southern Slavs. After regaining its independence in 1918, Poland returned again to the idea of the Intermarium in an attempt to create a counterweight to Moscow and Berlin. It was often associated with the Prometheus concept (the liberation of non-Russian peoples from the Soviet Union) and with the idea of a Central European federation based on the model and tradition of the union between Poland and Lithuania before the Poland-Lithuania partition. Every version of this concept involved Poland taking the position of a major power.

During the Second World War, the Polish government in exile tried to persuade the states in the region to form a federal alliance including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Hungary and possibly Romania. The idea was that this alliance would work closely with a Greek-Yugoslav federation. In 1942, government representatives of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece and Yugoslavia even signed a declaration for the establishment of a Planning Council for Central and Eastern Europe. However, all these attempts ended in fiasco. They failed because of the different attitudes that the various countries took towards Germany and the Soviet Union, insufficient economic ties, pressure from major powers and bilateral problems. Then the Yalta Conference came along.

This shows that the Three Seas initiative did not emerge out of thin air in 1989.

If I had to summarise its results, I would refer first and foremost to the question of security policy. At this point, we only need to recall the main initiative in this field in recent years. In November 2015, a Polish and Romanian initiative led to an informal summit of NATO's eastern flank was held in Bucharest, attended by the presidents of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, along with the leader of the Czech Parliament and the Deputy Secretary General of NATO. This meeting provided an opportunity to agree on a common position before the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016.

Growing cooperation

Representatives of the Adriatic-Baltic-Black Sea group met at the UN plenary session in September 2015. One year later, after talks with the project's most vociferous proponents, Poland and Croatia, the name 'Trimarium' was agreed. The first forum under this name was held in Dubrovnik in late August 2016. Over recent years it has become clear that cooperation on the north-south axis has grown on many levels. The Trimarium states in the narrower sense (those that joined the EU after 2004) have common interests within the EU (such as the EU budget, its infrastructure and energy projects and the EU climate package). This means they can act together as the Visegrád Group within the EU. The Group also introduced the V4 Plus mechanism, which is aimed at its neighbours to the north and south. Building partnerships on the north-south axis is also motivated by the economic dynamism of the countries along this axis. Taken together, this region has one of the fastest growing economies in the EU.

For the Polish government, the most important transport infrastructure project in the Trimarium is the Via Carpathia: creating a transport corridor by expanding the highway and motorway network to connect Klaipėda in Lithuania with the ports on the Mediterranean (Thessaloniki in Greece), the Black Sea (Constanța in Romania) and Svilengrad on the Bulgarian-Turkish border. The route will pass through Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. It also provides for the construction of branches to Ukraine, Turkey and Belarus, and to the ports of Gdynia and Gdansk. An important test for the Trimarium project will also be the ability of Central European countries to co-finance a major project: the construction of a canal linking the Danube, Oder and Elbe rivers. This would create a key transport route between the Baltic Sea, Black Sea and North Sea. After many years of discussions, a feasibility study is now to be carried out. The investment would amount to more than ten billion euros. It will not be possible without external financing (from the EU and foreign banks), but this will only be provided if the members of the Visegrád Group reach deep into their own pockets and match the investment. Joint lobbying for the investment is also important, including an expansion of the coalition through cooperation with Germany, Austria and Romania. The Trimarium idea is linked to domestic politics in Poland. The PiS government is using Hungary, ruled by Viktor Orbán, as its role model for building an illiberal democracy, a kind of national-populist democracy, a hybrid system with

authoritarian elements based on the supposed will of an ethnically defined nation.

According to an assessment by Freedom House, a renowned organisation that assesses political systems worldwide, Hungary is on the verge of being relegated to the category of partly free state – an unprecedented occurrence in the history of the EU. And, according to Freedom House, Poland is clearly taking the same path under the PiS government. The resistance to such policies on the part of EU institutions (and supported by a significant majority of EU Member States) has led the PiS to begin viewing the Trimarium idea as a potential tool for countering pressure from the EU, and Germany in particular. It also sees it as a way to gain the status of regional power and strengthen Poland's position, which has been weakened in Brussels by tensions between Warsaw and the EU's largest members.

Of course, PiS politicians swear that the Three Seas initiative has no geopolitical connotations and is not directed against anyone. By definition, it is supposed to be integrated into the European Union project. But the PiS has flooded its foreign policy with ideology (such as suggesting that Poland is an island of freedom surrounded by the dictatorship of political correctness). It should, therefore, come as no surprise that party leader Jarosław Kaczyński, during a debate with

'During the Second World War, the Polish government in exile tried to persuade the states in the region to form a federal alliance that would include Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Hungary and possibly Romania.'

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the recent Economic Forum in Krynica, contrasted regional cooperation in Eastern Central Europe with German domination of the EU. The two politicians called on the region to wage a 'cultural counter-revolution' against the EU. At the first summit of the Trimarium states in Dubrovnik, Poland's President Andrzej Duda stated his belief that the Trimarium region had to find its own way, albeit in less strident terms: 'It is essential to modify the system of relations between the 'centre' and the 'peripheries' that it defines, based on a one-way transfer of political, economic and cultural solutions. Very often such an arrangement has failed to take into account national sensitivities and the local context, based on different histories and traditions.'

A Europe of two zones

Sławomir Dębski, director of the Polish Institute for International Affairs, which falls under the Polish Foreign Ministry, has said the Trimarium is a concept that goes against two-speed Europe. He continues: 'A Europe based on a logic of divisions, on the dictatorship of the fittest, on a model of centre and peripheries that is the outcome of the idea of a 'two-speed Union' has no future. This Europe will hold no attraction for its own societies, nor for its neighbours. Any integration based on such a model will collapse. The countries working together under the Trimarium initiative are not interested in a model in which the EU is divided into

two zones: a prosperous centre bored by integration, and a poor periphery reduced to the role of passive spectators or, to express it in a less politically correct way, a metropolis and colonies. The Trimarium states will work closely together to prevent this.'

Ultimately, the Three Seas initiative has enabled the Polish government to weaken accusations of isolationism and present itself as a partner that has managed to form a broad coalition on the international political stage. And now President Trump's attendance at the Three Seas summit is supposed to demonstrate the great potential of economic cooperation between the region and the United States. However, we only have to look more closely at economic relations between Poland and the US to see that they are very limited, and the same applies to the other Trimarium states.

It is hard to imagine that there will be any fundamental change in this situation, especially as the region has strong links to the economy of the euro zone, and Germany in particular. The level of Polish exports to the US is similar to that of its exports to Hungary (around 2.5% of total exports), but ten times smaller than exports to Germany. US direct investment in Poland is also six times lower than that of Germany. It should also be remembered that the EU wants to support

the development of transport infrastructure between the Trimarium countries within the framework of the European transport network (TEN-T), but this is not about the simple north-south principle running from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and Black Sea. Of the five main corridors (TEN-T), the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, which connects the ports on the two seas, is the only one on the north-south axis to run almost exclusively through the Trimarium countries.

Diplomatic virtuosity

Moreover, it would be a dangerous illusion to even think of a Trimarium vision as an alternative or counterpart to the EU and Germany. It is important that members of the Trimarium keep their feet on the ground, avoid grand geopolitical or civilisational visions and concentrate on concrete projects. The great heterogeneity of the region requires diplomatic virtuosity and the ability to form large coalitions, as well as the ability to place the Trimarium project in the broader European, Eurasian or even global context.

Is Poland fulfilling these conditions? Not really. This country with its declining democracy cannot count on the support of the Tri-

'The PiS government is using Hungary, ruled by Viktor Orbán, as its role model for building an illiberal democracy, a kind of national-populist democracy, a hybrid system with authoritarian elements based on the supposed will of an ethnically defined nation.'

marium states. It is worth recalling two votes in the European Parliament, where the vast majority of MPs from the main governing parties of the Trimarium countries (with the exception of Viktor Orbán's party) voted in favour of resolutions condemning the domestic policies of the PiS party. The Poland that is resolutely demanding the dismantling of European integration, whose relations with Germany are deteriorating and whose relations with France are already poor, which is making anti-liberal changes in the country, which is being criticised by the EU – this Poland will have a serious problem realising its manifest destiny between the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black Sea.

Translated from Polish to German by Monika Satizabal Niemeyer and from German to English by Gill McKay

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Homesick for the future

No-one counted the number of people who fled from East European dictatorships, day in and day out. When the Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968, more than 200,000 Hungarians and 400,000 Czechs fled to the West. That's why writer Herta Müller is so angry that the countries of Eastern Europe are now trying to make out that flight is not part of their history. *By Herta Müller*
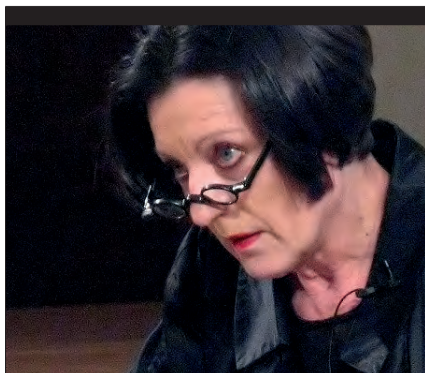
For decades, Eastern Europe was not only characterised by its repressive regimes, but also by a visible, shared sense of weariness at living under the repression and paternalism of dictators. Its people also shared a secret desire – the desire to escape. I know people who spent years of their lives planning their escape. They thought about it every single day and organised their lives around it. For example, at university they focused on Oriental Studies for years in the hope that they would have a chance to make an official trip to Japan at some later date – and then, when this opportunity arose, interrupt their trip at the first transit airport in the West in order to claim asylum. Others studied technical drawing because this profession involved surveying. Word got around that sometimes the terrain was surveyed close to the border. So some people chose their profession based on potential opportunities for escape – and ended up stuck in a profession that didn't suit them, and they spent half their lives feeling tricked by their illusion because the prospect of escape never came. In all this misery, the hidden thought of escape was a mixture of hope and despair.

From this time, I know that there are general and personal reasons for escape. These are equally strong. But the general reasons do not need to be reinforced by the personal ones in order make escape a reality when it finally becomes possible. The general, omnipresent reason is sufficient, the collective hopelessness and bitterness. And it is an obsession, a 'whatever happens' reason because of the feeling that, whatever happens, anywhere is better than here. This became the inevitable conclusion as the decades went by in Eastern Europe. It was ubiquitous. And it is the same conclusion that drives people to flee today. It harbours complete and utter resignation. That is why it is so absurd when refugees who come to our country today are described as an invasion or an avalanche. Escape has nothing to do with aggression. Every single element of escape is defensive.

It has always been a mystery to me how the silent, courageous thoughts of escape in most people's minds turned into the hugely risky and profoundly political attempt to flee. Because there was a tipping point when ordinary, tolerant, inconspicuous, resigned, politically passive people suddenly risked their entire

existence and decided to escape at any cost. The Romanian borders were closed, they were death zones. At the Hungarian border, there were armed soldiers, and trained dogs would tear fugitives to shreds. At the Yugoslavian border there were boats in the Danube that hunted down swimming fugitives and ripped them to pieces with their propellers. The chances of survival weren't even fifty-fifty; every escape attempt could end in death. And yet, over the years, hundreds of thousands slipped away in secret, often on their own. They were not scared off by the bullets, the dogs, the propellers.

I worked in an engineering factory and it was a regular occurrence for an otherwise reliable worker to simply not show up for work, and we never saw them again. After a few days, we'd hear they had escaped. Just occasionally we would hear a few months later that they had made it to Munich, Paris or Toronto. But more often than not they simply disappeared from the face of the earth. They never reached a destination. Although none of us knew they were planning to escape, we were also not surprised when one of our colleagues didn't show up for work. And none of us were shocked when they were killed. A little whispered sympathy was enough. This sympathy was even tinged with a hint of envy, despite the fact that the escapee was dead. The kind of bitter envy that hurts you. It wasn't schadenfreude, but a kind of admiration. It was like a posthumous medal of honour for daring to escape. After that, we

'That is why it is so absurd when refugees who come to our country today are described as an invasion or an avalanche. Escape has nothing to do with aggression. Every single element of escape is defensive.'

never mentioned them again. It would have been a little like betraying ourselves, because we all harboured our own thoughts of escape. We had to keep a cool head, think of escape in the conditional tense, hope for our own, better opportunity. And that was best done in silence.

Invented, but not a lie

What did people do before an escape attempt? Some went to the fortune-teller, trying to fathom their chances by reading the cards or the coffee grounds. They wanted to predict their destinies, perhaps even predispose fate to being merciful. I had a friend who was a seamstress and fortune-teller. She used to make clothes for me. One time I was at a fitting when a client came in to have his fortune told. She trusted me; we had known each other for ages. She hid me in the room and ushered him to the kitchen table. The door was ajar so that I could eavesdrop. Yes, it was about escape. Fortune telling has to be credible; the main thing is what the fortune teller says rather than the coffee grounds alone. And her words were poetry. It went something like this:

'Here I see two feet, that's you. And where you are, there's something green. It doesn't start here and also doesn't finish here. It's big. Look, now I see your back, very small, and it's growing into your back. Don't go there. Don't go into the cornfield, the tobacco field, the beet field. Don't walk over the grass, don't run into the green space. Here I see a long neck. It's a swan and you are arriving at a sparkling river.'

The seamstress paused, sighed and asked: 'Can you swim? That's the Danube.' I couldn't make out his answer. While I was listening, I thought how beautiful these surreal pictures were. The aesthetic beauty of language stays with us all – and particularly with people who

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have little to do with language. But how can telling lies be so beautiful? I asked myself. But that was easy, because the seamstress painted the pictures in the coffee grounds with her eyes; she deciphered them and truly believed what she was telling him. It was invented, but not a lie. And this aesthetic beauty of language became a dimension that defined the place of escape. In the client's mind, the words became specific instructions, escape maps, plans complete with methods, times and geographical data. The beauty of language was translated into deeds. Of course, a few weeks later I asked my dressmaker friend whether the man managed to escape. She said he was lucky; he was now in Canada.

In his Frankfurt lectures on poetics, Heinrich Böll once made brief mention of 'the search for an inhabitable language'. Böll probably had something specific in mind when he used this phrase after the war in a country where not only the houses were bombed. But he never added another word of explanation. It continues to float before us and its cryptic nature is what makes this expression so strong and metaphorical, so convincing and paradigmatic. Translating the beauty of language into action can be 'inhabitable language', especially when making an escape. One entrusts oneself to the language in order to leave home and arrive in a strange place that, whatever happens, must be better than home. From Böll, we quickly move to Jorge Semprun, who states that home is not the language as such, but what is spoken. Hence, the content of speech can be 'inhabitable language'. I associate 'inhabitable language' with escape because Böll also asked the young students whether they would ever be able to turn the bruised and battered country that they had taken over from the war generation into a 'a country for which one feels homesick'. For Böll, that was a utopia. That's because he doubted it. Because 'between 1933 and 1939, everything that could have been called Germany in any form until then died or was forced abroad.'

In the landscape of German commemoration there is still nowhere that thematises this initial expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people from Nazi Germany, that highlights the great misfortune of flight and exile. The endless routes to Mexico, Shanghai, New Zealand or Argentina. The desperation at the borders, the good and bad coincidences, the desolation of nerves that are permanently broken. The émigrés never knew whether they could afford their homesickness, for both political and psychological reasons. Nobody called them back. Yet post-war Germany was in desperate need of their experience and personal integrity.

Yet, despite this, perhaps contemporary Germany has become a place that generates homesickness. Not only for those of us who live here, but also for people who are forced to flee dictatorship and war. They are homesick for peace and security. And because Germany can offer them that, they are homesick for Germany. In their thousands they are feeling the same homesickness that East Europeans of my age still know so well, even without war – homesickness for the future. When I took the train from Timisoara to Bucharest, for a while the tracks ran alongside the Danube. You could see across to Yugoslavia. And when this part of the journey began, everyone in every carriage stood up, one by one. Without giving a reason, without saying a word, everyone, stood up, went into the corridor and looked over the border towards Yugoslavia. Young and old alike, amongst them policemen and soldiers in uniform. The silence was like hypnosis. Like a revelation, everyone knew what the other person was thinking. And when the train pulled away from the Danube, everyone returned to their carriages without a word.

Everyone sat down again and resumed their conversations – as if they had never been interrupted by the sparkle of the Danube.

This hypnosis in the corridor always left me feeling a little dazed, and I felt a little queasy when I imagined what it would be like if everyone suddenly escaped from the train. Mass exodus happened all that time, but in secret, independently of each other in individual, concealed actions. And it was not only like this in Romania. No-one counted the number of people who fled from East European dictatorships, day in and day out. When the Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968, more than 200,000 Hungarians and 400,000 Czechs fled to the West. That's why I'm so angry that the countries of Eastern Europe are now trying to make out that flight is not part of their history.

Above all, the 'ramblers' in Dresden who aren't embarrassed to call for Putin should understand that. Yet when it built the wall, the GDR built a cynical monument to escape. I believe that when the maelstrom of total despair engulfs a country, it leads to the emergence of the mass psychosis of flight. This is the case

'You could see across to Yugoslavia. And when this part of the journey began, everyone in every carriage stood up, one by one. Without giving a reason, without saying a word, everyone, absolutely everyone, stood up, went into the corridor and looked over the border to Yugoslavia. Young and old alike, amongst them policemen and soldiers in uniform. The silence was like hypnosis.'

in Syria and Eritrea. And the maelstrom only stops when the despair subsides – the murdering acts of the dictator, war and the apocalypse of Islamic terrorism. War is a political enemy; refugees in wars are politically persecuted and every single one of them needs protection. This protection cannot be restricted merely because so many need it. Before escaping, one's expectations of the future are not real. They still fluctuate after the escape. But getting out is always viewed as salvation. Salvation is a tired word. But everything about it is better than being at home with barrel bombs in the streets. Until now, you have been homesick for the future, but after escaping, the future clings to your skin. The word future sounds a little like refuge, but it's deceptive. Because future is an abstract term, while refuge is specific. Refuge is a real place beneath your feet. But the future is an unreal time that is unknown to itself. The present never ends, but you carry the past with you. Who knows, perhaps the future begins when the first moment of calm set in after escaping.

Herta Müller was born in 1953 in Nitzkydorf, Romania. After graduating, she worked as a translator in an engineering firm. She was fired for refusing to work for Securitate, the Romanian intelligence services. Her first book, *Nadirs,* was published in a censored version in 1982 and in uncensored version in Germany in 1984. After this, Herta Müller was banned from publishing in Romania and was subjected to repeated threats by the Securitate. She came to Germany in 1987 and from 1989 to 2001 was a visiting professor at universities in England, the US, Germany and Switzerland. Herta Müller was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009 and the Heinrich Böll Prize in 2015.

Chapter 2
Reset Europe
Crisis as opportunity

Does Europe need a reset? At the moment it mainly needs a direction. In the face of democratic crises, climate change, structural change and the hate that exists in society, the people of Europe need new ways of solving pressing problems. Can culture help to win back the trust of Europe's citizens and create a European public sphere? Can it generate more unity and defend Europe's existential values of human rights, multilateralism, freedom of the press and opinion? Can culture provide more tolerance?
For many, it is a duty – not as a retreat into nationalism but as an expression of a desire to be outward-looking and connect with others.

A call to action The Europe of cafés, debates, universities, the conflict of ideas and the opposition of ideas rejects both state violence and street violence. It believes in the strength of truth because it believes in the strength of the democratic confrontation of ideas. It is worth fighting for a European academy of culture, European universities, translation, the movement of artworks – fighting each time to reinvent this aesthetic, critical, intellectual debate in our Europe. *By Emmanuel Macron*

W hen defining what the European enterprise has brought us since the end of the Second World War, we usually say it has enabled us to live in peace for 70 years, and it's true. Europe has experienced the historic miracle of 70 years of peace between the traditional enemies of yesteryear.

And this treasure is priceless, and it's unprecedented on our continent in all the previous centuries, but if I think about Poland, the peoples of the former Czechoslovakia, Portugal, Spain, Your Majesty, the former East Germany, the Baltic countries, Bulgaria, all those sister peoples, can I say they've experienced 70 years of peace in full tranquillity, in full serenity – peace, freedom and prosperity?

Can we say that the peoples of the former Yugoslavia have experienced 70 years of peace?

While a few nations of Europe have taken the path of friendship and cooperation, others have until recently experienced the searing pain of totalitarianism, of nationalism, and some others genocide, civil war and military or political subjugation.

The myth of these 70 years of peace means a perfect Europe of which we need only cherish the legacy, but I don't believe in this myth, because Europe is still, and always, gripped by history and the tragedy of history. We can counter this not with the routines of management but with tireless determination, requiring each new generation to harness all its strength and reinvent hope.

Today, this dream of European unity is eroded by doubt. It's for us to decide whether to keep it alive or let it die. I've already said several times at the Pnyx, the Sorbonne and the European Parliament what France is proposing, but here I'd simply like to share four strong beliefs, four commandments if you'll allow me, or four categorical imperatives for action, according to the tradition of our Europe by which we want to abide.

The first imperative is simple: let's not be weak and let's not be passive! We're facing major threats, major imbalances that are un-

settling our people and adding to their worries every day. The question being asked of each one of us is: do we want to be passive? Do we accept others' rules or the tyranny of events, or do we make the choice to decide for our fellow citizens the rules that protect their private lives? Who will choose to explain the economic balance in which our businesses will have to exist? Foreign governments which, in fact, will organise their propaganda or their own rules? International players who have become clandestine passengers of a system they choose because they organise it? Or do we believe this is a matter of European sovereignty?

The European Parliament made the brave choice, supported by the Commission and the member states, to decide on general regulations for personal data. That's the direction we want to go in, and I believe profoundly that we have to build digital sovereignty in order to better regulate those players, protect our fellow citizens, more fairly tax those who currently pay no tax, in an economic and legal area where they're nevertheless bringing about profound transformations and, every day, threatening the interests of some while providing opportunities for others.

How do we want to make our climate choices tomorrow? And they're democratic choices; we can hear this echo beyond these walls; they're essential. Who will have to decide on this? Again, external powers or ourselves? We know these choices take time when it comes to energy and the climate, but the sustainable solution will be achieved only if we can organise ourselves at European level, if we can move towards a carbon price floor, introduce a tax at our borders too, avoid choosing the worst and favouring the least cooperative players, have an ambitious policy as regards renewable energy storage, which alone will enable us to begin a new chapter in our energy adventure and be equal to our climate commitments.

Custodians of multilateralism

Who must decide on our trading decisions? Who? The people threatening us? The people who would blackmail us, explaining that the international rules they helped draw up are no longer valid because they're no longer to their advantage?

We Europeans are the joint custodians of an international multilateralism that I believe to be strong. For the sake of our own sovereignty, it's up to us to defend its rules, not to give in, and to be neither naïve in the face of unfair competition nor weak in the face of the threat from those who sometimes wrote these rules with us.

Who will choose the environment of peace and major geopolitical balances that we want to live in? As heads of state and government, we have chosen to build peace and stability in the Middle East, taken this on board in full sovereignty and promoted it collectively. Other, equally sovereign powers have deci-

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ded not to keep to their own word. Must we therefore give up our own choices? Must we give in to the politics of the lowest common denominator? We must choose, built, talk to everyone, in order, again, to successfully build our own sovereignty, which, in that region, will be a guarantor of stability.

We've had to live through major upheavals linked to contemporary migration, be they political, economic or climate-related. On this issue, do we think for a single second that we can stand idly by or, again, withdraw into purely nationalistic beliefs? The answer is European, it's European to its very core. We'll face up to these challenges only by having an ambitious, concerted and fully European policy for Africa, on the other side of the Mediterranean, a development and security policy which we've started to work on but which we must be much more ambitious for, by having a common policy on security for our borders and the harmonisation of our rights, and by having a sovereign policy for development, security and protection.

European sovereignty

As you've understood, this first imperative that I believe in – let's not be weak, let's not be passive – is that of European sovereignty, the sovereignty that must guide us, the sovereignty that must guide us to make Europe a geopolitical, trading, climate, economic, food and diplomatic power of its own. We'll have debates, and we probably don't have the same situations in mind when we utter each of those words, but the precondition is that we refuse to allow others to decide for us. If we decide that a major digital player can decide on secrecy or tax rules, we're no longer sovereign and the debate is invalid; if we decide that such-and-such a major international energy

group decides on our climate policy for us, we're no longer in a position to decide and to have a democratic debate.

And if, in the toughest times in our history, we agree to other major powers – including allies, including friends – putting themselves in a position to decide for us, for our diplomacy, our security sometimes, creating the worst risks, then we're no longer sovereign and we can no longer credibly look at our public opinion, our people and say to them: we're going to decide for you, come and vote, and come and choose.

Our second imperative is: let's not be divided. The temptation is great, in this troubled period of self-absorption and nationalism, to think that at national level we'll control things better and regain a share of this sovereignty, which is still too ephemeral or nascent at European level. We had this alarm bell with Brexit, but we're also hearing it from the Italian elections to Hungary, Poland and everywhere in Europe: this music of nationalism reverberates, this fascination, and as I was saying earlier, in this place we're in the presence of the Carolingian dream we want to live up to, but the risk in Europe today is, as it were, a Lotharingian risk, the risk of extreme division. It tends to reduce most debates to overlapping nationalisms, persuading those in doubt to give up the freedoms they won at the cost of huge suffering.

Many would like to see history repeating itself and have our peoples believe we'll be more effective this time. In the face of all the risks I've just described, division would be fatal; it would further reduce our actual sovereignty. Barbed wire is reappearing every-

where across Europe, including in people's minds, and let's take a clear-sighted look at recent years, the last ten years we've just been through: a lot has been done, and we owe a great deal to those who had the honour of leading our countries, facing up to crises and, in the most extreme situations, taking decisions that were difficult each time, but it was at the cost of division between North and South, at the time of the financial and economic crisis. Then it was at the cost of division between East and West, at the time of the migration crisis. And those arguments remain like a cancer in the midst of our Europe, seeking to implant the idea that separate camps have been rebuilt and that unity is no longer possible.

The solution is unity

But our only solution is unity; divisions push us only towards inaction. Divisions push us into siege warfare, the very same that made Europe suffer one of its worst torments a century ago now. And I know all those collective representations that call on us not to budge, including between our two countries. I know all those in France who say to me: go on, go and confront Germany, the solution lies in a crisis with Germany, Germany is selfish, it's

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ageing, it doesn't want to reform Europe, it wants Europe when it's advantageous to it. I know that's false, and we'll never give in to that temptation, because I've seen a Germany which, in recent years, has taken its risks and made its choices and which, before the financial crisis, introduced radical reforms that we thought we could postpone, and in recent days I've seen again an ambitious Germany, loving Europe, acclaiming Europe, and young Germans who expect almost everything from this Europe because they remember its history!

On the other side, I also hear those in Germany who say: let's not give in to the siren voices of a France we know all too well, those people aren't serious, they haven't carried out their reforms, and France is demanding of us a Europe that would be in its hands, in a way, it wants a Europe for itself, a Europe that will finance its deficits, a Europe that will enable it to introduce the reforms it can't carry out. But wake up! France has changed, it's no longer the same, and that was the choice of the French people, who – almost exactly a year ago now – made a clear decision to do what I'm the custodian of and nothing more. But France has carried out its reforms, which were so long-awaited; it will continue to carry them out. It's got back on its feet, it's here; during the crises it paid its share, just like Germany, and France would like a Europe for Europe, not for itself. And so on either side, we must also be able to overcome the self-absorption, the music that was leading us in the worst direction, in order to endorse one thing, namely that unity between France and Germany is the precondition for European unity, which

is the only thing that will enable us to act!

And let's make no mistake. Our dream is already more than the Carolingian dream; for centuries and centuries in our Europe there have been transfers of empires, which, each time, have led to a search for the hegemony of one over others. They've led us to bad decisions each time. France itself, at the beginning of this century, when it was doing well, thought there was no need to reform itself or respond to the European proposals made by Germany, because this Europe suited us, it was beneficial to us. That was a mistake.

Our Europe no longer functions on the basis of successive hegemonies. It can no longer function on this basis. It can build itself only on constant solidarity. There's the essential responsibility we sometimes lost sight of before the crisis and which we've rebuilt, and each state has to take on its reforms, its share of responsibility, its own decisions, but we also have solidarity between ourselves, the solidarity which Germany, at the time of reunification, benefited from, and Europe's duty in order for Germany to take that step then – to be stronger and to play the role it does today –, the solidarity we must show today on migration within Europe, the solidarity we must show on financial issues within Europe, solidarity with the countries which still have youth unemployment rates of up to 30%, 40%, 50%, we must rebuild that solidarity!

Let's not be afraid

Otherwise, we'd take the risk each time of giving in to the siren voices of the 'haves', forgetting the precarious nature of those European hegemonies. That's why I believe in a much more ambitious European budget in which France will contribute its share, promoting the strength of our historical policies but also the new policies the Chancellor mentioned earlier, promoting an ambition to uphold the rule of law, champion economic, fiscal and social convergence and a coherent vision of our Europe, the Europe that reflects the ambition not only of the founding fathers but also those who created the Single European Act. That's why I believe in a stronger, more integrated Euro Area with its own budget, enabling investment and convergence, because that's the only way to let all countries that wish to do so move forward, move in that direction.

Our third imperative, my friends, is: let's not be afraid, let's not be afraid of the world we're living in, let's not be afraid of our principles, let's not be afraid of what we are, and let's not betray it. Today we're facing all kinds of anger and uncertainty, and confronting temptation, sometimes of the worst kind: the temptation to abandon the very foundations of our democracies and our rule of law. Let's not give up any, any of it!

It's not true that we'll respond to ill winds by being indulgent to those who, in the past, have already led us – sometimes through weakness or silence – to betray what we are; let's give up none of the rule of law or all these rules, either in the European Union or the Council of Europe. Let's give up none of our democracies' vitality or our democratic debates, the disputes that drive them, their strength, or our Europe's civility.

This civility is the Europe of cafés, debates, universities, the conflict of ideas, the opposition of ideas that rejects both state violence and street violence but believes in the strength of truth because it believes in the strength of the democratic confrontation of ideas.

That's why I believe in the power of intelligence, the power of culture, because yes, it is indeed about willpower. There's always this stagnation, there, under our feet, and we need this power of intelligence, of what is beautiful, of culture, not to make people forget it but to create spaces in it – like this space we've been living in for 70 years –, which are not obvious, which are not the natural state of European humanity, which are an exception linked to our strength of mind. So yes, fighting for a European academy of culture, fighting for European universities, fighting for translation, fighting for the movement of artworks, fighting each time to reinvent this aesthetic, critical, intellectual debate in our Europe – these are not fine ideas reserved solely for a few intellectuals: they're ideas essential for our societies, for our young people, because today, even more than yesterday, it's the strength of mind created by this space opened up 70 years ago that we're fighting for.

Promoting multilateralism

The Middle East and Africa are watching us. They're looking at this path, at this capacity for not being afraid, not fearing the Other and promoting what has always been at the heart of our destiny, an element of the universal. The world has always been thought of in terms of Europe and its capacity for being unafraid, exchanging ideas, having debates. I

'Let's give up none of the rule of law or all these rules. Let's give up none of our democracies' vitality or our democratic debates, the disputes that drive them, their strength, or our Europe's civility.'

mention these periods without being naïve; we've changed since, but that's Europe – the capacity every time for engaging in a dialogue of the universal and being a mediator for the universal.

And as we talk to each other at this moment Europe is experiencing, we aren't just talking about the debate on sovereignty I mentioned earlier, but also about not being afraid to continue promoting this strong multilateralism I believe in, i.e. Europe's ability to put forward rules for the whole world, because it is able and has a duty to promote within itself a vision of the world and the requirement which goes with this vision of the world.

Not being afraid – at least, of ourselves –, and freeing ourselves from our own taboos means us not being afraid; it means not being afraid of one another; it means not being afraid sometimes of our own obsessions. In France, people say the treaties mustn't be changed any more, we also mustn't reduce public spending any more, and we have a classic preference for public spending rather than complying with standards, and so let's agree to shake up these obsessions and not be afraid to say yes, to move forward in Europe we must at some point be prepared to shake up the treaties, change them and take this democratic risk. Yes, I'm prepared to say that we must carry out in-depth reforms and make radical changes to reduce public expenditure, which is the only condition for moving forward in this Europe and complying more with standards, building these common rules; but in the same way in Germany, there can't be a permanent obsession about budget and trade surpluses, because these are always at the

expense of certain others.

And so now let's not be afraid of putting our own taboos, our own habits behind us precisely because we've got to fight for something which is greater than ourselves! We've got to fight, not for our countries' interests or for protecting a particular European state – no! We've got to fight to forge a new, stronger Europe again and, with it, promote that element of the universal which is in Europe's hands today.

The time is now!

Finally, I believe the last imperative is that we mustn't wait and that the time is now! We've waited a long time for one another; it's even possible that we may have sometimes passed one another by. There's shared blame, but today we no longer have the right to wait; let's lose no time today in choosing Europe because when we do so – as we've clearly seen and have each reiterated – we choose the West too. That's also what we're supporting, the ability we'll have to make clear choices, not just to move towards a Europe of maybe a few for a time, maybe a more integrated circle because that's the way it has always moved forward, and it leaves the door open. I don't believe in a Europe that's shut off, having predefined an exclusive club, but nor do I believe in a Europe that can wait perpetually for yesterday's 28, tomorrow's 27 or others after then to all agree on absolutely everything.

We need to formally acknowledge – because this is always how we've moved forward – that a few have the strength of mind, the temperament, the determination to forge ahead, if the rules are clear: the door is left open so that everyone, whenever they are able and willing, can join them. But we can't think that choosing Europe always means choosing only the lowest common denominator, choosing what's least risky, choosing to take the tiniest step at the last minute – no! We've got to build an ambitious choice for ourselves by offering our fellow citizens a vision again, one for the next 30 years, which will subsequently allow such small steps and progress because they need a course of action, because the nationalists are clear, because the demagogues are clear, because there are clear fears. Those championing Europe must do so just as forcefully and ambitiously.

So together let's commit to a Europe that protects and promotes this ambition, a digital Europe, one of energy and climate transformation, one that bolsters the Euro Area and has a trade policy that is more protective and consistent with our health and environmental goals, a more unified migration policy, social, fiscal and democratic convergence, a policy of intelligence, research and innovation with this new approach – a determined one, which

'But we can't think that choosing Europe always means choosing only the lowest common denominator, choosing what's least risky, choosing to take the tiniest step at the last minute.'

no doubt goes with a form of risk taking.

Let's not be weak but make a choice; let's not be divided but unite; let's not be afraid but be bold enough to do things and live up to our histories; and let's not wait, let's act now.

When, nearly 70 years ago, the Swiss philosopher and promoter of European federalism Denis de Rougemont suggested taking a huge step with a charter of rights, people said, 'He's an intellectual, a poet, this won't happen'. But we did it – maybe you had to be a man of letters or an artist to dare suggest it. Utopians are pragmatists and realists.

So let's try and stick to these four imperatives and map out together for Europe the 30 years ahead of us, and let's do so now because we mustn't ever lose sight of the fact that some of us for the past 70 years – for others it's been a little less – have been living a kind of historical exception. Let's never lose sight of the fact that the Europe we're talking about is anything but self-evident. It's probably one of the most fragile things, and let's never forget that languidness, selfishness and old habits may pose some of the worst threats to it.

Emmanuel Macron has been President of France since 14 May 2017. From 2006 to 2009 he was a member of the Socialist Party and was a member of the Valls Cabinet as Minister of the Economy and Industry from August 2014 to August 2016 under President François Hollande. This article is based on his acceptance speech when awarded the Charlemagne Prize in Aachen in 2018.
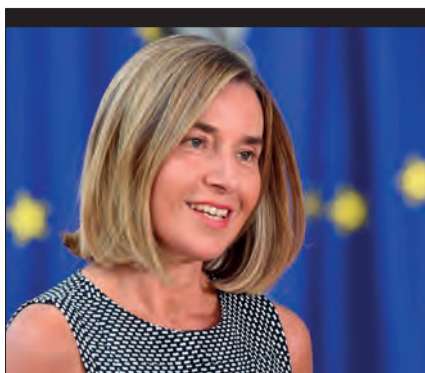
Dana und Petko Mitrović

The elderly couple were herding their cattle
on abandoned fields near the village. They
have two daughters and two sons. One daughter
is in the US, the other in Prnjavor and the
sons are in Belgrade and Banja Luka. Only the
daughter in America has a job, all the others
are unemployed. They live in a village with
a total population of six people and are the
only ones who support themselves by keeping
cattle. During the war they fled to Prnjavor,
where they lived for five years. When they re-
turned to the village the houses had all been
burnt down and destroyed. With the help of
small grants, they somehow managed to rebuild
their house. They returned to the village
with no income and now make 100,00 KM a month,
about 50 euros. At the moment their main fear
is attacks by wild animals. They are not safe
on their farms because bears and wild boars
often attack the cattle and rob the beehives.
About 200 metres away, their dog is follow-
ing the tracks of two wolves. They never feel
completely safe here. But despite everything,
they are generally happy with their lives.
Dana says that she sometimes says to herself:
'Okay, so what, we're not hungry. Don't com-
plain. There's milk, cream and cheese. And to
be honest, the cattle keep us going because
we'd go crazy here if we didn't have something
to do.'

Lifesaving medicine for the world Europe needs to be aware of its collective potential and use it. 'We are not living in times where we can afford to lose any of the positives that we could build' says Federica Mogherini, the EU's former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The continent has a collective responsibility towards itself and the rest of the world. *By Federica Mogherini*

During these last five intense years as the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, I have had the privilege of seeing Europe through our partners' eyes. And yes, I have seen contradictions and shortcomings. But most of all, I have seen through the eyes of the rest of the world, what we Europeans today tend to forget, to take for granted: that with all our problems and limits, with all the things we have to change and improve, we are still 'the place to be'. Our European Union is today the best place where you can live, on earth.

So yes, I believe we Europeans are very well positioned to make the case for peace and understanding. Because our history tells us it is simply smarter. And that making peace is always more convenient than making war. Nothing idealistic about it, we are pragmatic people. We simply know, out of our own experience, that peace is better than war. Common sense, one would say. And yet, building peace is today one of the most difficult and challenging tasks one could imagine. The wind blows in the opposite direction. You need to make the case. You need to explain the 'why' of things you would have taken for granted. Things that children get immediately, grown-ups less so. You wouldn't imagine how useful it has been for me over these years discussing world politics and global issues with my daughters around the kitchen table.

The wisdom and energy of youth

We need to invest in this young generation, in their wisdom and their energy. We need to invest in those who work every single day to build respect, dialogue, understanding, peace – patiently, stubbornly, without caring too much about visibility but focusing on substance, on real life, on real change. The real peace process happens on the ground – with women and men, communities, reaching out and crossing the line of mistrust, starting to move from hate to mutual respect. Peace

needs to be built, even when there is absence of war. And it is probably the most difficult and important challenge we have. Here comes, to me, the importance of culture in building peace.

When you say 'culture' one often thinks of museums and classical music – rightly so, especially here in Germany, or in Italy. But our culture is much more than that. It's who we are. It's our identity. Our traditions, our beliefs, our language, our food. The way we move our hands, and we dress. The lullabies our grandparents used to sing for us when we were children, and that we sing to our own. The street art of our teenagers. The novels we read, and those we dream of writing. The movies we like, and even our favourite TV series. Our culture is who we are, individually and collectively.

Dialogue, respect and understanding

The stronger it is, the less we are afraid of losing it, the less we feel threatened by diversity, the more we are open to dialogue, respect and understanding. All those that see a danger in multicultural, open societies, are telling you that they believe their culture, their identity, is not strong enough to meet the other, without getting lost. This is why I believe that investing in culture, in all its aspects, is the strongest antidote to hate and conflict. Culture constitutes the bricks with which peace can be built. Not only because

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culture can be the most powerful vehicle for emotions and feelings – that remains the easiest way to realise that your 'enemy' is a human being. But also because all those with a strong, self-confident cultural identity do not fear the other and are ready to listen and understand without running the risk of getting lost in translation. This is why during these five years in office I have introduced cultural diplomacy among the foreign and security policy tools of the EU. To me it was simply the most obvious thing to do. But at first, many were extremely sceptical. Then I believe everybody realised that culture is one of the most powerful assets we have – especially as Europeans – to promote peace.

First of all, because culture is an extremely effective bridge-builder. It can go where other tools can't even dare to imagine going – to feelings. You can dance to music that is composed by someone living in a country that is at war with yours. You can eat the same food your enemy eats. That is – can be – an extremely powerful door opener, an entry point to seeing the human being beyond the definition of enemy. And that is, I believe, the first, essential step to building peace.

Do we need a reset?

But culture is also an incredible engine for economic sustainable development, and as such it can play an essential role in preventing conflicts, creating jobs and opportunities for many, and helping in the post conflict reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction phase. It's surreal that a continent like ours, that

knows so well the economic potential of culture, has not used this powerful tool in its foreign and security policy before.

I am proud that now, with European cultural diplomacy, we are accompanying the economic development of cultural activities worldwide – which are also an impressive resource for the empowerment of women and girls – and also the use of culture as a vehicle for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Not to mention the extraordinary work that we have started to do with UNESCO to preserve and protect cultural heritage in conflict areas – an initiative that is so relevant on both the economic and the peacebuilding front.

Do we need a reset for Europe? I've seen our Union from the inside, and from the outside, through our partners' eyes. I've worked with all my different hats on, in all the institutions – the Commission, the Council, the Defence Agency, with the Parliament. I have seen and heard things I would have liked to not see and hear and lived some very frustrating moments. Every single day had its difficulties and problems to be managed and solved. Inside, and outside. Not easy. But I have loved every single moment of these five years, and I am proud of how we managed to navigate these difficult times. We have always tried to be on the right side of history – a pretty lonely place to be, these days, and the fact that we were there made it less lonely for others, that could never have managed to be on that right side of history without us. We have always chosen our battles, not looking just at those we could win, but first and foremost at those that were worth fighting for. And without us, without the European Union, this crazy world we live in would be an even more dangerous, unequal, conflictual place.

There are things we cannot be really proud of, and I believe we really need to change them, starting with our own politics sometimes. But

let us make no mistake. The potential we have, is that of a lifesaving medicine for the world. And once you have that potential, it becomes a responsibility – especially if the state of the world is not exactly that of being in perfect shape. We need to be aware of our collective potential and use it. If we don't, we will regret it. Because a skill that is not used tends to get lost. And we are not living in times where we can afford to lose any of the positives that we could build. It's a collective responsibility that we have, towards ourselves and towards the rest of the world.

Federica Mogherini is an Italian politician who served as the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy from 1 November 2014 to 20 November 2019. She was Italy's Foreign Minister from 22 February to 31 October 2014. This article is based on a speech that she gave on 18 December 2019 when recognised with the Theodor Wanner Award by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) in Berlin. At this event, Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas also delivered a laudation to honour her work and achievements.

What unites Europe

Nationalism, the rise of populism and the EU's legitimacy crisis are all proving to be a tough test for the EU. Looking back at the period since the revolutions of 1776 and 1789 with their ideas of freedom and equality – the very foundations of the West – we see a history of serious violations of the values that were proclaimed at that time. Ultimately, however, it has been a story of productive self-criticism and self-correction – that is to say, of learning.. *By Heinrich August Winkler*

For the most part, the ideas of 1989 were not new demands but reflected those raised by the two Atlantic Revolutions of the late 18th century: the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. A yardstick was created at this time, and Western democracies have had to measure themselves against it ever since. Since then, the history of the old European and new North American Occident has revolved around the struggles to adopt or reject the ideas promulgated in 1776 and 1789. It has also been a history of persistent, serious violations of the values proclaimed at that time, and ultimately a story of productive self-criticism and self-correction – that is to say, of learning.

After the peaceful revolutions of 1989, the part of the European Occident that fell under the Soviet sphere of interest after the Yalta Conference in 1945 was opened up to the possibility of enjoying the rights and freedoms that the United Nations General Assembly promised the whole world with its Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 1948. Today, it is clear that the battles over these late 18th-century ideas are still being waged in the old European Occident. When the European Commission is obliged to urge a member state to comply with the Copenhagen accession criteria of 1993 and the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, it is only doing its duty. However, such warnings will only have lasting success if the civil society of the country concerned also gets involved in the fight to defend threatened freedoms and institutions. This is happening in Poland, and this should be a reason for us not to give up hope that the rule of law and democracy will persist in our neighbouring country.

The question of asylum-seekers and refugees also relates to the issue of Western values, both claimed and real. None of the Western democracies in Europe, North America, Australia or New Zealand are in a position to solve the problems faced by the countries from which people are fleeing in droves to their territories. Western democracies can facilitate legal immigration and make development aid more generous and effective. The European Union has to focus on helping the Middle Eastern countries that are bearing the brunt

of housing and caring for people fleeing the Syrian civil war and must do everything in its power to promote the success of peace talks on Syria.

There are good reasons behind Germany's call for a European solution to the refugee problem, for joint efforts to secure the external borders and for a fair distribution of people in need of protection. It must not, however, be presented in a form that our neighbours regard as self-righteous or arrogant – as an attempt to create a 'German Europe', at least in terms of asylum policy. After the catastrophic failure of its National Socialist dictatorship, Germany was a latecomer to the political culture of the West. It tried to learn from the failure caused by its rebellion against the political consequences of the Enlightenment in the form of the ideas of 1776 and 1789 and, where possible – so in the western part of the divided country – established a functioning, pluralistic, Western-style democracy. But it has no reason to be self-righteous, and this also applies to the issue of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Germany's unique path

After the tyranny of the years after 1933, there were good reasons for including the following sentence when the Basic Law was drawn up in Bonn in 1949: 'Persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum.' This was a unique path for Germany, as most other Western democracies recognise the right to asylum not as an individual basic right but as a right that is granted by the state. Since then, the question of whether the Federal Republic has promised more that it can deliver has cropped up regularly, including in Germany itself.

It cannot be simply swept under the carpet, and the same applies to another self-critical question: when we revised the article on asylum law in 1993, were we merely feigning adherence to the 1949 principle, so at the expense of third parties, the 'safe third countries'? Would it not have been more honest to state that the Federal Republic of Germany grants asylum to politically persecuted persons in accordance with its capacity to accept and integrate them? The principle of helping people fleeing political persecution and civil war according to one's own capacity would be a good maxim for all EU member states. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that they will all adopt it in the foreseeable future.

It is not only the new member states in Central and Eastern Europe that have joined since 2004 which have failed to adopt this maxim. This is also the case with countries whose populations include a large proportion of migrants, such as the former colonial powers Britain and France. But, with its strong economy, Germany should also be helping refugees to the best of its ability, even if it remains in the minority in the European Union.

To the best of its ability: this also means that a humane and sustainable asylum policy has to lay the foundations for tomorrow and

'The West has to adhere to its own norms and take a long, hard look at its deviations. Then, and only then, will the ideas of 1776 and 1789 continue to radiate across the globe.'

the day after tomorrow. These foundations not only include respecting a country's limits for accepting and integrating migrants, but also maintaining the political support of its people, on which democratic governments and parliaments depend for their existence. In his famous 1919 lecture Politics as a Vocation, Max Weber describes the ethic of responsibility (as opposed to the ethic of ultimate ends) as the understanding that 'one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's action.' A sustainable asylum policy that pays attention to its potential domestic consequences must, therefore, do everything possible to maintain public confidence in the state's capacity for action.

Europe is not only divided on refugee policy, but in many other areas, including the question of the 'finality' of its unification process. Many people in Germany have long believed, and some still believe, that it is in the post-national stage of its history, but this is not the case. Rather, the European Union consists of post-classical nation states, which exercise some of their sovereign rights jointly and have transferred others to supranational institutions. Europe cannot be united against the will of the nations, but only with them and through them. As a confederation of states, the EU aims to be an overarching structure, but it does not seek to transcend them. It is easy to love a certain idea of Europe. But it is much more difficult to face the ugly reality of national egotisms, to seek a balance between opposites and to continue to work towards Europe's ability to speak with one voice on important issues, particularly relating to fo-

reign and security policy. Its huge diversity of languages and customs does not stand in the way of this. This is all part of Europe's richness and is one of its defining features. But there are also commonalities, and upholding these should, first and foremost, be a matter for civil society. One of these commonalities – and ultimately the most important – is the values that we like to call European values, but that in historical terms are transatlantic or Western values and universal in their normative basis. The West has to adhere to its own norms and take a long, hard look at its deviations. Then, and only then, will the ideas of 1776 and 1789 continue to radiate across the globe.

Heinrich August Winkler, born 1938 in Königsberg, is a German historian. He has carried out extensive research on the history of the Weimar Republic, on Germany's 'long road West' and on Western history from its roots in antiquity. His latest book *Zerbricht der Westen? Über die gegenwärtige Krise in Europa und Amerika* was published by C.H. Beck Verlag in 2017. Heinrich August Winkler was awarded the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding in 2016.

Ljilja and Željka

They were on their way to visit friends who live at the other end of the village. Ljilja has worked as a teacher in the village all her life. This has given her a small pension and, together with raising a few cows, she manages to survive. She was very nervous and reserved and preferred not to reveal anything about herself. She lives with her daughter Željka, who has a physical and mental disability. After taking the photo, when we said goodbye, Ljilja said sadly: 'Now we're like a miracle that is shown to the world.'

How can Europe gain new strength? This Europe of the European Union is the best thing that has happened to Europe in its long history. Today we have the European Parliament – the only directly elected supranational institution in the world. This democratic assembly of Europeans is a wonder of the world, yet its approval ratings are in decline. The author calls for a strong European social policy to prevent its solemn proclamations being nothing more than empty buzzwords. *By Heribert Prantl*

W'e're used to moaning about Europe, just like kids do about school. We're used to complaining about Brussels bureaucracy, its democratic deficits, the cost, the jumble of directives, the euro and the bailouts. All of these complaints are justified. But we have forgotten how to see the miracle. And Europe is a miracle.

This is the European paradox: the more this Parliament has grown in importance, and it truly has become more important (though still not important enough), the less seriously it is taken by Europeans. Ukrainians have taken to the streets for Europe, Latvia has adopted the euro, and Georgia and Moldova have signed association agreements with the EU, but meanwhile Euroscepticism is growing within the European Union. Of course, most people want Europe, but they want it to be different. The continent has to decide what another, more citizen-oriented EU could look like.

Europe needs more than just treaties and bailouts; it needs the trust of its citizens. Voter turnout in the 2019 European elections may have risen for the first time in 20 years, but years of indifference and mistrust have left many people refusing to vote. This sense of mistrust has surged into the Parliament with much Eurosceptic fanfare. Nationalism and nationalist movements have gained ground in the European Parliament. The election of critical Eurosceptic parties means Europe is being pushed back to an unpleasant past of fragmented small states that co-exist and oppose each other.

That's why it is so important to build trust in a better, reformed EU. Europe has to be more social, closer to its citizens, more human. Europe has to become a home for its people. Europe has to be more than just an economic community; it has to be a community of citizens. It should be more than just a symbiotic community for businesses and banks and become a community that

protects its people. This cannot be achieved through empty buzzwords but through solid social policy. We need this kind of concrete social policy.

Families who can still afford it usually take a holiday. We go to Florence or Nice, Versailles or Venice, Paris, Rome, Prague or Athens, Cologne or Copenhagen, Bruges or Ghent. Wide-eyed, we walk through the great museums, the old castles, monasteries, palaces and gardens, cathedrals and temples and yet there is one thing we do not see: that all this history and tradition is contained in and built upon the European Union.

European at heart

The Europhile writer Joseph Roth was born in 1894 in Brody, a small town in the easternmost reaches of what was then the Austro-Hungarian empire, and died in Paris in 1939. In 1932, in the foreword to his great novel Radetzky March, he bitterly lamented bitterly the decline of old Europe: 'The cruel will of history destroyed my old fatherland, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. I loved this fatherland. It permitted me to be a patriot and a citizen of the world at the same time, among all the Austrian peoples also a German. I loved the virtues and merits of this fatherland and today, when it is dead and gone, I even love its flaws and weaknesses.' My God, how cheerful and euphoric Joseph Roth would be if he could travel through today's new Europe. His grief over the decline of old Europe led him to seek refuge in alcohol. Today he would be celebrating, dancing in his favourite Parisian café, Café Tournon; he would be writing and writing; he would write more about the good Europe; he would make European history dance for joy and be dizzy with happiness because

his old Europe has risen anew, bigger, more peaceful and more united than ever. Never before have the people of this continent been able to move so freely as today. There have never been so few barriers, borders, obstacles. Millions of holidaymakers know this from their travels. More than ever, the people of this Europe can be what Joseph Roth wanted to be: patriots and citizens of the world.

How can Europe harness its strength? What does Europe need to be and become for people to love and appreciate it? What I wrote above in the introduction is so true: the European Union is the best thing that has ever happened to Germans, French, Italians, Czechs, Danes, Poles, Spaniards, Flemish and Walloons, the Dutch, Greeks, Bavarians, Basques and the Baltic peoples. Europe is the culmination of all the historic peace treaties that never actually brought peace. The European Union is the conclusion of an almost thousand-year war, waged by just about everyone against just about everyone else. It is an undeserved paradise for the people of an entire continent.

EU – these two letters stand for a golden age in European history. We write them down, we say them, and we are almost afraid because they are no longer in tune with the general mood. Fewer and fewer people believe in them because in daily life the European emphasis is being worn away and swamped by economic concerns and the social anxieties of its citizens. People are afraid, and many European politicians are responding to this fear by repeating the above accolades: the European Union is the best thing that

has ever happened to Germans, French, etcetera, etcetera throughout their long history.

This is certainly true – and yet such solemn sentences become mere strings of sounds if, and as long as, people experience this EU only as a community that benefits business and banks rather than as a community that looks after its citizens. Social policy cannot be a mere appendix to economic policy. Social policy is policy that creates a home; it takes clever social policy to turn Europe's state structure, the somewhat unwieldy EU that is still too much of an economic community, into a home for the people who live in it. When you feel your country is your home, you don't want to be driven out of it. If your home country becomes too weak, you want to feel Europe is your second home. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for protesters across Europe to repeatedly demand that their governments act with a certain degree of economic integrity in a globalised world.

Internal peace is based on economic rules that are also socially responsible. There is a growing fear that the social base is being gradually eroded in this Europe of the economy and the euro. If there is this feeling – and there is indeed this feeling – then it is not enough to demand that citizens show gratitude for the fact that the European Union exists. Europe needs more than just treaties and a single currency; it also needs the trust of its citizens. At the moment, citizens don't really know why they should want Europe. They are told that they need the EU as a powerful player on the world stage, but they don't feel this power. The European nation

states are losing their shape, but the EU is not gaining it. It is growing in size but not in strength. This has to change.

In the past, the Greeks would consult the Oracle of Delphi. Today, Europe consults the financial markets. We can argue about which is better, but communication with the Oracle was undoubtedly easier. It was in one place and embodied by one person. The place was on the slopes of Parnassus and the person's name was Pythia. So the Oracle was tangible. And when she refused to play ball, Alexander the Great simply dragged her into the temple by her hair. An inscription in the temple forecourt had the answer to every question: 'Know thyself'. Europe has been given more opportunities for self-knowledge than ever before thanks to the crises in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Cyprus (not to mention Brexit). These crises were and remain not just monetary and financial crises but also reveal an institutional crisis, a crisis of democracy. Apparently, the euro crisis was and is no different: it was simply a case of carry on regardless; the markets cannot wait. Everything has to be done at top speed; the executive has to take effective action; determination is the key.

On the slopes of Parnassus

So the first imperative of EU policy in times of crisis is: no time, no time. The second: spend even more billions even faster. The third: ignore parliaments. The fourth: markets first, people second. The fifth: the

old democratic rules are unfit for the new Europe. 'Democracy is too slow', declared Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, in September 2011. No, Mr Barroso, you are too quick to criticise democracy; that is where you are fundamentally wrong. The accusation that democracy works too slowly is 'an old topos from the arsenal of anti-democratic thinking', according to German sociologist Karin Priester. The euro is certainly important, but democracy, the rule of law and the welfare state are even more so. Crisis is the hour of the executive – this has always been the reason given for the executive's hectic pace during the euro crisis. That well may be true. But the problem is that the euro crisis has lasted for years, not just an hour. Dozens of EU summits, all of them so-called crisis summits, have left parliaments marginalised. Democracy has been displaced and gone mad.

It is incredible to see how parliaments, the hearts of democracy, have lost their influence. Parliamentary democracy in crisis-ridden Europe is in dire straits. The sovereignty of parliaments and the people must not be replaced by the sovereignty of real or supposed European experts. Democracy without demos is a contradiction in terms. The EU Parliament had no say on the euro bailouts; Europe's representatives are mere spectators. The national parliaments are a little better off; after all, the people's representatives there are allowed to approve their governments' decisions. The Bundestag in Germany has always been free to say 'that's OK' to things that really aren't, to the de-parliamentarisation of politics, which has moved from creeping to galloping in the course of the euro crisis. But parliaments are not beggars sitting beneath the European Council table waiting for crumbs to fall, and they should not be forced to adopt this role.

It is about trust in the democratic process, and parliaments are assets that build this trust. All too often, parliaments are derided in the media and public sphere as being argumentative places, but where else is one to argue about Europe? On the one hand, the crisis involves justified complaints about the castration of democracy and, on the other, a strong desire for 'Alexander politics' – the politics of the strong leader. These two things simply don't go together. It is undemocratic to yearn for leaders who will cut the Gordian knot with a single blow.

Europe will never recover from two or three EU leaders with an autocratic bent. Anyone who constantly demands 'hey presto' answers shouldn't be surprised when – hey presto! – democracy disappears. The European Citizens' Initiative that was introduced with the Lisbon Treaty could provide hope of a new democratic awakening in Europe. The institutional hurdles are high, as an initiative requires the approval of one million citizens who are nationals of at least one quarter of the member states. The European Citizens' Initiative is still not particularly satisfactory as its scope is limited to

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issues that fall under the remit of the EU Commission. And it is this Commission, which would hardly pass a democratic legitimacy test, that decides whether the citizens' legislative proposal is admissible.

Two million citizens can oppose the privatisation of the water supply – as with the Right2Water initiative – but the Commission can still simply sweep it off the table. That is neither good nor right. It is a serious mistake; it is anti-democratic. We love talking about the House of Europe. European houses have existed before, very special houses, holy houses: the cathedrals and minsters were once the houses, the trig points of Europe. This is where the whole of the continent's art found its form, its shape, its home – in Brussels and Barcelona, Antwerp and Strasbourg, Vienna and London, Magdeburg and Uppsala, in Aachen, Kuttenberg, Burgos and Cluj-Napoca. It is said that the name 'Parler', which belonged to a family of master builders who erected cathedrals and minsters from Freiburg to Prague, is the root of the German word Polier, meaning a site overseer.

Overseers of the spirit

It is hoped that the House of Europe will also have overseers of its spirit and workmanship. I hope these builders and overseers will include trade unions in Europe. I hope they will be involved in planning the ongoing construction of the House of Europe. I hope the trade unions will make it clear to the EU Commission, the European Council and EU politicians that it is they who are the builders of the House of Europe. The builders are the citizens, the people, everyone who lives in this house.

The euro bailout packages amounted to unimaginable sums in the billions. But size alone is not enough. After all, it is not euro coins that live in Europe, but people, its citizens. The European Union needs the trust of its citizens, and that trust does not simply trickle down from bailouts. Without this trust, any protective screen is fragile; it flutters, sweeps everything along with it or falls apart. Most discussions on most topics reveal the extent to which this trust has already been damaged. Whether it's the mouldy walls in the kindergarten toilet or the lack of teachers and cancelled lessons – there has always been wild applause when someone says '500 billion': '500 billion for banks, but just a few pennies of monthly benefits for children of the long-term unemployed.'

Money is important in Europe. Money is a way to shape Europe, but also to disfigure and destroy it. There is a striking discrepancy between the hectic pace of the austerity policies imposed on the EU's southern member states and the apathy that exists when it comes to taming financial capitalism. Europe is suffering the consequences of the aging and anti-aging excesses of capitalism. The banking crisis was managed and resolved by redefining it as a 'sovereign debt crisis': 90% of Greek debt was held by banks, hedge funds and other private creditors before 2010. From 2010, Greece

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received assistance loans amounting to 188 billion euros from the EU's bailout fund and the IMF. By 2012, a major transformation had taken place: now only 10% of total debt was in the hands of private creditors. European taxpayers were now guaranteeing or (directly or indirectly) liable for 90% of what was previously private debt. Europe has obviously been abused in the service of financial capitalists.

The Greeks as debtors

In the *Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare examined the archaic idea that one can settle debts with a part of one's body. For generations, people have attempted to interpret this case, including members of the legal profession. The moneylender Shylock insists on his contractual right to take a pound of flesh from his defaulting debtor, the merchant Antonio. For decades, the lawyers' guild has argued about the contract's validity and the verdict.

In his famous 1868 paper *The Struggle for Law*, the eminent German legal expert Rudolf von Ihering argued that Shylock's claim was invalid due to immorality. The exact ju-

stification has been discussed for many years, but it has generally been agreed that paying debts with a pound of flesh is intolerable. So if it is archaic and immoral for debts to be paid with a pound of flesh, what is to be made of the burdens, cuts and harsh austerity measures imposed on Greece and other southern EU states? The severity of the austerity measures has had serious consequences for the population's health. Many people find themselves without proper medical care, and suicide rates are rising.

Is this a new way of demanding one's pound of flesh? The EU troika decided that public spending on health should not exceed 6% of GDP – with the result that spending on medicines and health services has been cut by 25%. Greece now has fewer hospital beds, and no new doctors have been hired. Disease is once again spreading rapidly, with worrying increases in new HIV infections, tuberculosis and malaria. Infant mortality has increased by 43%. Greece always had problems caring for patients who needed blood transfusions after accidents or operations, but now the situation has moved from difficult to disastrous. The Greek people have paid for the debts of the Greek state – with their flesh and blood. Where is the 'victory of the clear sense of right and wrong?'

Few hospitals in Greece meet Europe's minimum standards. Greek TV regularly shows pictures of old people begging and pleading for help outside clinics and pharmacies in Athens and Thessaloniki. These were and are warning signs. The message? If you fall seriously ill in Greece, hard luck! Where

is the wise Daniel, where is the Portia from Shakespeare's play who will intervene and prevent the worst from happening? Everyone who sees the *Merchant of Venice* agrees that it is intolerable for debts to be paid with flesh. But where is this sense of justice when it comes to euro debts? Should they be paid for with one's life and health? Protective screens have been put up for banks and euros. There is no bailout for people. The bailout is for obligations, financial relations, power structures and economic systems – they have to survive. Is it of secondary importance whether and how people survive?

Many citizens have the uneasy feeling that, although the EU stands for classic external and internal security, it only benefits trade and commerce while social issues are largely ignored.

There is a fear that the social aspect is increasingly being eroded in the cross-border free competition that is propagated by the EU. This is because the different social standards in the various member states with open borders invite social dumping and lead to a levelling out of national welfare systems (with a downward trend). If there is this feeling – and there is indeed this feeling – then it is not enough to demand that citizens show gratitude for the fact that the European Union exists. Europe needs more than just treaties; it needs the trust of its citizens. However, amendments to treaties can and should also contribute to building this trust, particularly amendments to the Lisbon Treaty, which gives the principle

of competition a quasi-constitutional status and establishes competition among the member states.

Welfare state systems are crumbling and breaking down, and the EU is doing far too little to stabilise them. Despite all the rhetoric, the EU is not based on three strong pillars. It is based on just one: economic and monetary union. If the Union were a state, it would be the third largest state in the world in terms of population – 500 million people. Most people in Europe do not feel the potential strength of this great Europe. They want a Union that helps them, that takes away their fear of unemployment and cheap competition. They want a Union that protects them.

Fundamental social rights

But politicians usually answer their demands by saying that the EU is there for freedom and competition, while it is up to the nation states to deal with social issues. They say social policy is a matter for the member states, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed, there is something to be said for that. But such a division of responsibilities cannot work when the EU's main focus is on propagating economic freedom and free competition. Then the member states' social policies are seen as obstacles that have to be removed in line with the principle of free movement of people, services, goods and ca-

pital – remove anything that gets in the way!

On paper, at least, the EU has been inching closer to the social aspect. Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty no longer refers solely to a Europe that is committed to balanced economic growth and price stability. It now also states that the aim is to work towards a competitive social market economy, full employment and social progress. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights even lists fundamental social rights that are not mentioned in Germany's Basic Law. But listing them is not enough. Politicians have to enhance the European Treaties accordingly; and the European Court of Justice must abandon its economic orientation and see itself as the guardian of the European Constitution with all the rights it contains, especially social rights.

As yet, we don't know whether we can trust this new social commitment. There is some evidence to support it, but also much evidence to the contrary. On the one hand, the Lisbon Treaty mentions full employment and social progress, but in other places it has blind spots, for example when addressing the values of the EU. It's true that democracy and the rule of law are mentioned, but there is nothing about the welfare state and social justice. How can Europe harness its strength? Basic social rights need a guardian. The highest EU court should be – or should I say become – such a guardian. It must be the legal Olympus of a union of citizens; it must

not consider itself the legal Olympus of the former EEC, a European Economic Community. The European Union and its Court of Justice in Luxembourg must not turn Europe into a European anti-social union. That would be fatal; that would be destructive.

Privatising social responsibility

Why? Because the welfare state, the welfare states in Europe are a success story. This success story has different milestones in each EU country. In Germany, the initial focus of the welfare state was on ensuring that war invalids and refugees could at least survive. Later, it ensured that children from poor backgrounds could also study and perhaps even become chancellor. Without the welfare state, this republic would have crashed more than once; the welfare state has served to defuse social antagonisms. Without it, there would probably also have been no German reunification. And unless this success story continues to progress, there will be no European unity.

It is a matter of defining the essentials of what should comprise 'social progress' as described in the Lisbon Treaty. People in Europe want to feel that this European Union is there for them and not primarily for banks and international trade. They want security to be understood not only as internal security but also as social security. This is how Europe will gain new strength.

'The severity of the austerity measures has had serious consequences for the population's health. Many people find themselves without proper medical care, and suicide rates are rising.'

Privatising social responsibility is not a good way forward for Europe. The EU should not continue along this path. It still spends too much time looking through the lens of free competition. That's why it is neglecting social issues and the common good. That's why the impetus for privatisation of the post, telecommunications and railways came from Brussels. That's why Brussels is proud of these privatisations, but consumers less so. That's why the EU take a sceptical view of public service broadcasting, public utilities and even health insurance systems, while its citizens take a more favourable view. If the state sheds its responsibilities like trees shed their leaves in autumn, if the state makes itself ever smaller, then the voters' sphere of influence also shrinks. Too much privatisation becomes a danger to democracy. For example, as more municipal utilities are privatised, the municipality loses its previous function so that it is no longer a school of democracy but a one-room school. Fortunately, for many municipalities the time of privatising public services is once again over.

However, Europe still has to learn that not all public goods should be thrown to the lions in the name of competition. And the harmonisation of laws in Europe should not be done under the banner of how people can be made more fungible for the economy and competition. Man is not merely homo economicus, and the same applies to Europeans.

One of the strangest periods of my life was when I went to work at Alfred Wunsiedel's factory. I had gone to the job

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centre, which sent me and seven fellow sufferers to Wunsiedel's factory, where we were subjected to an aptitude test. I was the first to be sent to the examination room, where the questionnaires were beautifully laid out on tables. Question one: 'Do you think it is right that a human being only has two arms, two legs, two eyes and ears?' This was the first time that I reaped the fruits of my thoughtful nature when I immediately wrote: 'Even if I had four arms, legs and ears it wouldn't be enough for me to do everything I want to do. Humans are poorly equipped.' Question two: 'How many phones can you handle at one time?' Again, the answer was as easy as one plus one equals two: 'I get impatient if there are only seven phones. I only feel fully occupied when there are nine.' Question three: 'What do you do in your free time?' My answer: 'I don't know what free time means – I deleted it from my vocabulary when I was 15, because in the beginning was the deed!' I got the job.

Heinrich Böll wrote a story about this many years ago. Workers are required to be infinitely flexible, totally resilient, incredibly healthy, robust and efficient. The question is: do we want to live in such a society?

Do we want a Europe where everything is like Wunsiedel's factory – a Europe where the unlimited ability to perform is all that counts, where the only thing that matters is market value, where the value of people and nations is measured only by economics? In today's economy, the image of man is that of *homo faber mobilis.* Pure *homo faber* is a thing of the past. He belonged to the modernist era. Now, in our post-modern society, it is apparently no longer enough for workers to simply work. They have to be *homo faber mobilis*, highly flexible, mobile and adaptable.

The perfect human

Apparently if you're unemployed it's your own fault. If only you were more mobile, flexible and adaptable (and therefore not so comfortable) you would have a job. That's why many economic institutes and politicians are calling for a new human being, homo faber novus mobilis – people who can transcend their own limits and limitations. We need the perfect human.

Of course, real life in nation states and the EU is somewhat more restricted. Unlike snails, people no longer carry their houses on their backs. And also, unlike molluscs, they are not hermaphrodites. They have other social needs that are expressed through seeking a life partner, starting a family, doing sport, joining a choir, sending their children to school and having friends. This places certain limits on the unswerving need for mobi-

lity, on their limitless availability. 'Wunsiedel man' is obviously different: he has no children, no family, no social ties. He is not and cannot be the ideal European citizen – and the EU should not idealise such a person. What would happen to European society if homo faber novus mobilis were the social model? A European social model built in the image of such a person would be an anti-social model. A European social model does not mean that the whole of Europe should pay the same minimum wage or provide the same unemployment benefits, pensions or education system. A European social model also does not mean health care should be funded in the same way throughout Europe. A slim, pan-European, pared-down welfare state with streamlined guidelines from Brussels – this is not a European social model but a horror scenario. A European social model is something quite different. It is the common idea that social inequality is not God-given. A European social model means a strong safety net and help in times of crisis, such as ill-health, unemployment and the need for care. Only a few can handle such crises in their lives without suffering hardship. A European social model is a common coordinate system in which the axes are solidarity and justice – and in which the individual member states find their own coordinates and are not hindered but supported by Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Europe needs such a coordinate system. This is the system that will give Europe new strength.

The trust of its citizens will grow in line

with the legal and social security that Europe provides. So it would not be a bad thing if Europeans had a court of justice that they could trust as much as the Germans trust their Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe. Europe is so much more than the euro. The EU calls itself a sphere of justice, security and freedom. People know when this is mere empty words, prattle, lies. Europe must be a byword for democracy. Of course, the euro is important. But the welfare state, the rule of law and democracy are much more important than the euro. This is the only way that Europe will become a home to its people. So, where will Europe find its new strength? This new strength will come from the basic rights that also apply in Europe. This new strength will come from a social policy that gives people a home. This new strength will come from giving more power to the European Parliament – as the democratic representative of Europeans.

This Parliament must have the power to give Europe a social face. We look forward to seeing this kind of Europe. The foundations of this European House do not stand on the ruins of nation states. Those who want to destroy the individual states in order to build Europe on them; those who want to tear up the constitutions and principles in order to write a new common constitution in their place – they have understood little about Europe. Europe does not destroy, Europe does not tear things down, Europe joins things together. Constitutions are not there to ruin the constitution of the people; they are there to create trust. Europe is a new *concordantia discordantium*, a work that brings together very different, even contradictory things. Europe is a democratic project. It needs no cloak-and-dagger operations, no emergency decrees that bypass Parliament and citizens in order to bring it to fruition. What it needs is the people.

The European House is a large house with many rooms, many doors, many cultures and many types of people. This house preserves Europe's diversity and the richness that results from that diversity. This house is the home of Europe. A Europe without Europeans would be doomed to failure. So we must fight for a social and just Europe. Only a social and just Europe can also be a democratic Europe. A democratic Europe is a Europe that is committed to the interests of all its citizens, of all its states, rich and poor, and all its citizens, strong and weak. The preamble to the 1999 Constitution of the Swiss Confederation states: '...conscious of their common achievements and their

'This new strength will come from the basic rights that also apply in Europe. This new strength will come from a social policy that gives people a home. This new strength will come from giving more power to the European Parliament – as the democratic representative of Europeans.'

responsibility towards future generations, and in the knowledge that only those who use their freedom remain free, and that the strength of a people is measured by the well-being of its weakest members.' The strength of a people is measured by the well-being of the weakest. This is a good, important, forward-looking motto that applies beyond Switzerland's borders.

Europe's strength is also measured by the well-being of the weakest, the weakest states and weakest people – and by the trust that citizens place in this Europe.

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Nemanja

The second person we met on the tractor was
the only young person in the village: Neman-
ja. The 19-year-old is Rajko's neighbour and
works with him as a woodcutter. During the war
he was taken out of the house lying in his
cradle; he returned to the village because
his parents live here. His mother is a house-
wife and his father is also a woodcutter. How
do you live here? 'I don't, I just come here
for a month to earn money cutting wood and to
visit my parents. Then I go back to Prijedor
because there are no young people here, except
for one girl 20 kilometres away. The village
now has six people and 12 houses.' What do you
want out of life? 'A family, and I'd like to
work somewhere outside of Bosnia and Herzego-
vina, because everything is screwed up here.'
What motivates you in life? 'Money'. What do
you fear? 'I'm not afraid of anything.' How do
you see the future of these villages? 'There
is no future here. I have no plans to stay
here or live here. Only a madman would do
that. A school has been renovated in the next
village, but it has no pupils. It's interest-
ing that Edgar Zippel thought of us, because
everybody has forgotten us. We have invited TV
crews and journalists to come here and film,
but nobody has responded.'

More politics? Anyone who talks to the people of Europe these days, from Flensburg to Freiburg, Prague to Rome, Budapest to Warsaw, hears two things: a deep dissatisfaction with the EU, and a deep desire for Europe. Somehow, people have a shared cultural memory of Europe. The increasingly unsettled middle classes, in Finland and Germany, the Netherlands and France, are becoming easy prey for the siren voices of racism. When rotten systems finally collapse, it usually happens faster than anticipated. *By Ulrike Guérot*

The majority of EU citizens, around two thirds, still supports the idea of Europe. These people don't want to lose Europe. Many of them are deeply worried right now that the European project could fail. More than that, they are scared. But they no longer trust the EU. Over the last few years, this loss of trust has amounted to about 20 percent on average across Europe. The EU has forfeited the trust of most of its citizens. Only about 30 percent of the German, French and British populations – that is, of the three largest EU Member States, still support the project of a 'united states of Europe'. Yes to Europe, no to the EU. That's the general feeling. What they want is a different Europe.

But this other Europe is not here yet; it has to be invented – a democratic and social Europe. A Europe of citizens, not of banks.

A Europe of workers, not of businesses. A Europe that acts in concert in the world. A humane Europe, and not one that shuts itself off behind barriers. A Europe that defends its values rather than trampling all over them. This Europe doesn't exist. The betrayal of the European idea by the nation states is almost physically painful. The betrayal of human rights, first drowned in the Mediterranean, then trampled into the mud of the Balkan route.

The betrayal of the idea of a Europe without borders, now impaled on fences. The betrayal of the idea of overcoming nationalism and populism, both of which have come back with a vengeance. The betrayal of the dream of a social Europe, of a converging European economy, as foreseen in the Maastricht Treaty, swept aside by the neoliberal Single Market. The betrayal of the next generation, and the one to follow, who have been burdened, via the socialisation of bank debt, with the costs of a scandalous, shameless binge on the financial markets. The betrayal of the savers, whose savings and life insurance policies are being eaten away by low interest rates. In recent years, the EU has created many losers and only a few winners – but very big winners. As a result, few things are more fragile than the European narrative today. Fifty years of European integration now seem like a thin veil which is being torn back to reveal a historical

abyss threatening to swallow up Europe once again. An EU incapable of reform, almost apathetic, now produces only endless and growing crisis.

Clearly the EU, with its multiple integration projects, has lost its way. First, the Single Market project; then, Economic and Monetary Union. Lately there has been a concerted but fruitless effort to bring about a Common Foreign and Security Policy. Yet it is clear that the EU has managed to lose the very thing that is needed to inspire popular enthusiasm for the project of a common Europe: the essence of politics.

The death of political Europe can be sketched out in a few sentences. The Maastricht idea of an ever-closer union had already fizzled out by the end of the 1990s. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has not worked. The emancipation of Europe from the USA has not succeeded: what remained of it was buried in the confusion wrought by the American war on Iraq in 2003, where the slogan of 'united we stand' succeeded only in uniting the eastern Europeans against the German-French tandem.

From that point on, a deep division has split the EU in two. Despite what was often said in the 1990s, enlargement and deepening could not be undertaken in parallel. Maastricht and Amsterdam, Nice and Laeken are all European place names and treaties that hardly a single student knows

'The betrayal of the idea of a Europe without borders, now impaled on fences. The betrayal of the idea of overcoming nationalism and populism, both of which have come back with a vengeance.'

today. In all of them, the EU worked feverishly on a reform agenda which grew ever more complex, and which produced ever less political union, so that in the end the modest achievement of the establishment of the post of European ombudsman by the European parliament was celebrated as a victory for European democracy.

However, the biggest problem is perhaps not even that the EU is despotic. The EU's biggest problem is that it cannot even concede that fact in political discourse. For what would happen then? This is the only Europe there is, so it has to be defended. This is the trap in which the political debate over Europe is caught. In Greek, the word for crisis is the same as that for decision. The EU has long outgrown intergovernmentalism, but it cannot bring itself to unify. It cannot make the decision to become a political entity and thus democratic. If you cannot decide to live, you die. That is the true nature of the crisis.

Breaches of democratic principle

As a consequence of these massive breaches of democratic principle and of the decoupling of the economic and political arenas, forms of populism – both on the right and on the left – are now sprouting up like mushrooms everywhere in Europe, from Finland to Greece. The so-called populists oppose the EU. They break up classical two-party systems and thus make possible the erosion of national democracies. Populism is usually branded as a threat to liberal democratic societies. However, Europe's populism problem is a problem of the second order. Its main problem is the political centre ground! For the political centre ground is not able or willing to denounce the EU as a violation of democracy. Nor does it feel any

obligation to help the EU become a genuine transnational democracy, for example by proclaiming the positive political and social benefits of European integration. The EU is incapable of escaping from its own political self-repudiation.

That's the real problem in Europe! European populism always has two faces. One is an anti-euro face; the other opposes migration and inundation by foreigners. Both faces are recognisable in Marine Le Pen and Viktor Orbán, in the 'True Finns', the Austrian FPÖ, the Swedish Democrats and Geert Wilders. The German AfD believed that under Bernd Lucke it could hide its ugly second face behind the professorial anti-euro face until AFD politicians like Björn Höcke revealed the party's grotesque xenophobic face in public as well. This grotesque anti-migration face of European populism makes it easy for centrists to claim the moral higher ground.

But this self-righteousness disguises the fact that the populists' critique of the euro highlights a genuine weak spot in the euro governance system: the euro can work, but it is not democratic. What Marine Le Pen and her fellows criticise, namely European post-democracy, is not a particularly original target, and can be found in the analyses and critiques of almost every respected political scientist or sociologist.

There are whole libraries of studies that tell us that the euro suffers from a lack of legitimation and that European parliamentarianism is flawed. The euro cannot ensure social cohesion in Europe. The problem is that for decades now we have refused to apply this knowledge in the European parliaments. If anyone says it out loud in the world of politics, they run the risk of being labelled a populist.

The slogan 'we are the people' regularly used by Pegida expresses in an uncomfortably stark manner the fact that citizens, and not the state are sovereign – not in the sense of plebiscites, but because as a sovereign collective they legitimise parliamentary representation. According to the essay on the theory of populism written by Jan-Werner Müller, a German political scientist who teaches at Princeton, a person is by no means a populist simply because they reject the dominant views or a national or European elite. Thus the mere fact that Marine Le Pen expresses justified criticism of current European policy in France certainly doesn't make her a populist, let alone a pathological one.

Instead of taking seriously the root causes of the populist vote and recognising that there are genuine grounds for it in a weakness of the system which results in social and cultural exclusion, the political class reacts in a way that is self-righteously moralistic: with argumentation that exaggerates the ethical principles involved, in which right-wing populists are characterised as being without integrity, irrational and malicious or dangerous, and in which the particular needs of those left behind by globalisation are not acknowledged as a legitimate opposing value system, or even just a different political opinion. The buzzword for this today is polarisation: anyone who isn't in the centre ground is polarising.

In this way, opposing arguments are not engaged with but simply denied political validity, and thus the very ground on which democratic discourse can take place is pulled away. It must inevitably erode if political views are not considered a priori to be of equal validity in principle, and if consensus is prized above dissent. Excluding populists is thus the beginning of the end of democracy. This is certainly not meant as a defence, or even as an excuse for the statements made

by leading lights of the AfD such as André Poggenburg or Björn Höcke.

Objective facts are declared taboo and labelled populist. Recently, even the establishment of a European Parliament committee of inquiry into Juncker's tax affair was lost in the daily nitty-gritty and failed because the Left and the Greens didn't want to cooperate on it with the populist right. This is a breach of the aesthetic principle of form follows function: form rather than function is now determining the politics of the EU. This is perhaps the precise point at which the recovery of a European political aesthetic should begin.

For some time now in Europe we have been in a kind of pre-revolutionary state – but we haven't noticed. Pegida's gallows posters in Dresden are a symbol of this. Pre-revolutionary means that people oppose the system because they refuse to accept either the supposed absence of political alternatives or the hidden corruption and illegality of the system itself. Precisely this is happening right now all over Europe. The support for populist parties across Europe now stands – subject to variation by country – at around 30 percent. Where the EU effectively allows no opposition and no possibility of overturning its decisions, there remains – on the right as on the left – only the option of escape into system opposition and into new parties. This is precisely what the renowned American economist Albert O. Hirschman expressed in 1970 in the formula 'exit, voice, loyalty'. If you can no longer remain

'This grotesque anti-migration face of European populism makes it easy for centrists to claim the moral higher ground.'

loyal to a system, and your voice is no longer being heard, then you can only drop out of the system.

Anyone against current EU politics is against the system. And right now their numbers are growing. Thus it is not populism which is threatening the EU, but the EU which is producing European populism. Where the politics of the EU is regarded as being without an alternative, it provokes opposition to the system. The post-democratic condition of the EU does offer a formal, though ineffective, democratic choice via elections to the European Parliament. But the EU fails to redeem the promise of democracy, which in order to be effective must entail the capacity to produce different kinds of politics. More than that: at the same time, the EU is destroying the functioning democracies at the national level by withdrawing from them key tools of social governance, for example by means of the so-called European Semester and through its control over budgets. Nota bene: in the no-man's-land between European post-democracy and purely formal democracy at the national level, mainly made up of grand coalitions at the political centre, European populism is thriving and will continue to thrive.

European populism thus has an objective basis which the political centre ground is not capable of acknowledging, let alone of correcting at a structural level. The most important breeding ground for the widespread hostility towards foreigners currently being stoked by the European refugee drama is – disregarding for a moment incorrigible neo-Nazis and xenophobes – a continuing post-democratic mismanagement in Europe, which has produced a social crisis on an unprecedented scale and a massive disenchantment with politics. In this context, the German theologian, civil rights activist and

non-party politician Frank Richter speaks of an 'emotional bottleneck' and stresses that exclusion or worse still, condescension, is not the answer. Surprisingly, so-called 'conservatives of the left' have recently argued in a similar vein and have interpreted the populist surge on the right as a symptom of objective political failure.

The increasingly unsettled middle classes, in Finland and Germany, the Netherlands and France, are becoming easy prey for the siren voices of racism because their own civil, political and social rights have been trampled upon. When rotten systems finally collapse, it usually happens faster than anticipated. And the ruthlessness with which they are brought down by those who never profited from the old system is also always underestimated. It would be a mistake to assume that many tears will be shed for the passing of the EU; any that are will be crocodile tears at best.

Empirical studies now provide evidence of an unambiguous correlation between poverty and electoral participation. Poor people don't vote. Elections no longer offer a genuine political alternative and thus no hope for possible improvement in people's lives, which is why the socially marginalised and the 'left behind' do not bother to vote. In his book The Society of Equals, the French sociologist Pierre Rosanvallon gets to the heart of the issue when he writes that democracy is more about social equality than formal participation; and he thereby reminds us of the founding principles of the French Revolution, liberté, égalité, fraternité.

Freedom is only possible together with equality. Wherever a formal democracy exists without a resolution of the social question, or without a society's implicit promise of equality having been fulfilled, at least to some degree, there the democratic system

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has failed, because it no longer fulfils its purpose. There is now comprehensive evidence that income inequality and wealth disparities are continuing to rise across Europe today. Everyone knows it. Democracy is not so much a matter of participation and more about maintaining social cohesion. Europe must be more than mere market integration.

The solution to the problem therefore lies in the first place not in the denigration of the people who demonstrate in support of Pegida, or of those who vote for the FPÖ or the Front National, but in the construction of democratic conditions and socially sustainable politics in Europe. And that means in the whole of Europe. The EU cannot deliver this, because it cannot do either social policy or genuine structural economic policy. Its responsibility has been largely reduced to that of creating a single market. So it cannot even make use of the vocabulary or the toolbox for a policy of social sustainability. With a budget of 100 billion euros, currently around 0.9% of European GDP, a derisory fraction, it doesn't have the means, either.

Because of a Single Market policy largely built around the concepts of structural reform, efficiency, growth and competitiveness, and the linked distribution of structural funds on a per-capita basis, the rural regions have disappeared from the value

creation chain across the whole of Europe. They are becoming, with few exceptions, mere recipients of handouts. Europe's social problem is today largely a problem of urban versus rural and centre versus periphery. In the sprawling rural wastelands the vote for right-wing populists is very high, whether UKIP, FPÖ or Front National. UKIP flourishes in regions of comparative economic decline in northern England, the Front National in the so-called centres péri-urbains, the economically weak regions of France, and the FPÖ in Styria and Lower Austria. The one-sided Single Market philosophy on which today's EU is based drives these mainly rural globalisation losers directly into the arms of the populists.

Under the pressure exerted by the right-wing populists, the countries affected lurch into nationalism, as has long been observed in Hungary, France and Poland, though not only there. Where national political systems can no longer resist the populist challenge, and where in addition national policy – especially economic and social policy – is constrained by the EU, entire systems shift en masse to the right, entire states succumb to simplistic solutions, nationalist fantasies or grand coalitions that stumble on for years on end. In France, Nicolas Sarkozy tried to outdo Marine Le Pen on the right during the 2012 presidential elections. Germany's grand coalition is the lifeline of the political centre ground in countries that have adopted the euro and which therefore cannot escape EU policies. For the others, the option is to totally seal themselves off (Hungary, Poland and most Eastern European Member States) or pull out (UK). When the political programme does not include European democracy, the nationalists spread the fiction that they are better off alone. In any case, we have lost conceptual clarity about democracy. Terms such as 'authoritarian' and 'legitimate' are relative and it is time now to think about how to find a permanent European way out of this structural crisis of EU politics. It is time to point out the structural deficiencies and democratic deficits of the EU's economic model. And it is time to take both of these things seriously. 'If you don't let the system go, you get a revolution', as an American political scientist recently observed.

It is possible that European populism is the herald of just such a European revolution, which will become ever more difficult to channel politically. Time, therefore, to radically rethink Europe. Is the EU ready to seek a way out for all of us by attempting to create a transnational European democracy, which would of necessity require as its basis a more equitable distribution? Is the EU ready to recognise that the neoliberal nature of its monetary system is part of the problem? In short: is the EU ready to acknowledge that the current economic order, and the way it is anchored in the EU Treaties, needs to be fundamentally re-thought if the aim is the political reunification of the continent? Or is the lurch into nationalism all that remains, because the EU cannot answer these questions?

Those were the days, when the directive on cucumbers seemed to us the worst of all the evils emanating from Europe, and the juggernaut of European bureaucracy was to be resisted by an EU official tasked with reducing red tape – a former Minister President of Bavaria not otherwise considered especially knowledgeable about European affairs. Who wouldn't want to go back to those times? Straightening cucumbers instead of dealing with refugees, olive oil jugs instead of Grexit, light bulbs instead of Brexit. How widespread was the indignation, how much rage was expended over EU cucumbers or

EU gender equality measures in the pubs and bars, especially those frequented by (older) men: Brussels really should mind its own business – surely 'women's issues' were something for national level regulation!

How grievous was our betrayal then already of political aesthetics, our failure to take the politics of Europe seriously, and our resulting lack of concern or attention. 'Il faut cultiver son jardin', we must cultivate our gardens, wrote Voltaire in Candide. We didn't. Only 20 percent of Germans know what the European Commission is or what it does. Hardly a single young person can name the member states of the EU, or even tell you how many there are. Even people in the first semester of their studies at a renowned Law School do not know about Jacques Delors or the Maastricht Treaty. The situation is probably similar in other countries, if not worse. The great majority of the population no longer know, and haven't for some time, what our goals were in 1992, or how or when we managed to lose our way so badly in our European political project that it is now like a tangled ball of wool, and we can no longer find the thread. But the thread that leads to a political Europe was cut long ago. In public political debate, the EU can no longer find its way back to its origins – and it doesn't have a new concept to replace it. We don't have a language of Europe, we are unable to talk about Europe in political terms or to talk about a political Europe.

We are paying the price for that today, and it is a high price. In the general European mumbo-jumbo, it is no longer possible to discern a clear vision of Europe, because we can't express it in words.

The corruption of language and discourse in the public political debate on Europe – and the way entire electorates have been led astray as a result – might be considered a relatively minor issue. But it is important: 'Tout est langage', everything is language, the influential French psychoanalyst Françoise Dolto once said. Europe had been talked down long before it was actually left cowering and impotent on the floor, as it is now. The political language of Europe – and with it the associated emotions – was snatched by the populists long ago. There is hardly a single politician at the national level capable of putting forward in a few, crystalline or remotely persuasive words a credible, concise argument as to why European unification is necessary and a proposal for how to go about achieving it. Our language should bear witness to the integrity of the European political project. A project without integrity, on the other hand, will have no political traction either. Citizens everywhere can sense that, even if they have no specialised knowledge of democratic theory. Europe's loss of the power of speech was accompanied by the loss of a sense of direction. In the 1990s, there was at least still the dream of a finalité – of a goal. Now, even that has been buried. As long as the national political elites had good reason to link their hopes for the future to Europe – the hope of economic prosperity, the hope in Eastern Europe of accession to the EU, the hope of security, the hope even in France – oh, yes – that the euro would

'In public political debate, the EU can no longer find its way back to its origins – and it doesn't have a new concept to replace it. We don't have a language of Europe, we are unable to talk about Europe in political terms or to talk about a political Europe.'

break the dominance of the D-Mark in the European currency system; as long as Europe carried such hopes, an extensive European coalition of discourse was maintained between the national political elites who spoke up for the European political project. This may have been only soap-box rhetoric, but it showed the importance of political narratives. However, such narratives have to be coherent and consistent. And the narrative of the Europe of the EU was not. As the European political project, under the pressure of the multiple complex challenges and changes of the last two decades, especially the Eurozone crisis, began to crumble in the hands of the national elites, the European coalition of discourse collapsed. Europe no longer had an advocate. Suddenly, it had many different narratives about the origins and costs of the crisis – a German one and a Greek, a French one and a Hungarian, a Polish, Finnish, and many more; narratives which also varied across the generations, and which all boiled down to one question: who is to blame?

Hall of mirrors

This hall of mirrors constructed of contradictory narratives now produces only a fractured and distorted vision whose passing no-one will mourn. It is important to understand that the national elites had already abandoned Europe before the citizens became fully aware of it. The elites took to their heels when Europe became difficult. In Germany, too. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Wirtschaftswoche, Bild Zeitung, ordoliberal economists, and conservative lawyers who still see the state in terms of German constitutional doctrine from 1912: all of them blithely joined in the deconstruction of Europe, in Germany just as much as elsewhere, coordinated through the system of speaking tubes that is the political and media network. The German discourse coalition on the Eurozone crisis, incidentally, consisted mainly of men, usually ageing professors. Where Germany said a formal farewell to the European ethos, the other countries simply fled without a word – the French were the first, of course, as their refusal to speak up for Europe dates back to the 'Non' in the constitutional referendum of 2005. The loss of the foundation of pro-Europeanism at the base of German political discourse had an impact on the European narratives in the other countries. When it came to the issue of a fiscal union (usually referred to as a transfer union) as the – necessary – price to be paid for the single currency, the answer from Germany was a thunderous 'No thanks – that's not the kind of Europe we wanted!', accompanied by a dogged but untenable legal insistence on a 'No bail-out' clause. Economists, usually Germans, appeared regularly on television to stoke up fears of inflation, rather than bemoaning the democratic deficit in Europe. Although people in Germany don't like to hear it, it has long been observed by prominent commentators in other countries – from Austria to Italy and Great Britain – that populism and nationalism in Europe are not least a reaction to the fact that the European narrative was re-written in Germany into a story of 'German national normality', one in which the Germans have smugly basked ever since the fairytale summer of the 2006 World Cup, taking it easy on the back of their record exports – which were in reality due to the introduction of the euro, but which were proclaimed as a legitimate source of national pride, the fruits of which were certainly not to be shared with the rest of Europe.

On top of that, the Nord Stream gas pipeline from Russia direct to the German Baltic coast was being built, elegantly circumventing Poland and thereby perhaps explaining in part the anti-German sentiments of the dreadful Jaroslaw Kaczynski and his 'government'. Renowned British and American historians have for some time now been saying things that make people in Germany squirm with embarrassment, such as that the austerity policy imposed because of the Eurozone crisis has caused a 'Europe-wide depression' on a massive scale, just as Brüning's deflationary policy did in the 1930s. But not in Germany this time, which is why Germany can be said to have exported populism (up until now, at least). In Germany, as in the neighbouring states, the EU has now lost every possible platform for the launch of a political project, for setting out a narrative that could make sense of the whole thing, where the malaise occasioned by the many diverse crises afflicting the EU today could be explained and contextualised. The citizens of Europe are left alone now with their worries, with their fear, and with the big question: what's the point of Europe? Solidarity with whom? With the Greeks? The refugees? Even perhaps with the Brits? And why now with the French in the war on terror? Where does it end?

When, in a couple of thousand years – or perhaps sooner – intelligent beings arrive on Earth and read our speeches and debates on Europe, what will they say? Probably that we seem to have taken leave of our senses. At any event, they will have serious doubts about our intelligence. And the question does indeed have to be posed: what could we have been thinking of? Not much. At the very least, we were disingenuous. Very disingenuous. A glance at an imaginary dictionary of typical EU terminology and discourse will make that clear. It has been pointed out already that with the term sui generis we have created a perfect figleaf for the lack of any explanation or justification for the structural absurdities of the EU – first and foremost, that it is a market without a state and a currency without democracy. For decades, legal experts walked a tightrope between a European federation of states and a European federal state, and came to the conclusion, with a shrug of the shoulders: neither one nor the other. Constitutional lawyers have long bemoaned the fact that the established distinction between (national) constitutional law and international law was abandoned in the EU to be replaced by a 'permanent state of overlap', or what Dieter Grimm called a 'confusing hotchpotch'.

Terminological confusion

The term 'European federalism' was bandied about for decades, but it means different things in French and German usage alone. In Germany, it usually refers to the federal structure linking the republic, the Länder and the municipalities; in France, by contrast, the term 'federal' brings to mind the Fête de la Fédération in 1790, with which the process of centralisation in France effectively began, taking power away from the regions. And let's not even start here on American fe-

'Europe's social problem is today largely a problem of urban versus rural and centre versus periphery. In the sprawling rural wastelands the vote for right-wing populists is very high.'

deralism. Terminological confusion wherever one looks. The consequence is a lack of conceptual clarity, and political and legal tribulation.

Not to mention that ever closer union is itself also a very elastic concept, as can now be seen by the fact that Mr Cameron simply had it deleted it from British European vocabulary – and the eastern Europeans, too, have by and large taken its meaning to be symbolic at most. Whole libraries were filled with (occasionally absurd) essays on 'the nature of the beast', without the question of whether we wanted to live with a beast ever being posed. What if it were to devour us? The legal experts set out to find the locus of sovereignty in the overgrown jungle of the EU institutions – and failed to find it. Or else it was sometimes to be found here, and sometimes there. The knowledge of what the consequences would be if sovereignty were to mean no more than the right to non-intervention was collectively suppressed. So who decides? The EU is sovereign, and so are the states. And the citizens? Well, they are as well! But where can they be found? Logically enough, all three were awarded greater or lesser sovereignty according to demand: sometimes the European Parliament was upgraded, then the citizens were given an ombudsman, then the national parliaments were given more rights again – as the Bundestag was in 2009 with the 'Act on the Exercise of Responsibility for Integration' in the course of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. But the EU Council, too, was not short-changed, with the announcement in 2010 of the so-called 'union method'. The Commission was treated generously, given control over the 'European Semester' and thus over national budgets. Sometimes, the German constitutional court defended the European project – or at least did not aban-

don it – for example with its (late) decision on the bail-outs in March 2015. Sometimes it called into question the legitimacy and democratic structure of the European Parliament; on another occasion, the citizens were awarded a 'citizens' initiative', since when they have been able to collect signatures (for or against something), which the EU Commission is supposed to take seriously, but in reality doesn't. An expression still popular with many national politicians is that they would of course like more Europe, but that unfortunately the nation states are not prepared to relinquish sovereignty – a sovereignty that they don't possess, given that only the citizens are sovereign. As is the empty phrase, we have to 'take the citizens with us' – to a European destination that seems to be neither known nor identifiable. Sovereignty in Europe is an amoeba – tiny, flexible and infinitely adaptable. The political science community responded with agility: in no time at all, it coined the term 'multi-level governance', which basically means simply that many people can play a part in European decisions but no-one has to take responsibility for them. Or at least, the responsibility remains diffuse, and it is hardly possible to hold to account the many actors who share the responsibility between them. This is a very practical arrangement, and people have got used to it. Then came the birth of European civil society, which, through the NGOs, has for years now been conducting a form of regulatory trench warfare against the EU comitology in numerous EU directives, from the chemicals directive through to TTIP.

It is certainly capable sometimes of limiting potentially severe political harm and of achieving successes, for example the blocking of the directive that would have seen the privatisation of water utilities. But do we

Slavica

Jovo Ivetić Slavica and Ivetić Jovo, daughter-in-law and father-in-law, live together in a village near Livno. Jovo is 92 and fought in World War II alongside the partisans and Tito. He was wounded during the war. His son, Slavicin Bozidar Bosko, also known as Karan, died last year in the very place we are sitting now. One morning he drank brandy, had a heart attack and died. Slavica tells some amazing stories about Bosko. She says the popular singer Mali Kninǆa recorded a song about her Bosko. He once sang it in a pub and it was all about Bosko for 18 minutes. All of Banja Luka wanted to buy the CD with the song about Bosko. And apparently Bosko was the only man to ever escape from Goli Otok (the Naked Island), the infamous Yugoslavian prison island of the Tito era. 'He was on the island for exactly 12 years, 12 days, 12 hours and 12 minutes. Then he escaped, and luckily wasn't eaten by the sharks.' She goes on to praise his qualities as a fighter during the war and talks about Vukovar, Knin and Bihac, where he was wounded. Slavica criticises the state of Serbia, which has given nothing back to Bosko. As a war hero he should have some kind of income, but he received nothing. Besides Bosko, Jovo has two sons, Luku and MomÐila, who live in Belgrade, and daughter Dana, who lives in Krusevac. Luku had been back for a while to make schnapps but returned to Belgrade the day before our visit. Besides Slavica and Jovo, Kuma is staying in the room next to the stove. She is actually Bosko's godmother. She lives alone nearby and is 83 years old. Kuma has three sons, one in Serbia, one in Banja Luka and one in America. Her husband died some time ago. She has been a housewife all her life. They offered us soda, coffee, apple juice and schnapps. We drank a soda in the little overheated room by the stove. Slavica also offered us something to eat, which we refused. Throughout our visit, the frail and absent-looking grandfather stroked the cat's belly with his foot. About Bosko, Slavica adds: 'He was a fighter, plain and simple. Serbian, fuck, and I'm Croatian!'

want that kind of trench warfare? Or would we not prefer a well-functioning political system? When European democracy is not an option, we resort instead to participation and to forms of sham democracy, or we breezily substitute deliberation for democracy, despite the fact that all the empirical evidence tells us that in networked forms of governance, especially, the complexity and diversity of the arenas constitute a natural barrier against the proper representation and protection of the interests of citizens who are relatively poor in terms of organisation, networking and finance.53 That basically means all of us.

Lobbyists of every stripe

Instead, the corridors of the European Parliament and Commission are crowded with lobbyists of every stripe. Parliamentary committees are largely replaced by stakeholders. The politics of the EU has been reduced to functionalist and administrative tasks. Output legitimation replaced input legitimation, and it was only when there was no longer enough output, in the form of growth and prosperity for all, that people suddenly realised there was a problem. Core concepts of politics such as 'government', 'executive', 'legislature', 'separation of powers', 'accountability' – the EU never gave them practical effect. For a long time nobody noticed, because it wasn't important. Now it has finally caught up with us. Where is European politics going to come from if the EU only does governance and not government? The EU can only offer us technocratic governance. The populists, however, want government – and they are right to do so! Anyone who wants to debate the politics of Europe has to make a political Europe possible. The danger

is that we have missed the boat for a political Europe. If it were to be put to a popular vote now, the answer would probably come only in the form of national-level fury and rejection. So the trap in which we are caught is best described as being between national nightmares on the one side and European technocratic governance on the other. And European democracy? 'This item is currently unavailable ... ' The vagueness of the terminology is stifling public debate on Europe. According to a study by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, around two-thirds of all Europeans are in favour of a European president. However, they don't want them 'to govern alone or to have too much power'. Something very similar can be found in the manifestos of many political parties: a European president is a good thing, even if we don't know exactly what the president can or should do. Given this degree of vagueness, we should not be surprised by the number of popular but fruitless talkshow discussions about whether we want more or less Europe. More or less of which Europe? Of the Europe we have now? A president of what? It always boils down to the same thing: we do not take Europe seriously as a political project. We don't even think through properly or rigorously what it might mean, and then we are surprised to find that a political Europe isn't there when we need it. Like now.

Now everyone is calling for European solidarity – and that's another term that's used in a politically disingenuous and arbitrary way. Solidarity is not a legal concept, and therefore politically next to useless, as it is neither legally actionable nor fixed and substantive. There are no sanctions against a lack of solidarity. Legal rights, by contrast, can be enforced. First, Germany didn't show solidarity with the south of Europe during the Eurozone crisis. Now eastern Europe is

'Terminological confusion wherever one looks. The consequence is a lack of conceptual clarity, and political and legal tribulation.'

letting Germany down over the refugees. The federal German government originally insisted resolutely on the application of the Dublin Regulation, which stipulates that refugees have to be registered and to remain in the countries where they first set foot on EU territory. For a country without an external EU border, that is an understandable position to take. For a long time, it simply did not matter to Germany if Italy or Greece had problems with it. In 2012, Italy begged for support for 'Mare Nostrum', its air and sea rescue operation in the Mediterranean, and received a paltry 90 million euros – nobody in the EU displayed solidarity. France asks for solidarity in its military actions against Islamic State terrorism, but chooses not to do so under Article 222 of the EU Treaties (which applies 'if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack') so as to avoid having to involve the EU community institutions. The concept of solidarity has long been adulterated into a kind of national cry for help, with which any country can ask for almost anything: the Greeks for money, the Hungarians for border fences, the British for help with their referendum (which they intended to use to justify more opt-outs from European rules). The easy use of the word solidarity over the course of 2015 to signify a kind of European panacea, as well as the moral indignation displayed when it was not forthcoming, demonstrates that there is no possibility of European unity until we address the issue of the political format of Europe and of how to mould it into a bin-

ding legal construct. Everything else is just too diffuse and arbitrary. Since we are not capable of thinking or talking properly about Europe, and thus of making our way into the political engine room of the European project, we can only conduct various forms of defensive linguistic rearguard actions. Instead of working on the design of a transnational democracy, we organise national bunkers. When European democracy isn't functioning properly, the call for subsidiarity can often be heard – another familiar term used to defend us against the theft of more competences and other such interventions by the EU in 'national affairs'. This usually results in the creation of so-called 'competence catalogues', which signify the total abandonment of a common European legal area. Few concepts have been abused quite so shamefully in Europe as that of subsidiarity, which hardly anyone apart from the Germans understands anyway. Usually what is at stake in such cases is something like apples from Normandy or milk from Holland, products to which the supposed strategic interests of a country have been attached. And we do not even notice that we are thereby employing the specious discourse of populism. During the eurozone crisis, the vocabulary of European politics became especially shrill. 'Rescue fund', 'stability mechanism', 'growth strategy', 'debt brake' ... the citizens of Europe were browbeaten by bureaucratese. And the public discussion of this most political of all European crises was left to the economists, of all people, who work only with numbers, devoid of any cultural, historical or political feel for Europe. As if a political community could be comprehended in numbers!

It was the eurozone crisis above all which buried the European ideal under a linguistic rubbish tip of terms like structural reforms,

competitiveness, and bail-out packages. None of these terms is clear, none of them warm. All refer to the market, but none refers to democracy, responsibility, goals, citizens' interests or the common good in Europe. None of them expresses values or a normative obligation. None refers to a general public good. They are all formal organisational principles, and they are all cold. You can't picture any of them. 'You can't fall in love with a single market', said the former President of the Commission Jacques Delors. The language of Europe must be dug out from under this terminological debris so that we can once again recognise what is our common project on this continent. France and Germany especially spent decades haggling over how to create European economic governance. Ultimately, it was all nothing more than word games. What form of governance doesn't cost anything? What kind of policy doesn't need a budget? Or which government ministry? How can you separate 'economic governance' from a government? Are education and defence also part of economic governance?

There is no form of governance that isn't 'economic governance'. The term itself is an expression of political dishonesty.

The EU is the embodiment of a contradiction in terms. Behind the policies it introduces lie national interests, and in front of them stands the protective wall of sovereignty. 'National interests are the interests of national politicians and economic operators for whom the interests of the citizens are just costs to be written off', Jean Monnet once said. As European citizens we need to ask ourselves how long we are prepared to put up with this! Europe's economic misery is effectively permanently entrenched by the national bureaucracies, to which the national industries attach themselves like leeches. National officials and bureaucracies and their public and private hangers-on largely serve their own interests – that is, the pursuit of competencies and power. The principal interest of the European citizenry, namely to have a set of common policies that works well and to the benefit of everyone from Lapland to the Peloponnese, is right at the back of the queue. But given the travails of the Single Market and of the so-called 'common policies' (digital union, energy union, capital markets, union), the EU is in practice only attempting ex post to deal with the problems it generates itself ex ante. The majority of the EU's macro-economic coordination policies could be pulped if the EU were able to deliver infrastructure – that is, transport and energy investments – across the whole of Europe, and thus to develop and demonstrate a commitment to a common European polity. But it can't do that. Ultimately, an internal market doesn't have to concern itself with the common good. Although the scope for action at the national level is still exploited to the full whenever possible within the energy, digital and capital markets union programmes, the lack of such scope with regard to the refugee crisis prompts criticism. The conclusion must be that the scope for action at the national level will always be fully exploited when national privileges and benefits are at stake, but that the EU will always be brought into the game when costs can be shifted onto it. To put it

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more succinctly, when the EU is not allowed to act consistently at the smaller scale, it will fail at the larger scale. Even with regard to the securitisation of the EU's external borders, an issue currently widely under discussion, there has as yet been no detailed negotiation on whether or how German or Danish border police are to be deployed in Greece, or whether Dutch officials will be able to patrol the Romanian border, as even the vice-president of the German police union proposed. A practical person, one might deduce, who is simply concerned to establish what exactly common responsibility for external borders means for the training and career structures of the police. Which language will be used, for example, for training and deployment exercises? And whereas this practical person seeks a European solution, the national politicians by contrast are closing the internal borders and Schengen is unceremoniously suspended. The ordinary citizens seem prepared to bring Europe in from the realm of the abstract and to break out of the blinkered national perspective in order to design European policy – but not their national politicians. The citizens want efficient politics – the politicians want national powers. The list could be extended at will.

The proposed institutional solutions, too, such as those for the political integration of the eurozone, although they are always fundamentally pointing in the right direction, are increasingly losing momentum through the multiple crises. Negotiations over political progress in the eurozone have been going on for years. Political initiative follows political initiative, excellent strategy papers pile up en masse: everything is on the table – or rather, in the drawers. Emmanuel Macron's familiar calls for fiscal and social harmonisation, for an EU budget and a Eurozone finance minister, after the German

and French economics and finance ministers had launched several joint initiatives and commissioned related studies. But by then Germany had the refugees, and the eurozone crisis was so yesterday. 'We know what needs to be done, but we can't do it', Jean-Claude Juncker is supposed to have said. The rift between Eastern and Western Europe that became ever more visible during the refugee crisis is currently serving to revive the debate over 'core Europe'. What tends to get forgotten in this debate is not just that, before the eurozone crisis, the intention had been for the eastern European states to join the Eurozone as soon as possible (at that time, the target date for Hungary, for example, was 2008; for Poland, 2011); but above all that, with each passing year, the economic differences between East and West grow larger and more petrified within the system.

How the continent of Europe is supposed to grow politically closer despite this economic rift is a mystery. Since the Baltic states – presumably more for reasons of security policy and fear of Russia than on intrinsically economic grounds – were swiftly accommodated into the eurozone in recent years, the debate on how to integrate Eastern Europe into the euro has fallen silent (both here and there), as indeed has the argument that this should happen sooner rather than later. And in all of these debates on eurozone integration, or in all of these discussions on a 'core Europe' currently enjoying renewed interest, another question needs to be asked: do we really want to unite only half the continent again, and to cut off the eurozone (including the Baltics) from Eastern Europe – and thus to exacerbate, politically and above all economically, the same rift through Europe that we prided ourselves on having overcome in 1989? A debate ignited some time ago already, and no longer only in

whispers behind closed doors, over whether the eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004 might perhaps have been a mistake after all.

Yes, the eurozone urgently needs a political initiative to push forward further integration; and this will have to address the issue – better perhaps, the urgent task – of finding new ways of thinking about state sovereignty, especially in the domestic economic sphere. And this in turn has to entail the question of how to bring Eastern Europe into the eurozone, as quickly as possible – not least for reasons of geopolitical strategy, because monetary policy and geopolitical strategy go together. But it's probably too late now; not only too late to bring Eastern Europe into the euro, but too late for the structural corrections to the euro that might have made it socially sustainable and democratic. It may well prove possible to pinpoint in retrospect that the turning point for eurozone integration, that is, the year when the political ambitions for it were abandoned, was 2012; the year when the French, after the April election of their new President Hollande, caved in sooner than expected, and the hopes and ambitions for political reform of the euro that had been voiced before that election were dashed in the turmoil of the eurozone crisis. It was already clear then that, in addition to fiscal and social convergence, Euroland would need a eurozone parliament, a parliament with full rights of legislative initiative as well as responsibility for a 'eurozone budget' and a legislative cycle synchronised with the budget cycle of Euroland. Responsibility and accountability would then once again be on the same legitimatory level. In its current form, the eurozone cannot achieve that. In 2012, there was at least still political hope.

A new Europe begins with new thinking, in the full knowledge that the creation of a

'Although the scope for action at the national level is still exploited to the full whenever possible within the energy, digital and capital markets union programmes, the lack of such scope with regard to the refugee crisis prompts criticism.'

different Europe cannot be mandated, either politically or legally, under the currently prevailing conditions – that is the nature of a utopia. Europe has to be reconceived from first principles 'to complete what has been withheld from us'. These beautiful words are from Walter Benjamin, who in his writings rejects the idea of utopia as a final state in a linear conception of history and instead asserts that the 'divine spark' of mindful

thought (*Eingedenken*) can rescue what has been lost, and is accessible to us in every moment of the present. Against the idea of linear historical progress, Benjamin proposes a non-linear, discontinuous conception of time. Utopian potential is hidden within the cracks, crevices, historical discontinuities and deviations of time, like the potential in the burning hot focal point of a magnifying glass. Let us hold on to this thought at this historical moment for Europe: utopia is within our reach! And now that we have looked deeply into the political malaise; now that we have understood the condition of post-democracy, and also why the EU cannot deliver us from it; now that we have seen how this will inevitably and almost mechanically lead us into more and more populism and more and more nationalism; now that we have also understood that we ourselves have destroyed the European political aesthetic

through our language, and have betrayed the political project; now that we have grasped that the European nation states will continue to lead us to increasingly wrong solutions that are not good for the Many; now that it is clear that we European citizens are set at odds with each other by the EU, and suffer the betrayal of our common interests in democracy, social justice and sustainability because we are at the mercy not only of European post-democracy but also of the Single Market, both of which are destroying our national democracies – now we are ready for the utopia of a European Republic. The only thing we have to do is to say goodbye to the nation state as the only political form of democracy. This is exactly what the concept of the European Republic offers!

The republic has always been the historical form for an association of sovereign citizens – so why not also in a transnational democracy, one that is embedded in a vision of society? The republic is thus the formula for a European constitutional patriotism beyond the nation state and beyond political ideologies. The republic is not right and not left. It is a transnational legal framework whose crucial element is the political equality of all the citizens who join together in it. That is what makes it a true political entity, a union of European citizens. By contrast, the concept of the 'United States of Europe', a federation of nation states, is, as we have seen, an oxymoron, an irreconcilable pair of opposites. If we can escape from this oxymoron, the way is clear for a different Europe. The EU and the nation states simply cannot both be sovereign – and anyway, only the citizens are sovereign. The EU and the nation state do not go together. Europe and the republic go together. The concrete realisation of Europe as a republic will require a lot of hard work. We must let go of both the EU and the

nation states. But nota bene: the EU – not Europe! The nation states – not our identity! The conceptual leap we have to make to achieve this is to really understand that as European citizens we are indirectly sovereign and that the nation states are only trustees of our sovereignty. The states have only borrowed sovereignty from us. We will reclaim it now and build the first transnational European democracy: decentralized, regional, post-national, social and democratic. 'Network Europe 21' is a network of European regions and cities under the protective roof of a European republic in which all European citizens enjoy equal civic and political rights. The moment this new Europe has evolved from below and a new post-national democracy has emerged, the EU can collapse like a house of cards. Nobody will miss the Brussels technocracy. Welcome to the European Republic!

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Time to make Europe understandable The alternative to the EU is renationalisation. That's why the EU Member States face a choice: do we want to stand alone and divided, or stand together in defence of our social model and our competitiveness in a globalised world? The author believes that if Europe collapses into its constituent parts, it will sink into irrelevance. Together, however, Europeans form a strong community of states and peoples that guarantees the rights of its citizens. *By Martin Schulz*

It could be said that people living in border areas are Europeans by instinct. For all of us who grew up after the war in this part of the world where Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium meet, in this microcosm of Europe, borders decisively shaped our outlook. For all of us, nearby borders, marked by wooden barriers, were a part of our everyday lives. Long queues formed at these borders when people wanted to cross over at the weekend to go shopping or visit relatives on the other side. Sometimes these borders were closed because of a football match. We all know how restricting borders can be and how liberating it can be when they are opened. To my mind, hardly anything so perfectly embodies the achievements of European unification as open borders. At the same time, we should remember that the lifting of the barriers which the borders represented was only the culmination of a lengthy process of overcoming other barriers – cultural, economic and linguistic. We overcame what divided us in order to create something that unites us. That is Europe's message: overcome divisions in order to create unity. That is why I will vehemently oppose any attempt to take away this freedom! Those who try to reinstate borders, try to separate us again!

For many years, I was Mayor of Aachen's neighbouring town of Würselen, and so I had the enormous privilege of experiencing Europe as a daily reality. At that time, the firm conviction grew in me that political decisions must always be taken as close to the people as possible, that politics needs a human face, that politics must be both relevant to people's lives and readily understandable. As a European politician, however, I have often found that ordinary people simply don't understand the European Union. They equate 'the EU' with faceless institutions, far removed from their daily lives, the Brussels spaceship, a bureaucratic monster. It worries me that people are becoming increasingly alienated from Europe, that they are turning their backs on it and that they no longer feel at home in the House of Europe.

Having said that, the idea on which Europe is founded – overcoming what divides us by means of cooperation between states and

peoples across borders – is not in question. But fewer and fewer people associate it with 'the EU'. The question now is: do we give up on the idea, or do we make the EU easier to understand and more effective? I firmly believe that we should make the EU easier to understand and more effective to develop this great idea of ours even further.

In 2012 I therefore made it my task, as President of the European Parliament, to throw open the doors and windows of the House of Europe so that people can look in and gain a better insight into what is happening inside: who does what, when, where and why. Only in this way can the trust we have lost be recovered. This is the common goal I share with European Council President Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Why do we share this goal? Because mistrust generates resentment, whilst trust generates optimism. Yet mistrust has grown in recent years and has unleashed forces which are determined to roll back Europe, which speak the language of renationalisation, which call our democracy into question and which are even prepared to destroy the EU.

No guarantee

There is no guarantee that our way of life will last forever. It is foolish, therefore, to think that there is no alternative to the EU. Of course there is, and we should spell it out: the alternative to the EU is renationalisation. That is why we face a choice: do we want to stand alone and divided, or stand together in defence of our social model and our competitiveness in a globalised world?

Blinkered nationalism encourages a return to an idealised vision of the nation state as an Island of the Blessed and suggests that there are easy solutions, such as 'close the borders'

or 'abolish the euro', to the highly complex problems facing the world in the 21st century. But using national approaches and instruments to address what have become European problems – that is a recipe for failure.

I am convinced that if Europe collapses into its constituent parts, it will sink into irrelevance. Together, however, we Europeans form a strong community of states and peoples that guarantees the rights of its citizens – rights for which people elsewhere in the world are forced to demonstrate and even risk their lives. Elsewhere in the world, after all, there is child labour, torture, the death penalty; strikers are shot at by the police; and access to the internet is cut off when people express views which displease the regime in power.

But if the countries where these things happen are more competitive than us Europeans, precisely because they fail to uphold fundamental rights, then once again we are faced with a choice: we can either become like them, or we can bravely declare that anyone who wants access to our market – the richest market in the world – or who wants to trade and do business with us has to accept the rights and standards we uphold. Our economic strength derives from the internal market, a grouping of economies which are strong precisely because they are interconnected. From this position of strength, we can defend the values on which our society is based. This, then, is the challenge facing Europe: internally united and thus stronger vis-à-vis the rest of the world, to safeguard democracy and the rule of law and social and economic justice in the 21st century.

Anyone who dares to question this project is playing fast and loose with the prospects of future generations. Each generation inherits certain things from the previous one and bequeaths certain things to the next. My generation inherited the House of Europe from the

courageous men and women who made up the founding generation. Those men and women decided, in the light of our tragic history, to bind our interests so inextricably together that war would be impossible and to create the sense of common purpose that would enable us to meet the challenges of the post-war era together. That we Europeans should have succeeded in this aim has been, in my eyes, the greatest achievement of our European civilisation since the Enlightenment. This bold decision has secured us 70 years of peace and democracy in Western Europe, and finally brought the same peace and democracy to the whole of Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall 25 years ago.

What my generation must now do is make sure that we do not bequeath this great House of Europe to our children as a ruin. In order to safeguard the European unification process for our children, we need to regain the trust we have lost and at long last create a Europe that ordinary people can understand, give Europe a face that they can recognise.

The process of nominating 'Spitzenkandidaten' (leading candidates), a German term that has rightly found its way into many other languages, was a step in the right direction. For the first time, we saw candidates setting out their policy programmes in order to campaign for votes in the run-up to the 2014 European elections.

For the first time, the Commission President was democratically elected. At national level this is a standard procedure – in Europe it is an exciting new development. The European Parliament will never give up this hard-won right! If this has meant that some individuals have seen their powers diminish, it has also meant that voters have acquired a greater say in EU affairs.

I want to issue an appeal to the EU heads of government: stop blaming Brussels for everything that goes wrong and for every intractable problem and claiming every success as a national achievement! All you are doing is turning more and more people against the EU.

I understand how difficult it is to acknowledge that as nation states in the globalised 21st century we can no longer go it alone if we want to keep our place at the top table, to fight climate change, to conduct trade, to maintain the competitiveness of our economy and our values-based social model – we can only do so if we work together with our European partners and the European institutions. I am well aware that making a commitment of this kind to the EU is no short cut to greater popularity.

Courage and vision

But should be much easier for us today than it was for the founding generation in the aftermath of the Second World War! Bringing about reconciliation with German neighbours who had wreaked unprecedented devastation and havoc throughout Europe – that took courage and vision. If, back in the 1950s, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman and Paul-Henri Spaak had had their eyes fixed only on the latest opinion polls and the next

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elections – as my generation of politicians has today – European unification would never have come about.

Europe needs that courage and vision again now, and policies geared to the long term. Enough of the crisis management of the past few years, characterised by short-termism, cautious manoeuvring, muddling through from one last-chance summit to the next: it is high time that we called a spade a spade, tackled problems head on and came up with lasting solutions.

Lest we forget: many of the great political projects of the past were initially greeted by contemporaries with scepticism. To give just two examples, Konrad Adenauer's policy of anchoring Germany in the Western camp and Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik were as controversial as they were far-sighted, but proved successful in the end. European added value is more than just the sum of the national interests of 28 Member States. But there certainly is such a thing as the European public interest and our task is to maximise it. What we need, therefore, is closer cooperation in Europe.

If we stick together as Europeans, there is so much we can achieve. In our response to the Ukraine crisis – this war in our own backyard – over the past few months we have achieved an unprecedented degree of common purpose in our foreign policy. National governments have put aside their individual interests, selfishness and vanity and agreed on a common European approach. So far no Member State has budged from that common approach. That is a success in itself. If everyone pursues their own interests, we are weak; if we stand united, however, we are strong.

The farther you go away from Europe, the more you can feel the force of the European idea, the greater people's enthusiasm is for European unification. On the Maidan, Ukrainians brandished our European flag. For people throughout the world, Europe stands for the defence of human dignity. Europe means hope for a better future.

Let's stop trampling on the European Union. We have achieved so much by working together, as we Germans in particular would do well to remember: enemies have become friends, dictatorships have given way to democracies, borders have been opened, the largest and most prosperous internal market in the world has been created. We have human rights and freedom of the press and we have abolished the death penalty and child labour. Why shouldn't we be proud of our achievements?

In our European House many different families live, and some new ones have recently moved in. The atmosphere is lively, and sometimes even a bit rowdy, but never violent. We inherited this great House from our parents, and now it is starting to show its age. For that reason I say: let us renovate it, so that its true colours shine for everyone to see. I hope you feel as I do: I am grateful for the privilege of being a resident of this House.

Martin Schulz is a member of the German Bundestag. He was mayor of Würselen from 1987 to 1998. From 1994 to 2017 he was a Member of the European Parliament and served as its President from 2012 to 2017. He was awarded the International Charlemagne Prize in 2015.

Revolution is in the air

The spectre of nationalism is haunting Europe. It is time for the continent to display unity. Yet saving Europe and the EU requires us to listen to people when they vent their frustrations, otherwise we are simply surrendering to the populists. But this requires us to adopt structural changes, new procedures, and new world views, concepts and ideas.

By Bogdan Góralczyk
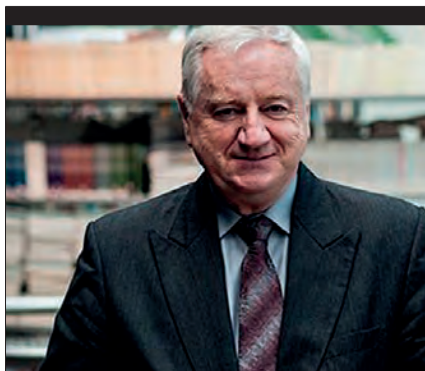
Depending on your viewpoint, Europe is fascinating, unpredictable, threatening or dangerous. Not so long ago, it seemed that the continent would be identified by the supranational European Union, with its vibrant formula of 'ever closer union', which cleverly included the goal of a totally federal future. Today it seems likely that it will come to naught. We have failed to create a common European identity based on the noble principles of equality and solidarity. On the contrary, new cracks and divergences are appearing everywhere – between East and West with regard to migrants and between the rich North and poorer South due to income differences (not only linked to the Maastricht criteria).

Along with this, transatlantic relations are clearly in a bad state. Worse still, there are conflicts among EU Member States, with Eurosceptics at odds with the fast-dwindling federalists, liberals surrounded by illiberal movements that are little different to authoritarianism, and advocates of open society being marginalised in opinion polls by radical nationalists. Instead of the hoped-for unity, we are having to deal with polarisation and new differences that are replacing the traditional division of right and left.

The former liberal elites now find themselves surrounded and in retreat; they talk about a wave of populism, even counter-revolution, while the flag bearers of the new order are not only cosying up to the common people, but also taking this opportunity to call for resistance against the privileged and the strong, whether in Brussels or Berlin. More stridently still, they call for a crusade against those who do not fit into their landscape – whether it's refugees, migrants, the foreign capital associated with transnational companies or even the Brussels bureaucracy that they claim is 'out of touch with the people' and generally perceived as suffering from a chronic illness called 'democratic deficit'. The recalcitrant masses don't like the privileges they have enjoyed, nor the elites concerned, who are sometimes called liberals, sometimes technocrats, and who are generally regarded as being detached and far removed from the worries and needs of ordinary people.

Revolution is in the air so it is hardly surprising that – as has always been the case in times of historic change – leaders are emerging at the head of the malcontents and rebels. Some are newcomers to politics, as is the case in Italy, but others are veteran politicians who have breathed new life into their careers by adopting a populist programme, such as the former liberals Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński, with their motto: *vox populi vox Dei*.

To put it another way, the words 'fear only God' apply once again. This is also true of the blatant attempts to give people a conservative re-education and build a Christian democracy, restore traditional family values, and give the church a central position – not just in religious circles, but in society as a whole. All this in defiance of multiculturalism, open borders, a radical market-oriented economy and public and moral liberties, as Viktor Orbán spelled out last July at the annual meeting of the Szekler Youth (the Szeklers are a Hungarian ethnic group that lives in the Romanian Carpathians). Orbán proclaimed the end of the 'generation of '68', which he identified with rootless hippies and flower children. Pursuing the opposite agenda, 'our generation' will now hold sway in the salons of Europe. No more laxity, it is time for discipline, and that applies to morals and values too!

Hungary's prime minister is no longer a lone voice. When he unexpectedly came to power in 2010 and began spouting his anti-liberal views, he seemed to be totally isolated. But times have changed. Warsaw took a similar course in 2015 and other capitals have followed: Vienna, Ljubljana, even Rome. A whole movement is emerging, a phenomenon that is no longer specific to Hungary. Nationalist forces – however we decide to understand that – have been given fresh wind in their sails by the UK's Brexit vote, and they are instru-

mentalising people's fears for their own ends. After 2015, the fear of an over-powerful market and more social disintegration has been joined by a fear of 'foreigners', whether they are migrants, refugees, Muslims or terrorists. Orbán, the movement's figurehead, believed the solution lay in walls and barbed wire at the border. Liberals were stunned, but it proved to be a popular move with the public.

Existential fears have been joined by a fear for one's own safety. The old slogan from the Clinton election campaign 'It's the economy, stupid' has been replaced by 'It's security, stupid', giving fistfuls of ammunition to the new elites, the anti-liberals.

The EU faces difficult times with the UK's exit and the rise of anti-liberal voices. Steve Bannon travelled to Europe before the 2019 European Parliament elections specifically to assist election campaigns by spreading the gospel of a 'national populist revolt'. All this while Matteo Salvini called for a 'new crusade' against those who come to us on foot – or rather by sea – and disturb our beloved peace.

The unity striven for by the EU's founding fathers, starting with Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, was all geared towards a single goal: federation as the crowning achievement of the European project. But, given the general mood among Member States, is it something that should still be sought? It's the stuff of a disaster movie.

The simple act of promoting a loose cooperation of nation states, so a confederation according to the ideas of Charles de Gaulle (or, to be more precise, Christian Fouchet), would be a backward-looking or at least anachronistic concept, basically also counterproductive, in light of the degree of integration, cooperation and open borders already achieved under the Schengen Agreement. This would threaten a return to being nation states and, sooner or later, they would fall out with each other as

part of the struggle for sovereignty and their particular 'patriotic' interests.

A trap awaits us, perhaps we are running into a dead end. It is clear than no-one has a magic formula to solve all the problems that are currently plaguing Europe. We only have a prophylactic that is handed out too generously and perhaps already ineffective – whether it is an overly strong belief in the market ('market fundamentalism') or the kill-or-cure belt-tightening that was prescribed for Greece; on the other hand we have the quacks, magicians and miracle healers with their simple, neat, shortcuts that seek to impose discipline on society with a system that can no longer be distinguished from a military mentality. Should an excess of liberality be replaced by an epidemic of nationalism and a circle-the-wagons mentality?

However this may sound, no-one will be able to cut the Gordian knot without Germany's will and involvement. Now that London has left the field, the nucleus of the European project, the Berlin-Paris axis, is regaining its importance. Emmanuel Macron's persistently repeated proposal to create 'concentric circles' may sound good in Paris and Western Europe, but it is not popular in the East, where countries run the risk of automatically being downgraded to second or third category states.

So we are left with the old German concept of a 'multi-speed Europe', which goes back to the time of Willy Brandt. Angela Merkel has repeatedly advocated this idea, but will she remain true to it or yield under pressure from Bavaria and the illiberal trend under Macron to accept his formula of a 'hard core'? Or perhaps the Polish-born Oxford political scientist Jan Zielonka is right when he states

in his latest book Counter-Revolution that he doesn't believe Chancellor Merkel and President Macron can lead the continent out of the current crisis on their own.

But one thing seems certain: whether it likes it or not, Germany plays the role of hegemon and, as studies and surveys have shown, recent happenings among EU Member States have restored the strength of the role of their capitals at the expense of the – in principle – supranational EU institutions, which have now been weakened. Some years ago, in an interview with journalist Gregor P. Schmitz, Hungarian-born George Soros already felt that things were on a knife edge: either Germany would become a 'generous shareholder' and take responsibility for Europe's fate, or it should withdraw from the euro zone due to its excessive strength in order to avoid totally upsetting or dominating the other members.

The question posed by Soros has now been given a very different meaning in light of Brexit and the Trump phenomenon. The EU can only be saved with the commitment of Germany, but if too much pressure comes from Berlin or if too many concessions are made to the federalist proposals being driven by Paris

'We only have a prophylactic that is handed out too generously and perhaps already ineffective – whether it is an overly strong belief in the market ('market fundamentalism') or the kill-or-cure belt-tightening that was prescribed for Greece; on the other hand we have the quacks, magicians and miracle healers with their simple, neat, shortcuts.'

– even if territorially limited – as became apparent in an article by German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in the Handelsblatt, this could exacerbate existing differences and rifts in Europe. This might please the Kremlin, but Beijing will be less happy because it is seeking a partner as a counterweight to the US.

Ideals give way to power politics

It is clear that old ideals, norms and coordinated diplomacy have given way to pure power politics. With his self-proclaimed transactional and entrepreneurial mindset, Donald Trump is driving this trend forward, but even once he has left office we cannot expect to see an easy return to the previous status quo. Instead of the infamous 'end of history' announced by American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, along with the triumph of Western liberalism, we are now seeing a return of history with all its demons, the retreat of the West and a strong trend towards illiberalism or – judging by its message and agenda – authoritarianism.

Instead of an 'ever closer', ever more homogeneous and cohesive Union, we are now haunted by the spectre of an ever looser Union, a flaccid Union torn apart by disputes and internal contradictions, as we are seeing throughout the continent as a whole but also in the Member States that are being riven by disputes and internal conflict. Who can put it back together again? Who will save the European project and its greatest, most remarkable success – more than seventy years of peace on the continent?

The reasons behind the proposals emerging from Budapest, Warsaw, Rome and Munich are understandable to some extent, but they do not trigger the best of associations. They conjure up demons that have long been buried: a continent of discontented, divided peoples, stirred up by nationalism and suspicious of their own governments, led – quite naturally – by new leaders who curry favour with the frustrated masses.

Will Berlin, Brussels and Paris (for London and Rome are now out of the equation) be in a position to contain this movement, which may have taken on a new form, but which stirs bad memories of a history that we know all too well? One thing is certain: saving Europe and the EU requires us to listen to the people when they vent their frustrations, otherwise we are simply surrendering to the populists. But this requires us to adopt structural changes, new procedures, and world views, concepts and ideas. Just like Monnet and Schuman in their day. Who will provide them in this age of Trump's isolationism? Who will explain what kind of system the EU is today and what it will be in the future? And what does Germany have to say about this?

Translated from Polish to German by Andreas R. Hofmann, and from German to English by Gill McKay

Bogdan Góralczyk is Director and Professor of the Centre for Europe at the University of Warsaw. This text is based on an article that appeared on Dialog Forum, an online portal for issues relating to Europe's political and cultural dimension.

Milan and Srđan

Milan has two houses in the devastated village. The one he lives in has been renovated. The other is burnt out and is one of the houses that is due for demolition.
Srđan, his cousin, has a house here in the village in the same row — his grandparent's house. But Srđan doesn't live here, he lives in another village near Pea. Milan survives because he has a few cows but has no income, pension or any other kind of help. Today is Saturday, so they are both enjoying a drink — the alcohol seems to fill their empty days here in the wilderness. When they saw our car with its German registration plate, they followed us because they thought we were their distant relatives from Germany. Srđan was already pretty drunk and immediately demanded money for letting us take photos — to buy beer. Apart from his views on the war, he wasn't prepared to tell us anything about himself and accused the US, NATO and Germany as a whole of bombing and destroying the villages. Dealing with him was hard work as his demands for money became more strident. In the end he told us that his father worked in Bregenz for 30 years. He was trying to get a work permit or marry someone to get the right papers.

Freedom for creative artists

Most democratic societies spend less than 2 percent of their GDP on culture. But they need to spend more on this culture, says journalist Jagoda Marinić. They need to protect and promote it with the same vehemence as when the arts, artists and journalists are attacked by dictators. The solidarity of creative artists with their colleagues inside and outside their country creates a bridge that goes beyond the nations of Europe.

By Jagoda Marinić

Let us return to those people who dared to hope that Trump's election would have a deterrent effect in Europe and help it become a brighter continent. It could be that a new political culture is developing, a culture that goes beyond the confrontational mentality of the old parties. A political culture in which a winner humbly mounts the podium and chooses the Louvre, an art museum, for the celebration because it has never been used as a stage by either the Right or the Left. The selection of this location also highlights the value of culture in today's politics. We need to understand how to preserve our cultural heritage if we are to keep what we value about Europe for future generations.

What can culture do in this respect? And what about creative artists? First of all – and this is also a resolution – avoid portraying the world as darker than it really is! People are already writing: 'Yes, he may have won, but…!' We write every BUT in capitals and admit little success, little that could give people the strength to work towards a better tomorrow. Critical thinking does not mean painting a bleak picture by numbers. Critical thinking does not mean scaring people so much that they become apathetic. Critical thinking, on the contrary, is anchored in the calm that arises from clarity. Not every thinker is the most profound and most gifted, who can outline the situation to the most cynical or with the least hope. Criticism can always be the beginning of new answers, even if the answers are given by someone other than the critic. The intellect is not there to batter people with worst-case scenarios. Ingeborg Bachmann was right when she said: 'People should be expected to handle the truth'. However, the truth is always the possibility of a new tomorrow.

We are emerging from a phase in which creative artists wanted to retreat – after all, who wanted to take on the role of Günter Grass? Art and culture should be cleanly depoliticised, consist only of narrative, offer an alternative world, not be too concerned with the nitty-gritty of everyday life or even the

grubbiness of politics. It mustn't take sides; otherwise it's not good art. But the last few years have shown that culture can indeed be an alternative world, but only in this world. Or to quote Woody Allen: 'I hate reality but it's still the best place to get a good steak.'

Creative artists are back to defend their place in society. Because there is one thing that dictators make clear: culture and art, as they understand it and create it, is not possible without freedom and the universal rights of the individual. Culture is not a conservation area where creative artists are protected from the world around them. When writers, artists and journalists all over the world have to pay for their work with their freedom, then it becomes clear that an unfree society will not tolerate free theatre. It will not tolerate 'immoral' novels.

An unfree society will not tolerate the freedom to express an opinion. And this restriction of freedom will not only be about expressing opinions, but about freedom of expression as a whole. Which area of the arts do you think has the most persecuted artists? Music. In 2017, world-renowned pianist Igor Levit was able to play the European anthem at the #PulseofEurope movement in Berlin. In other countries he could pay for this with his freedom. Dictators believe that it is not the job of art to provide hope of equality or facilitate cohesion by getting people to enjoy the European anthem together or even sing along with it. With his performance, Levit is not only defending Europe, he is defending the freedom of creative artists to fight for a world that is the basis of artistic creation.

The events of recent years, the idea that

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scenarios.'

this Europe is fragile, have reminded many creative artists that they do not live in a bubble, but that they are connected to the society around them, and their lives are not bound by a concert hall or house of literature. This new vulnerability of European fundamental values has reminded many creative artists about their role as citizens. Creative artists are once again citizens. You write a sentence differently when you know that in another country, not far away, an author such as Asli Erdogan is paying with her freedom for doing precisely that. It is something else to blog when you know that in another country, a blogger like Raif Badawi is being punished with a hundred strokes for expressing his opinion, and that his wife Ensaf Haidar in Canada is asking the public for help so that he will survive this torture.

Liberal values under fire

Liberal values are under fire all over the world and today's creative artists are reminded that there have been times when books were burned, films banned, and artists were forced to go into exile if they wanted to survive.

In times of peace, culture is often described as society's adornment – when in fact it is its substance, its backbone. Dictators know this and are the first to take on this area of freedom in society. They think that by making the strong, the gifted, and the famous small and quiet, they are silencing them all. Most democratic societies spend less than 2 percent of their GDP on culture. But they need to spend more on this culture, they need to protect and promote it with the same vehemence as when

the arts, artists and journalists are attacked by dictators. The solidarity of creative artists with their colleagues inside and outside their country creates a bridge that goes beyond the nations of Europe.

Culture holds Europe together. By defending freedom as a value, we are defending Europe. But the fact that we are living in difficult times means we must ensure that culture does not become a hostage, that it is not detained in order to do what political debate should do, simply using artistic methods. Art must have the freedom to be more than an assignment. It must have this freedom in order to be a child of hope. Freedom – this can also be the breath triggered by a poem, because it offers our vulnerability a home in a single verse. A home for words that goes beyond citizenship. Freedom of expression, such as the freedom to express oneself artistically, is a fundamental pillar of the basic democratic order.

Defending Europe

Creative artists are also citizens. They may think they are also global citizens, but this great concept is a utopia, perhaps an opportunity for tomorrow. But today we see that someone who holds the wrong passport might have it in their head that they are global citizens, but they will be put in prison with this head on their shoulders – as was the case for German/Turkish journalist Deniz Yücel. The idea of 'global citizen' must not be a euphemism for restricting the many in favour of the privileges of the few. Even today, anyone who calls themselves a global citizen cannot gloss over

their privileges. Anyone who has experienced freedom as such will feel a responsibility to defend it. Nowadays many people are experiencing the dilemma that this freedom is being used to defend anti-democratic arguments.

A fight against minorities rather than a fight for the rights of minorities, as contained in German Basic Law. These opinions are also being aired by citizens. To quote Voltaire: 'The right to say and print what we think is every free man's right, which could not be taken away from him without exercising the most repulsive tyranny. This prerogative comes from the ground up; and it would be disgusting if those with sovereignty were not allowed to express their views in writing.' This also applies to those whose opinion is currently seen as anti-European or nationalistic. It is up to us to listen to this opinion, to give it its place, but to fight for that Europe of unity in diversity. It is up to us to create the conditions for co-existence that make our arguments convincing. Walled-off elitism is no more of an answer to these questions than the anti-elitism that is becoming so widespread.

The hope that Europe can provide is its history. That precious store of historical knowledge, failures and successes – that is what European history has to offer. It is this history that binds us together. It needs to be

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a narrative that is accessible to all, a narrative that tells us about this European identity and that makes this knowledge available to every single person. At this point I would like to recommend a significant book: *Europe – The Struggle for Supremacy* by Irish historian Brendan Simms, a professor at Cambridge University. It is a book that tells the story of Europe from 1453 to the present day. It is a tale of centuries of power struggles. A tale of countless naval battles, kingdoms, religious wars, principalities, a tale of pacts and alliances. All these centuries make up our collective past – but unfortunately not always our collective knowledge. If there is anything that creative artists can do, then surely it is to breathe new life into this knowledge: What was it like to live in times of conflict? How many wars were there and how were they waged? If politicians now believe that a new generation is growing up who are more interested in free mobile roaming than in the European peace project, then free roaming cannot be touted as the answer, it has to start with education.

In Europe, the concept of a world order was defined, decided on and implemented after 1500. It was a world order that made it possible for Europeans to conquer and exploit the rest of the world. It is also part of Europe's culture to be aware of the pride that we Europeans have flaunted for centuries. It is part of Europe's identity to know which cultures, ethnic groups and regions were the rulers and which the servants. Europe dominated the world from the 15th century onwards. Europe was the gravitational focus of colonisation. Even then, Europe was creative enough to buy itself free in terms of morality.

In 1550-1551 Charles V convened theologians in Valladolid for the Valladolid debate. Even then, it was about who were the barbarians and who the superior peoples. They made theological arguments for slavery and the exploitation of native Americans. Historical responsibility is a value that Europe has to capitalise on – long before the last two world wars.

Education and democracy are also European values. In 2017, when we talk about Europe and culture, then we mustn't forget the invention of mobile printing. The fact that access to education was democratised is part of European culture. Stepping out of the Middle Ages was linked to stepping out of an elitist circle of clerics and rulers who kept knowledge for themselves. The invention of printing meant that the discoveries of explorers were made accessible to more and more people. They rediscovered antiquity, their own roots, and suddenly created more space for reason and questioned the established institutions.

New ways of thinking

Martin Luther not only nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Schlosskirche Wittenberg, but he also opened the door to new ways of thinking for the whole of Europe. This new way of thinking gave the individual a new place in the world order – now man could talk directly to God. Individuals were elevated above institutions, and the individual conscience was suddenly the key focus. This is also the task of creative artists – to open up new ways of thinking. But Luther's theses led to wars. That is also Europe's culture. New world orders are linked to wars. It is only by remembering these developments and the recurring phenomena of history that we can truly appreciate the European Union's value as a peace project.

I have recently visited several key places in Europe which, in their own way, tell us about the diversity of this continent. One of them was the Austrian state of Burgenland, a European region where minorities have a particular set of rights. Their languages and cultures have been protected, their autonomy guaranteed in all cultural spheres. Despite all this, the different cultural identities have died out. Barcelona, Catalonia's port city, is a place where it is possible to study the role of the Mediterranean in Europe. In its maritime museum at the port, close to the statue of Columbus, the city has reappraised maritime history. I entered the museum and just a few steps later found myself in the belly of a ship. This small wooden ship contains video animations about the shipbuilding of old. How did people build such a ship? What did they need, and where did they find the raw materials? Why were ships and the Mediterranean so important at that time? I saw children bending over huge displays, looking for the raw materials to build a ship. All the materials could be found in the small region at the foot of the Pyrenees. In this way, this small wooden ship and a few square metres of museum proudly explained the story of a European region like Catalonia.

A region that strives for independence and autonomy; that seeks to avoid seeing its own language and associated culture die out, its own memory. At this museum, children stand in front of the huge galley with which the Christian Mediterranean powers defeated the Ottomans at the battle of Lepanto in 1571. You see how Europe turned people into slaves because there were no machines to propel these ships. Almost 40,000 people lost their lives in this battle on the Mediterranean.

The history of Europe is a battle for progress – the brilliance with which it has been pursued and the downside. Conveying these experiences, passing them on to the next ge-nerations of Europeans, as content that has been thought through critically and not as myths, is an opportunity for creative artists and their institutions.

This Europe is a mosaic, a puzzle made up of autonomous provinces, independence movements and constantly changing alliances. Only those who understand this diversity can understand Europe. This diversity has always been a challenge, but it is also the reason for the rapid development of this continent. Europe is a string of extraordinary attempts to seek political balance; a string of failed empires, including the Second World War and the consequences of the Third Reich, which had a critical effect on creating today's social order. The social foundation, Article 1 of Germany's Basic Law, came out of the fact that we could no longer be sure that human dignity is inviolable. Our lives are based on this written principle because we are aware of the fact that humanity can be lost. And that it must be fought for.

When we listen to historians and diplomats, it soon becomes clear that Europe has always had to bring together many different princes, leaders and provinces under one roof, and that every era has seen extraordinary attempts to seek agreement and majorities. Europe's discursive character is old. While the Chinese emperors, for example, were absolute rulers over their territories, European emperors always had to pursue a more balanced way of ruling. They were indeed the rulers, but individual provinces had to be brought on board, to coin a modern phrase. We also tend to forget that this Europe of ours has always been a Europe of negotiation, with whatever

more or less brutal means it has at its disposal. The last time that Europe did not follow this path, a totalitarian ruler dragged it into a war that destroyed the continent. After the Second World War, partly as a result of the horror of the Holocaust, a peace project was launched that sought diplomatic and bureaucratic channels for this negotiation.

Within the framework of the European Union, this peace project was to provide Europe with a format for this negotiation – initially at an economic level. Unfortunately this format has become distorted. Instead of promoting more cultural cohesion over the years, it has continued to rely on closer economic cooperation. Citizens and experts see a democratic deficit in this European Union, and a sense of mistrust has arisen, particularly with regard to who are actually the beneficiaries of this project. It is this European Union as it is currently operating that is viewed as one of the reasons why European unity and mutual understanding is at risk.

It is the responsibility of the citizens of Europe to remember that the European Union must serve peace on this continent and not the interests of the few. The European Union must not give the impression that it is a self-service shop for bureaucratic and neo-liberal forces; it must not be the springboard for right-wing populists, nor is it the defender of Europe's fortress who rides roughshod over the rights of minorities for the nation states. On the contrary, it should be a platform that enables individual countries to jointly implement and defend Europe's values.

An existential value for Europe is also the power of ideas, the power of words, the power of enlightenment. An exemplary value for Europe is remembering and dealing with past mistakes. Europe's values are the sum of the lessons learned from the historical mistakes that this Europe has made. Those who do not want to learn these lessons will take Europe backwards rather than forwards. It is up to us whether we repeat history or learn from it.

Freedom, equality, fraternity – these are ideas that creative artists have brought to society. These are ideas that have given people a new place in the world order and turned citizens into sovereigns. We have returned to a time when culture cannot hide away, because it will be found and will wake up in a bad mood if allowed to sleep too long.

There is a great deal of debate about what politics can do, and what the media can do. But what about what creative artists can do? I would like to expand on this question by asking who creative artists are. Creative artists are citizens – and citizens are creative artists. We all create culture. There is no-one who is not also a creative artist through their everyday, private activities or work in the public sphere. Parents create culture when they exemplify or introduce values to their children. Politicians shape political culture with their

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words and agendas. The media creates a culture of debate through its reporting. However, the media also shapes a culture of attention, meaning that they play a major role in what grabs people's attention, what they consider important and what not. I would even go so far as to say that the media is part of shaping people's view of the world – but they always show an extract of it. Media culture is also always about selecting and presenting reality – so it is a culture of responsibility.

The risks of an attention economy

Responsibility is a value that has difficulties in times of quotas and figures, which are supposed to bring profits. In a world of economic superlatives, where supposedly only the maximum wins. When media and politics are cumulative and make polarisation the object of their culture, this polarisation spills over to the public. The media are not only representatives, but are themselves players. It was Donald Trump who said he would never have won the election without the US media because of all the free advertising he received for his agenda – which he would never have been able to pay for. He won in spite of his derogatory comments about women and his disdain for human dignity, because attention has become a value in itself.

Anyone who can attract so much attention, so many clicks, will win. The emperor's new clothes is a fairy tale that would no longer work these days. If the emperor rode naked through the streets and the child cried 'But the emperor is naked!' – people would say: So what, he's the

emperor, and look away. Culture and cultural education can oppose this cheap attention economy. This brash machinery of attention is also the tool of the right. The rapid rise of the AfD can only be explained by the excessive attention it received. Culture has also produced the appropriate phrase here: 'Wrong I was in calling spirits, I avow, for I find them galling!'

If culture in the classical sense, i.e. creative artists, can bring something valuable, then it is the memory of a society in which the struggle for attention and the determination of profits were not the focus of the community. If culture can do anything, then it is to make the idea of Europe tangible, to keep the ideas alive. But culture would not be culture if it were only about conserving. Culture is also an adventure, the search for the unknown, taking risks.

Ideas – that is culture. Words, images, an ability to understand that goes beyond mere facts. Now we are living in a time when suddenly feelings have become a danger to facts. 'Facts not feelings' is a popular slogan that tries to allay our fears. But culture also needs feelings; without feelings humans are nothing more than a variable that can be calculated. It is culture that cannot support this dehumanisation of humankind. It is culture that can save true feelings from manipulated feelings. Because the opposite of fact-based arguments is not feelings, but manipulated feelings.

After the darkness of the 20th century, this continent has been seeking new ways of

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doing politics. We wanted to leave war and conflict behind us. Nevertheless, the myth of the struggle for civil rights and democracy is a central part of the history of Europe. Many people have left this myth to the right – but European history cannot be left to those who, in a Trojan horse that pretends to be democratic, are seeking to enter parliaments and tear down the pillars of this democracy from within.

We must make it clear that all of us, as creative artists, are fighting for a cultural Europe, but that today we are fighting smarter, that we will not see Europe catapulted back into the Middle Ages, and that we want to know that the darkest chapter of our history is behind us, not ahead. Friends of democracy do not let us in to the old methods, because they have found better ones. Now it is more gentle.

Europe's history teaches us that democracy has to bring prosperity for all, otherwise democracy is at risk. If the welfare state is endangered and people are impoverished, then we must not remain silent until these exclusionary and dehumanising slogans have penetrated the spaces of this poverty and democratic society has been endangered by economic exclusion. Europe was also the continent of the social market economy, health insurance, education for all, culture for all.

Europe will only be saved if it is defended by those who love it and if the platform created for Europe's peace, the European Union, is seen as a platform for the people and not as a platform for undemocratic elites who use themselves and exploit the citizens as cheap labour. Dignifying life as working life must be an issue that we address in Article 1 of the Basic Law. What is dignified working – and how do those who have no work live in dignity? In France, which had its elections yesterday, 24 percent of young people are unemployed. We must bring values such as dignity and responsibility to these issues, not just industrialisation and de-industrialisation. The common and diverse culture of this continent, the balancing of different interests, the defence of humanity, all this is the Europe that we must not forget.

Europe is the cradle of democracy and democracy protects individuals and their freedoms. A democracy is only as strong as its ability to protect its weakest. This applies to dealing with individuals, dealing with European nations and how Europe presents itself to the world. Democracy is strongest when this sense of justice has been transferred to the feelings of democrats, when it is internalised by as many people as possible and not just quoted. It is internalised by the cultural experience of living together. Enlightened humanism is the cultural heritage of Europe, enlightened about its own shadows in order to learn how to bring the world from darkness into the light.

Jagoda Marinić is a German/Croatian author, playwright and journalist. In Germany she is a regular contributor to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung, taz,* and Deutsche Welle, and internationally to the *New York Times*. Her first published work was a collection of stories entitled *Eigentlich ein Heiratsantrag*, and her most recent is a novel, *Restaurant Dalmatia.* In 2016 Hoffmann und Campe published her volume of essays *Made in Germany. Was ist deutsch in Deutschland?* She is also the founding director of the Intercultural Centre Heidelberg and, together with other activists, launched the Democracy Plus initiative in 2015. It works to combat citizens' growing mistrust of political parties and seeks to encourage people to get involved.

Chapter 3
Social fragmentation
The fight to control the narrative

Fake news, filter bubbles, artificial intelligence and voter manipulation à la Cambridge Analytica: how should liberal democracies meet the challenges of the new media age? What is truth? One thing is clear: trust requires transparency and democracy needs a solid base of facts in order to make sensible decisions.

A short story about control Through A/B testing, the United Kingdom's Vote Leave campaign found the winning message was 'take back control'. Research suggested that including the word 'back' triggered voters' anger and dislike of losing things they felt they once had – in particular, control. Losing control is a common sentiment in Western liberal societies. How can this be changed? *By Anatol Itten*
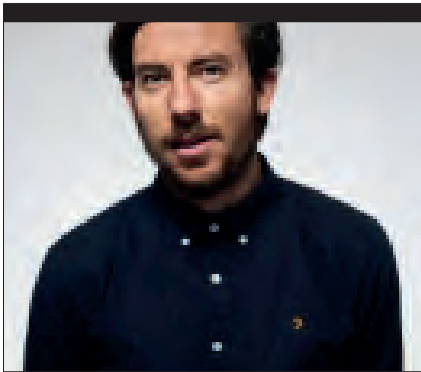
One of the most popular concepts currently sold on democratic marketplaces is the concept of retrotopia. We believe there is no happiness in the future, thus we must retreat into the past. How come we have become so obsessed with nostalgia, despite ever-fading existential pressures and ever-increasing freedom, diversity and creativity?

We've lost it. Lost control over our workplace security, over our culture, over civility in politics, over the climate, over you name it. We're still hoping to get it back – control – but, in reality, we are handing it over to others. Losing control can be scary and is rarely voluntary. This article explains how disruptions initially caused uncertainty in markets but rapidly evolved into society and democracy; and how that has led to the challenges we face today. In the mid-90s, when prospects in Western societies still seemed bright, Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen invented the term 'disruptive innovation' as a theory to describe why businesses fail. The theory goes like this: established companies focus on high-priced products for their existing customers, while disruptors introduce their innovative products to a new audience, create a new value network and eventually displace market leaders. Christensen recognised that few technologies are intrinsically disruptive or sustaining in character; rather, it is the business model surrounding them that creates the disruptive impact.

Initially, Christensen's concept delivered the argumentative base for many dotcom startups. Established rules suddenly became 'whatever you want them to be'. Employees were told to forget their obligations, conscience, loyalty, the view for the common good. It was either disrupt or be disrupted. Old assurances of the working place but also parts of society virtually turned into bits and atoms.

'Innovation and disruption are ideas that originated in the arena of business but

which have since been applied to arenas whose values and goals are remote from the values and goals of business', writes Harvard history professor Jill Lepore in her *New Yorker* magazine article, *The Disruption Machine*.

Admittingly, the word disruption has lost its meaning from overuse. Yet, despite or because of that, we have not fully grasped its broader implications on society. In order to do so, it helps to go back a few years to before the term 'disruptive innovation' was coined.

According to Louis Hyman, an economic historian at Cornell University, disruptions in society that have accelerated as a result of technology had their breeding ground in the practice of downsizing, outsourcing, and subcontracting in the late 1960s, during a time of stagnating profits. Cutting costs was easier than increasing revenues. Outsourcing functions to temporary or contract workers is now commonplace, but back then, it was so strange that it had to be learned. Decades later, 'Uber can stay flexible because workers have few options', says Hyman. 'Disruptive innovations did not cause the precarious economy. Uber was possible because shift work is so bad', he continues. Based on the acceptance of treating workers as independent contractors, many so-called platform startups of the last decade have avoided the cost of paying employee entitlements such as annual leave, sick leave and superannuation. Businesses are even incentivised to do whatever they can to avoid the costs of employment relationships. The new 'charging economy' involving electric scooters is one of the most obscure examples in this regard. The task

'Employees were told to forget their obligations, conscience, loyalty, the view for the common good. It was either disrupt or be disrupted.'

usually involves locating scooters with depleted batteries on an app, piling them into a car or truck, and taking them home for overnight charging. Chargers have practically no connection to the companies, yet they need to purchase power supplies and adapters to complete the task. The pay is minimal, the scooters can be hard to find, and freelancers often complain about unsafe conditions because of criminal activity. It is easy to register to be a collector and, with the help of smart gamification, thousands of people are weirdly willing to subsidise the charging of scooters with their own electricity.

Hence, what Hyman is trying to say is that technology was built around social disruptions to simplify and increase job flexibility in order to win the race to monopolise market positions.

Social disruptions

Problematically, most of our knowledge about the consequences of disruption revolves around marketplaces and market players and on their most visible impacts, namely on our workplaces and social security systems. But we need to keep track. Business models in the digital world have become so successful that tech companies seek to 'replicate the digital experience in physical space'. A senior Google Maps manager explained this plainly in 2012: 'If you look at the offline world, the real world in which we live, that information is not entirely online. We are trying to bridge that gap between what we see in the real world and the online world. Anything

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that is visible will become a part of Google's index of the physical world.'

After conquering our streets and public spaces, next in line are our neighbourhoods and homes. 'Sidewalk Toronto is due to become the first entirely connected neighbourhood on the planet. Leveraging this connectivity to improve citizens' lives will be key to a successful disruption of neighbourhoods.' This is one of several provocative statements made by Dan Doctoroff, CEO of the Google company Sidewalk Labs, former Bloomberg manager and deputy mayor of New York. According to Doctoroff, they seek to 'to think city planning from the internet up', so that 'government and social policy can be data driven'. Even if that sounds a little far-fetched, their first test district, Waterfront Toronto, shows that they are not too far from turning this idea into reality.

Precisely how do they do that? By generating thousands of urban design scenarios, testing combinations of design inputs like type of street grid, population, building heights, the amount of green space and how these inputs are distributed. These scenarios are then evaluated according to various performance criteria such as outdoor comfort, energy efficiency, views, daylight, and pedestrian enjoyment. Through further inputs like public or private goals (e.g. carbon emission, commercial zones) and constraints (e.g. available budget, existing regulations, usable space) the software explores all the possible permutations of a solution, quickly generating design alternatives.

The program tests and learns from each iteration what works and what does not. All you need are AI algorithms and unlimited cloud-computing-capacities.

The goal is to make public planning and protests redundant. A sub-company of Sidewalk labs tells their story via their favourite

example: A curious resident started to draft a future neighbourhood on their pilot design interface with the lowest population and the most green space. As the company comments, 'she wanted a backyard of her own'. The program output signalled her that her chosen preferences would lead to low scores for outdoor comfort and energy efficiency – two things she apparently valued. This led her to make some adjustments, generating a compromise option that performed well for those two priorities. According to the company this was the kind of solution 'that would greatly improve the performance of suburbs'.

The crucial question behind this new approach to city planning is: who is in charge of selecting and evaluating the performance criteria, the goals and constraints?

Who decides how the design inputs are conditioned and presented? On what basis does the algorithm match 'a lot of green space' with 'low outdoor comfort' and 'low energy efficiency'? Up to now, there has been no thorough deliberation in politics and society on all of these questions. It is not rocket science for the above-mentioned generative design to condition things that a person values with pre-set preferred outcomes. It is a mirrored exercise. The more participants play with the inputs to design city infrastructure and social policies until they find a solution that fits their preferences, the better an AI algorithm will be able to calculate and present feasible compromises. It will obviously be the one solution that can integrate the greatest number of individual preferences. It could be a perfect fairy-tale

for an output-based democracy. Yet, how much can you genuinely co-shape a meticulously engineered, algorithmically-tuned and master-planned environment?

Disruption means losing control

As Shoshana Zuboff warns in her monumental study of surveillance capitalism, in this template of social relations, behavioural modifications operate just beyond the threshold of human awareness to induce, reward, punish and reinforce behaviour consistent with 'correct policies'. (Residents should choose solutions that support the performance of neighbourhoods. But whose performance?). The parameters that constitute such 'correct policies' are not debated or negotiated but rather are mostly derived from corporate objectives that define the policies towards which harmonised behaviour is expected to stream.

When Nextdoor, the largest neighbourhood social network, encountered racial profiling on their application, it nudged, or to be more precise, demotivated users to file reports based on racial bias through smart product design. In the end, the company simply increased and complicated the steps required to report suspicious activity and crime. If users do not fill in the requested fields, they cannot post.

Big tech's approach reduces citizens to behaviour-automatons that live in an anomaly-free society, shaped by desired outcomes. This, however, contrasts with the notion that citizens should be treated not merely as passive subjects to be steered or manipulated but as welcome participants who take part in the democratic governance of their own society. It is only now, one decade after the financial crisis, writes Nitasha Tiku in her article *An Alternative History of Silicon Valley Disruption*, that the public seems to appreciate that what we thought was disruption worked more like extraction – of our data, our attention, our time, our creativity, our content, our DNA, our homes, our cities, our relationships.

When established businesses encounter disruptions and uncertainty, they usually seek to increase their resilience by adapting to changes, improving workarounds and minimising negative impacts. Yet disruptions in societies follow different logics than in markets or technology; and consequences are offset differently. People are not disk drives, warns Harvard professor Jill Lepore. It is a banal statement, but it has important implications. Even though public schools, museums and hospitals have revenues, expenses and infrastructures, they are not industries in the same way that manufacturers of hard-disk drives or engines or videos are industries. Doctors have obligations to their patients, teachers to their students, and curators to the public – obligations that lie outside the realm of earnings and are fundamentally different from the obligations that a business executive has to employees, partners, and investors. The same applies to the places we call our streets and homes.

'The crucial question behind this new approach to city planning is: who is in charge of selecting and evaluating the performance criteria, the goals and constraints?'

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Disruptions in society have ultimately questioned the way we organise our 'living together', meaning our democratic processes. Democratic processes contain the core promise that policies are made by, for and sometimes together with the people. Yet democratic processes have become increasingly unable to respond to the increasing uncertainty faced by society. Few are as skilled at explaining this 'political impotence' as philosopher Zygmunt Bauman. He argues that the capability of deciding what things need to be done that was once related to the territorially sovereign state is declining or shifting to a more global scale. This has rendered nation-states unable to deliver on their promises, giving rise to a widespread disenchantment with the idea that the future will improve the human condition.

Many European citizens have lost their faith in the ability of nation-states to provide for a bright future and are dissatisfied with how democracy is working. Experts believed that if citizens lost their faith in the nation-states to solve current social, economic or environmental problems, they would direct their faith towards supranational institutions or multilateralism to correct domestic government failures. We can see, however, that this 'either-or' thinking is not holding up. A recent EU foreign council/YouGOV poll showed that 38% of the European electorate has given up hope in both their national political systems and in the EU, because they think that all political systems are broken and they cannot see how anything positive can come from them.

The highest numbers and the majority

'Democratic processes contain the core promise that policies are made by, for and sometimes together with the people. Yet democratic processes have become increasingly unable to respond to the increasing uncertainty faced by society.'

of the respondents who think that way are found in France (69%), Greece (61%) and Italy (49%). Italians, like Greeks are currently more concerned about emigration than immigration. In both countries, citizens see unemployment as the most important issue facing the country.

Taking back control

Brain drain is an especially sensitive issue in Italy because around 280,000 young, educated people are leaving the country every year. This is a considerable loss for Italy's intellectual and economic life. In France, the most important issue facing the country, according to the respondents, is the cost of living. Hence, common fears and anxieties in many Western societies centre around the growing scarcity of jobs, falling incomes, and thus a greater uncertainty of social positions. Two decades of market disruptions have contributed to what Bauman calls 'an increasing frustration, fed by detachment of the resources and skills at our disposal and the momentousness of the challenges facing us.'

Looking only at the elections in 2015, 2016 and 2017 in various EU member states, 31 new political parties entered national parliaments. Some of these political parties up-

set the established political system, such as the Italian Five Star Movement, the Spanish Ciudadanos and Podemos, the German Alternative für Deutschland, the Dutch Forum voor Democratie, the Greek parties To Potami and Syriza, and the French La République en Marche. They not only changed the categorisation on the left-right-axis, but notions regarding party organisation, financing and ways of approaching election campaigns. In the political arena, a similar paradigm to that of the corporate world seems to be taking over: to be successful, you need to disrupt democracy, and make it whatever you want it to be.

Dominic Cummings, campaign director of Vote Leave in the UK's Brexit referendum, has chillingly described how they used machine learning to transform polling by using a much larger sample than traditionally used in election polling. The Vote Leave campaign then used a sub-sample of their polling sample to plug data straight into Facebook and target specific individuals to test the impact of messaging on different micro-demographic groups. Through A/B testing, the UK Vote Leave campaign found the winning message was 'take back control'. Research suggested that including the word 'back' triggered voters' anger and dislike of losing things they felt they once had – in particular, control.

Down the road, the disruptive dynamic of creatively dismantling social structures has ultimately paved the success of anger-mining campaigns. In a recent report, the *New Yorker* wrote that Fox News' great insight was not necessarily that there was a particular desire for a conservative point of view. They had simply identified an attraction to fear and anger-based politics. The report quotes a former host saying: 'Never did I hear anyone worry about getting a second source. The single phrase I heard over and over was: "This is going to outrage the audience!" You inflame the viewers so that no one will turn away.' Hence, political parties are now learning to appeal directly to that part of our psychology which is, and always has been, more emotional than rational. Nathan Kalmoe and Lilliana Mason recently reported findings that in extreme polarised campaigns, winning increases violence against the opposition. This has proved true in the UK, with the Brexit vote resulting in the country's highest-ever spike in hate crimes.

If society and democracy are continuously disrupted, what do we do with the intended or unintended negative consequences for social cohesion and democratic principles? Especially when most of the younger generations have never really experienced effective political institutions during their lives?

Agents of change

It is always difficult to consult history to predict the future. Historically, neighbourhoods have turned into closed or parochial communities whenever the state was radically open and permeable. Communities began to defend their culture against outsiders. In the cosmopolitan cities of multinational empires such as ancient Alexandria, groups from different cultural backgrounds built up and enforced their own institutional structures, parallel to those of state officials. Or in early twentieth-century New York, the centre of mass immigration, where the country was open but the city became

a place full of fragmented ethnic, cultural and religious groups, each of them alien to each other's way of living. What happened was that local ethnic gangs controlled their neighbourhood turfs and beat up boys who literally wandered across the line. Thus, in times of social disruption, and absent political responsiveness, we observe that many citizens retrench to, and rely on, the strength of their in-groups.

What is different today though, is that we can to turn to technology to solve social problems. But in doing so, we are asking a thief to catch a thief. Don't trust the government, trust us, signals big tech. In their world, there will be no place for parochial communities or ethnic gangs. The Nextdoor example shows that the goal of stopping racial profiling in neighbourhoods was solved by intelligent design, rather than intelligent deliberation by the residents. The motivation to do so was based on corporate objectives. It was seen as a danger for business, not as one for society itself. Hence, rather than taking back control, we give away control.

Have we just accepted disruptions in our lives because they were a given or inevitable, because no one has bothered to ask whether there are other possibilities? The answer lies elsewhere. Disruptors are working with a sense of urgency all the time and seeking to prevent anything that will slow them down.

Intel's former CEO Andy Grove formulated what many of his counterparts think: 'High tech runs three times faster than normal businesses. And the government runs three times slower than normal businesses. So we have a nine-times gap'. 'Works for me', says Google's Eric Schmidt, in this interview. 'And so what you want to do', he resumes, 'is you want to make sure that the government does not get in the way and slow things down...The government could actually pass a law that is stupid, that would actually do something wrong and wouldn't work.'

The crucial question societies therefore need to answer is who they want to make the agents of change: governments, citizens or big tech? Governments might run nine times slower, but people do not. Therefore, there needs to be a possibility for citizens who are subjected to the tools that disrupt their lives to be able to monitor them and hold them accountable.

Most big tech companies make their money from users' input data, either by advertising or selling our behavioural patterns to other companies. If Google's goal is to own

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the infrastructure and services for autonomous cars and buses, smart roads, homes and playgrounds, they will have to present solutions in a way that resonates with the values of each individual resident, and the solutions need to be better than any the current government or the EU can provide. As depicted in the Sidewalk example, they already know what stimulates our acceptance. Big tech's knowledge garnered over almost two decades of mapping our behaviour will be their key to rebuilding cities from the inside out. It is a simple conclusion. Since the early 2000's, Google has been providing the best service and advanced infrastructure in the digital space. Now they are the single biggest gatekeeper of the digital space and arguably the most powerful corporation in the world. If they provide better technology and better services in the city, if they become better bus drivers, plumbers, and deputy mayors, if they can provide a new social safety net and incentivise 'correct' and well-performing policies, they will eventually also become the biggest gatekeepers of the physical space.

Anatol Itten is a co-founder of the Disrupted Societies Institute in Amsterdam and the author of *Overcoming Social Division*, Routledge, New York 2018.

An exclusive claim to truth The technology for manipulating images, films or sound recordings is becoming ever more sophisticated. What is truth, what is manipulation? The answer to this question is increasingly difficult to find. What happens to cultural memory? What about the printed book? Our two authors stress how much we rely on particular achievements – such as truth, credibility and accountability – for our peaceful coexistence.

By Aleida and Jan Assmann

Res publica litteraria, a homeland that knows no national borders. This homeland was founded on the cusp of the age of the printing press by poets, humanists, publishers and booksellers. These are the figures who mediated between old and new languages, thereby laying the foundation of European diversity. In doing so, they fashioned the library as their realm of communication and set into motion a true *Geister-Gespräch* – a dialogue of exalted spirits – that developed across centuries and national borders. In 1950, the newly launched tradition of the Peace Prize brought this dialogue of exalted spirits – upheld to this day by writers, publishers, booksellers and readers – back into the public sphere. Indeed, we should never forget that the term Res publica litteraria contains the word 'public'. Although books open up 'thinking spaces' for the spirit and libraries are vast archives of information containing a universe of fantasy and imagination, does this automatically mean that they, too, generate a public sphere?

Whereas reading scatters and isolates, the public sphere pulls us together and addresses each and every one of us. Hannah Arendt argued that her mentor, Karl Jaspers – whom she referred to as an 'incorruptible philosopher and dissident' – may have been isolated and on his own during the Third Reich but he was never alone because he had a spiritual home in 'the realm of humanitas, which everyone can come to out of their own origins.

The 'public', as we all know, is the opposite of the 'private'. 'Public', however, can also mean the opposite of a repressive silence – one that must be broken time and again, as we saw most recently with regard to the handling of victims of sexual violence. Jaspers, too, saw the public sphere as a battlefield upon which truth must do constant battle with untruth. He considered untruth to be 'the true evil destroying every peace.' And, for Jaspers, untruth had many guises: 'from concealment to blind indifference, from lies to inner mendacity, from foolishness to a rigid truth fanati-

cism, from the untruthfulness of the individual condition to the untruthfulness of the public condition.' Since Jasper's day, the universe of communication has become infinitely more abundant and flexible, with many more voices joining in; however, it has also become much more difficult and – above all – more dangerous to navigate. When we speak of the 'public' here, we must also speak of 'media', that is, we must distinguish between the organs of the public sphere, such as newspapers, television and radio, on the one hand, and their technical infrastructures, on the other.

Indeed, each individual technological base creates the public realm in a different way. Whereas the printing age and analogue photography were still calibrated to serve values such as truth, evidence and verifiability, in the digital age, the door has been left wide open to data manipulation. For example, while it has long since been possible to manipulate images at will, IT engineers in Germany and the US are now working on a very disturbing AI faceswapping technology that will enable anyone to create fake photorealistic videos, thus making it look like a person is speaking words they never spoke. In April 2019, a Google engineer presented a video he had made while still a student showing Barack Obama uttering a number of things he never said, all deceptively real and matched perfectly to his facial expressions. In other words, we will soon, quite literally, be able to put words into anyone's mouth without being able to judge definitively where an expression or an opinion originated.

And yet, we not only have to deal with ever-increasing levels of obfuscation thanks to fake news and the latest technologies; we've also had to confront more traditional forms of deceptive behaviour, for example, in the auto industry with regard to the manipulation of emission levels. Only now, as this type of obfuscation grows more prevalent, is it becoming clear to us how desperately we rely on particular achievements – such as truth, credibility and accountability – for our peaceful coexistence.

In a true democracy, the work of thinking cannot be delegated, that is, it cannot be left up to experts, performers and demagogues. Eight years ago, in his bestselling essay *Indignez-vous!*, 93-year-old Stéphane Hessel let us all know that it was 'a time for outrage!' Since then, that indignation has switched sides – and it has done so all over the world.

While it is true that democracies gain in strength through disputes and debate, this does not mean that everything in a democracy is subject to negotiation. A democracy must

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have inviolable convictions and be based on a shared consensus, for example, in the form of a constitution, human rights and the separation of powers as well as in the independence of the legal system and the media. Indeed, not every dissenting voice deserves to be heard. A voice that seeks to undermine the pillars upon which the diversity of opinion is built forfeits in that moment any respect it may have had. In other words, democracy thrives not on disputes, but rather on good arguments. Loutish behaviour, verbal attacks and the increasing use of polarising symbols, such as we saw recently in Chemnitz, can only lead to a state of general confusion, which, in turn, inevitably leads to a paralysis of democracy, ultimately rendering it incapable of carrying out its important tasks.

Jaspers was one of the individuals who developed a vision of a new Europe in the wake of two catastrophic world wars. For Jaspers, this vision involved first and foremost the overcoming of European conceit towards other countries and cultures. Just one year after the end of the war, he declared: 'Gone is that European arrogance which used to think in terms of "world-history" what was in reality only occidental history'. Jaspers sought to bring an end to Europe's exclusive and destructive hegemony in the world and instead integrate it into a global vision of humanity that 'made a great leap' as a whole around 500 B.C. This is the core of his idea of the 'Axial Age', a new interpretation of history that sought to place Europe on par with other advanced civilisations.

In that era thousands of years ago, many cultures saw the emergence of great minds whose words and thoughts continue to shape our lives to this day. In Greece, it was poets and thinkers such as Homer and Plato; in Israel it was the prophets; in Persia, it was Zarathustra; in India, it was Buddha; and in China, it was Lao Tzu and Confucius. These figures established a *Geisterreich* – a realm of exalted spirits – in which, to use the words of Hannah Arendt, 'they appear once more as speaking individuals – speaking from the realm of the dead; speakers who, because they had passed from the temporal world, were able to become eternal companions in the realm of exalted spirits.' Jaspers' agenda for peace started at a cultural level. As scholars of culture, this approach speaks to both of us. However, it also presents us with a number of challenges. Our research, too, is based on the observation that some so-called advanced civilisations used writing and other forms of transmission to create traditions that have lasted for thousands of years. This sense of contemporaneity with great thinkers, poets and founders – this connection and comprehensibility between their and our time upheld through traditions – is exactly what we refer to as 'cultural memory'. However, unlike Jaspers and Arendt, who presupposed the 'realm of exalted spirits' as something self-evident, we focused the lens of our research on the very question of how traditions are built.

First, our thesis posits that cultural memory is the result of ceaseless cultural work. Here, it would suffice to recall the unbelievable efforts made by ancient Egyptian culture to maintain its recognisability across the millennia, that is, to make it possible for us to read inscriptions even after two-and-a-half centuries and to continue to practise the formal language of art and architecture. This was no 'dull perseverance', as Max Weber put it, but instead the result of intensive work on

cultural memory.

Second, a cultural memory requires dialogue and vigorous engagement with each respective present. The texts, books and authors that are closest to us are those we reinterpret time and again – the ones into which we are able to input our own thoughts. Those that become unfamiliar to us are doomed to disappear in an archive – from which they can nevertheless be rediscovered at a later date. Thirdly, although Jaspers envisioned the realm of humanitas as a sphere of 'limitless communication', we do not go that far. Instead, our theory is based on the acknowledgment of borders and differences in the realm of humanitas.

Indeed, humanity exists in the singular, but cultures, languages and religions exist only in plurals. For this reason, we also do not speak of 'knowledge' but of 'memory', which is always already bound to identities, perspectives and, of course, interests. Society needs a memory just as individuals do; we need memories in order to know who we are and what to expect, and to be able to develop and orient ourselves.

The American political scientist Seyla Benhabib expressed it in the following manner: 'Culture is a dialogue of multiple voices across generations, connecting the past, present and future by means of conflicting narratives.' Remaining recognisable is the task

'When the scope of public discourse is narrowed down to include only a few issues, this serves only to fan the flames of the debate while doing very little to assist in clarifying and handling current problems.'

of a cultural as well as a national memory. In this sphere, however, a number of things have changed in recent years. We can no longer seamlessly draw on old fantasies of national pride and greatness. The national memory, which served as a pedestal for honour, pride and heroism for a long time, has become more complex, more inclusive and more self-critical.

Still, it is not only a pedestal that makes the nation larger and more powerful, but also a mirror of self-knowledge, remorse and change. The nation is not a holy grail that needs to be protected from defilement and desecration but a union of people who are also capable of remembering shameful episodes in their history and taking responsibility for the monstrous crimes committed in their name. We must keep one important difference in mind here: it is the history alone that is shameful, not the liberating memory of it, which is something we share with the victims. This is why identity does not emerge through denial, ignoring or forgetting; in fact, identity also requires the act remembering in order for it to become accountable, that is, to take on responsibility and foster a change in values and national self-image. And yet, that which connects us – whether it be our origins, religions, convictions or projects – is often also that which separates us. Thus the following key question arises: How exclusive or inclusive is this national 'we' that emerges through identity and identification? We move from the theme of cultural memory to the theme of social and political solidarity; and here we would like to draw upon the research done by another couple among our Peace Prize

predecessors. Alva and Gunnar Myrdal were honoured here in 1970 – that is, in a critical phase of the Cold War – for their energetic advocacy of nuclear disarmament. In addition to the nuclear menace, they also saw other issues as posing a threat to world peace: the lack of equal opportunity and integration, the erosion of solidarity due to racial discrimination and the exclusion of entire groups as a result of increasing economic inequality. Gunnar Myrdal even anticipated the experience of globalisation when he argued that '[a]s a result of revolutionary technical and political changes, nation states will inevitably become more and more dependent on one another'. He also emphasised 'that the prevailing free-trade theories and their application will lead to a further deepening of existing inequality at the expense of poor countries'. Myrdal's argument is more relevant today than ever before. His model at the time was the Swedish welfare state, but his utopia went even further and aimed to carry over the principle of the welfare state to the world stage in the form of a 'welfare world'. Still, Myrdal had no illusions about the forces of opposition that stand ubiquitously in the way of our willingness to express solidarity on a global scale. People are very willing to show solidarity with others when they have the same attitudes and pursue the same goals. We are all familiar with the type of solidarity that comes in the form of a nation's 'collective egoism' – the model here being 'America First!' In recent years, we have also come to know the transnational collective egoism of populist parties, their model being that of a 'Fortress Europe'.

These forms of solidarity are exclusionary and aim to keep others out. Integration, on the other hand, calls for an inclusive form of solidarity that extends to people who are different from us – people with whom we nevertheless want to build a common future. Mo-

'Through this contact with other cultures, all cultures are transformed: they overlap, inspire and leave lasting changes on one another. It is not possible to bring cultures to a standstill, nor can they be confined to national borders. Cultural memory comprises not only books and sacred texts, but also monuments, landscapes and locations.'

ney and greed neutralise cultural foreignness, however they, too, divide the world – into the rich and the poor. Nationalist political forces are very adept at diminishing solidarity in many areas; for example, by inciting hatred for those who are weaker or foreign. This leads to a *Milieuvergiftung,* yet another term used by Gunnar Myrdal, this time to refer to a poisoning of the social atmosphere with which he drew parallels to an *Umweltvergiftung*, the contamination of the physical environment.

On the path to achieving a welfare world, as he envisioned it, Myrdal argued that solidarity must therefore be cultivated on all levels: as social solidarity on the level of society, as transnational solidarity on the EU level and, above all, as global solidarity in the handling of economic and natural resources so as to ensure that subsequent generations can even have a future. Today, we must add to this our solidarity with refugees – people who have had their futures destroyed by war,

hardship and violence. It simply cannot be the case that we endorse a neoliberal freedom of movement with regard to capital, goods and raw materials, while migrants drown in the Mediterranean or are left stranded at national borders and we forget the people, their fate, their suffering and their future. The key question here is no longer whether we are going to succeed at achieving integration, but instead how we are going to go about achieving it. Unfortunately, it almost appears as if this development is moving backwards. When the scope of public discourse is narrowed down to include only a few issues, this serves only to fan the flames of the debate while doing very little to assist in clarifying and handling current problems.

I was speaking recently to a social worker – a woman who works with foreigners and has lived in Dresden for 15 years – and she told me in perfect German: 'When I open my mouth and people hear my Russian accent, I'm suddenly a migrant again, and nothing else.' Others, many of whom have lived here three times as long, have told me that they, too, have been gripped by naked fear in recent days. Shall we speak, for a change, about areas in which efforts are actually bearing fruit? We would like to provide three examples. Olga, the women whom we just quoted.belongs to a group of Russian-speaking citizens who found a home here in Germany at the end of the 1990s. This group are anything but indifferent about what happens to their adopted country and its democracy, which is why they founded an association called 'Phoenix'. These people are the new patriots. As individuals who have undergone the process of integration themselves, they know best how integration works. And this is why they are putting their experience and commitment to work as mediators between German authorities and immigrants looking for employment. These

citizens are currently working in a race with the AfD, a political party that has proven very clever and effective at using new immigrants for their own political ends.

Shared heritage? The borders between cultures are permeable. Indeed, translators and interpreters are among the oldest professions in the world, having accompanied tradesmen on their routes for as long as those routes existed. Cultures can cross borders through the import and export of books, but also by means of translations, appropriations and reinterpretations. Through this contact with other cultures, all cultures are transformed: they overlap, inspire and leave lasting changes on one another. It is not possible to bring cultures to a standstill, nor can they be confined to national borders. Cultural memory comprises not only books and sacred texts, but also monuments, landscapes and locations.

There is a very simple criterion that enables us to take up a perspective of peace, and we found it, once again, in Karl Jaspers: 'That which is true is that which connects us to one another!'

Jan Assmann (born 1938) is an expert in Egyptology and Theory of Religon and an emeritus professor of the University of Heidelberg. He has a particular interest in cultures of remembrance.
Aleida Assmann is an Anglicist, Egyptologist and specialist in literary and cultural studies. Since the 1990s her research has focused on cultural anthropology, particularly the topic of cultural memory, remembrance and forgetting. Aleida Assmann also researches and writes with her husband, Jan Assmann. In 2018 they were awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.

The loss of the public sphere The digital revolution has destroyed the public sphere as we knew it. Isolated from each other, we dig our own tunnels: blind, sensitive to the smallest of vibrations, frightened by loud noises that we cannot locate precisely. We are disoriented, we have no light and no air. We have lost our sense of distance to our own emotions and our immediate present. Writer Eva Menasse asks: it is too late for pessimism? *By Eva Menasse*

A little while ago I read an interview with a climate expert under the heading 'It's too late for pessimism'. From a linguistic point of view this is a great sentence, because it contains so much more than sentences that are merely good. 'Pessimism' is the only stand-out word here, while the other five are just stem cells of language, little words with dozens of possible uses. But in this combination they express so much at once: the seriousness of the situation as well as the necessity, indeed the urgency, of taking action. And, perhaps most importantly, they contain a grain of humour. Because you have to be able to allow yourself to be pessimistic. When the roof is burning above your head, you don't tend to sit on the sofa complaining about it. Or if you do, you become a comic figure, but in a dramatic and existential sense:

the whiner in the inferno.

Gernot Wagner, a Harvard-based Austrian researcher, described climate change as the 'perfect problem'. Even if we humans were able to switch off our emissions like a lamp from one day to the next, temperatures would soar even more – with disastrous consequences. Why? Because we are not only emitting harmful carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, but also the air pollutant sulfur dioxide, which gets trapped in the lower atmosphere and reduces solar radiation. It serves as a parasol for our poor, beleaguered Earth. So air pollution mitigates the worst effects of our emissions – but kills between 3 and 6 million people every year.

Since then, I haven't been able to get the words 'perfect problem' out of my head. It seems to express our situation perfectly. Gernot Wagner is far from confident that science will be able to find a solution to the climate crisis. And even if it does, it would be impossible to enforce it politically. So far, our efforts have been pretty pathetic. The keyword is chlorofluorocarbons, which I recently presented to my children as proof that the global community has managed to work together on climate issues in the past. For a while, every

refrigerator, every deodorant proudly bore a sticker proclaiming it was 'CFC-free'. We smugly thought that we had saved the world, but, unfortunately, we had just replaced these harmful substances with even more harmful ones, which massively accelerated the crisis. But we didn't know that at the time. As has happened so many times over the years, we did something without having an inkling of what it would lead to. Today, our actions are far more powerful than in the past. We have come close to being the gods that we used to worship, but unfortunately we lack their divine plan. The future looks more apocalyptic than ever. And yet, or perhaps because of that, the aforementioned climate expert insists that it's too late for pessimism.

The light of cultural achievement

Two hundred years ago, enlightened political writers like Ludwig Börne in Germany kindled the light of a cultural achievement that we are in the process of extinguishing. Because battles of words, conducting a reasoned argument in a manageable and retrievable place – this has all come to an end. You may feel upset or desperate, but it is as true and verifiable as the fact that corals and amphibians are dying out, and the insects will be next.

'What is drastic, however, is the total dissolution of the public sphere as such, which in Börne's day was formed by civil society as a counter public to the state and its organs. Its components are still there, but they are as fragmented as the microplastics in the oceans.'

The end has not come because people weren't up to the job. All over the world, intellectuals, scientists and journalists are working as hard as ever, diligently and combatively highlighting issues such as the climate emergency, the financial crisis, Trump and global migration. The end is also not merely a case of being superseded, as happened with the milkers, settlers, tailors and furriers of the past. That would be sad, but not drastic. What is drastic, however, is the total dissolution of the public sphere as such, which in Börne's day was formed by civil society as a counter public to the state and its organs. Its components are still there, but they are as fragmented as microplastics in the oceans. Who are we trying to reach by writing in the broadsheets?

Last summer I had a chance conversation with a very pleasant young man. Just thirty years old, he was articulate, intelligent and thoughtful. As it turned out, he wasn't just interested in politics, but worked as an adviser to politicians, political parties, sometimes even ministries, in Germany and Austria. With raised eyebrows, he told me about the kind of private tutoring he had to provide every day. He said some of his clients are keen to gain the approval of Germans who read the broadsheets. But he said this group of people are utterly meaningless for his work. These few hundred thousand people simply don't count.

He added that the German media as a whole has only just understood the requirements of digitalisation, and he was unable to come up with the name of any traditional newspaper other than The *New York Times*. I suddenly felt about a hundred and twenty.

In this situation I could have asked so many questions, but – almost breathlessly – I only asked two. First, I asked him if he wasn't sorry about the enormous waste of knowledge and experience, because the people who still produce these funny old newspapers are a treasure trove of – yes, I actually said it – content, which could be useful to other people. He just shrugged and said it has been ages since he last read them, and he doesn't miss them.

Then I pressed him on how his generation and the next, the oft-cited digital natives, would in future find consensus on their concerns, their priorities, on what needed to be done next – so about their expectations of politics. Where is your public sphere, I asked, if you no longer use ours, which I'm still trying to understand? Where are your online watering holes that you seek out when you want to talk, argue, debate? Once again, he just shrugged and said it would work itself out over time. He was as relaxed as a ten-year-old who switches on all the electrical appliances without even knowing what they are.

Participation without representation

Techno-sociologist Zeynep Tufekci and political scientist Ivan Krastev are currently conducting research on politics in the digital space. Their studies of protest movements such as Occupy reveal that these have failed to make a lasting impact. They may cause a stir in the short term, but they tend to run out of steam. It's true that they are an effective way of creating connections, but people soon start chasing after something else. According to Krastev, to date, online protest movements have been a form of participation without representation. And this probably also applies to the confused blur that has replaced our old public sphere: mass participation, but its

effects are fragmented and all rules have been abolished. But everyone has an abundance of insecurity and anger.

Of course, there is not and never has been a single public sphere, they have always been numerous. The political, scientific, and artistic spheres and their many sub-groups have been like the large and small coloured circles of a Venn diagram. For many years, the political sphere was unfair and restricted, such as in ancient times when male patricians were allowed to visit the forum or agora, but foreigners, women and slaves were excluded. However, thanks to Gutenberg and his movable letters, more people gradually gained access to something that we might call a platform for self-affirmation.

In Börne's day, and thanks to relentless fighters like him, it gained power and civil society emerged as a counterweight to the state. Along with the episodic public sphere (on the street, in the pub), which will always exist, and the staged public sphere of organised events, there is a third sphere that Habermas defines as the abstract sphere, created by the mass media. When it emerged, it was treated with suspicion because it seemed to be encouraging the process of 'dumbing-down'.

We still have our concerns on that front. Perhaps this abstract, mass-media public sphere was the best that could be achieved in a world that was growing together, for one moment in history, in that blink of eye before the advent of the internet permeated everything. When I say 'the best', I mean in the sense of providing the widest distribution with low-threshold access. In Germany we had the evening news bulletin *Tagesschau*, the

tabloid *Bild*, Saturday night TV, the popular crime drama *Tatort,* the broadsheets and radio shows. We all had something in common, at least in this country, at least in the German-speaking world. We knew something about each other and how we were getting on. Of course, many people were only interested in popular music shows like *Musikantenstadl* or talent shows like *Deutschland sucht den Superstar*, but at least the broadsheets gamely continued to examine and reflect on things that had mass appeal. It was possible to believe that places existed where popular phenomena were preserved in the discourse. It could be assumed that these temporary storage facilities were regularly visited by decision-makers, opinion-formers, the opposition and anyone who simply wanted to understand and be understood.

It is to historian Per Leo that I owe the legitimate objection that the public sphere has never historically represented majority opinion, and that the majority and public opinion are different phenomena whose congruence is not self-evident. Nevertheless, I still insist that there was once this halfway reliable platform that allowed us to grasp what moved us and bound us together, even if only in a rough and approximate manner. I think of this platform as a place, a huge square, like a forum. It has always had its dodgy edges and dark corners, but the rule of law applied here

'Perhaps this abstract, mass-media public sphere was the best that could be achieved in a world that was growing together, for one moment in history, in that blink of eye before the advent of the internet permeated everything.'

because it was basically an open, visible space.

Today we have something else, something that goes deep but not into the figuratively valuable: a mine in which everyone can dig their own extensive, branching tunnel system, but where it is possible to avoid contradiction. At the very least they provide an opportunity to escape the gathering places and major crossroads, and as a result they lose their importance. And down there you are free to do all the things that are forbidden outside in the daylight.

In this sense, I believe the public sphere as we know it has gone. It's not that it will disappear in the future – it has already disappeared. The digital revolution has had a wonderful effect on many areas of our lives, but its very basis – communication between people – has also triggered an explosion that is destroying everything. For the public sphere, which – with all its mistakes and weaknesses – was once the informal power of democracy, it has had the kind of impact that the economy would feel if everyone could print their own money at home. It has been fragmented into millions of inconvertible individual opinions, a hyperinflation of information.

Isolated from each other, we dig our own tunnels: blind, sensitive to the smallest of vibrations, frightened by loud noises that we cannot locate precisely. We are disoriented, we have no light and no air. We have lost our sense of distance to our own emotions and our immediate present. We can see this scary prospect playing out in Britain, where the "mother of parliaments" is struggling with its insoluble Brexit drama. With their suicidal inability to compromise, parliamentarians are

the perfect embodiment of their voters. Let's not deceive ourselves – this could happen anywhere. In Germany, we have only suppressed the months of wrangling involved in building the last coalition government. In a worst-case scenario, we will soon no longer be a society at all, but just a loose association of extremely aggressive interest groups, barely held together by the relative wealth of the continent into which we happen to be born.

Political earthquakes

Everywhere there is outrage, and this is reflected in the discourse on global warming. The metaphorical proximity of all these phenomena to climate change is astounding: shitstorms and political earthquakes, the melting of the polar caps of reason and conduct, the fracturing of world views and the devastation wreaked among groups of friends. Masses of people are fleeing – into extremism or insulted silence. Opinions are leading to wars, all on a scale that we never anticipated and never believed possible.

Everything is being destroyed. The main political parties are disintegrating and making way for clowns, comedians and cynical mercenaries. No, it's not enough to say that they obviously weren't working, that they are now being superseded by something else, a natural evolution, so to speak. This does not recognise their importance as a haven, as the first rough system for maintaining order in a fragmented society. It was moving to see how the main political parties in Germany became more inclusive and shifted towards the centre as the mood hardened. But this is accelerating their downfall. They have not noticed that being inclusive – being a kind of 'collecting tank' – has become an insult. It's a place that no-one wants to go any more, it sounds extre-

mely unhygienic. The groups that you trust are becoming smaller and more exclusive. One false tweet and you're out.

There is only one 'tank' that has become more attractive – that of self-proclaimed total opposition. If you believe that you have to start by destroying everything, you lose your inhibitions. This is what holds the far right together: the loyalty of the demolition squad. They have infected everyone else with the radicalised, taboo-breaking language: we are now so afraid of them and their undeniably destabilising forces that we no longer trust each other.

In parallel with the loss of the public sphere, our fear leads to our own inner disintegration. We would rather excommunicate people whose opinions we used to respect and vilify them as being New Right than concentrate on the things that we used to do much better than right-wingers: weighing up facts, analysing them and allowing for opposing views. Don't lose your head. And keep your sense of humour. Some things are so absurd that laughing out loud is the best strategy. But laughter is still only available under the label of 'cynicism'.

The fragmentation and bitter battles are by-products of the culture of conflict. Ten years of internet for all, with your phone in your hand, have sufficed to make us forget what Börne and Heine began two hundred years ago. The much-vaunted freedom to have an opinion about everything has created the dangerous illusion that we are no longer required to endure other opinions. It has always been difficult to explain to children that fairness is not guaranteed but something that has to

be constantly worked on. Today, it is difficult to explain to adults what a compromise is and why it is needed. Other opinions no longer serve to make us examine our own views – but to identify our opponents.

And so the old public sphere has come to an end. It has almost completely dissolved into the private sphere. It is no longer possible to get an idea of how your neighbour is doing, what minority he wants to belong to or what phantasm he is currently harbouring. Everyone has their own tiny public sphere, because they have 'customised' it. But, based on everything we've seen so far, this is as dangerous as an autoimmune disease.

But as one door closes, another one opens. Besides anger, perhaps despair is the other big emotion that has the ability to bring people together despite all their differences. Then I remembered the images that we all saw, that we all talked about, regardless of the echo chambers that we normally bury ourselves in. The schoolchildren going on climate strike, set in motion and led by a little girl with funny hair.

I don't know if this is simply my last hope and if it too will die as quickly as the internet protests described above. But so far it seems to me that the despair of these children is so great that it powerfully trumps the contradictory nature of their own behaviour. They are the first to resist their protest disintegrating into a thousand hostile subgroups. They don't care about the adult cynics who mock the cult of the little Swedish girl, and they don't care about the views of hypocritical paternalists who say they should leave it to the experts. They are undoubtedly intelligent enough to know that the challenge does not stop with them, that their parents and they themselves have to make massive changes to their way of life. But the fact that they are not yet perfect does not prevent them from being activists. This is the alternative to our current stand-offs. It is almost a perfect problem: our children's despair is our only hope. Their strikes and demonstrations are a return of the old, effective public sphere that is visible to all. Because one sentence applies to us all: it's too late for pessimism.

Eva Menasse was born in Vienna in 1970. She moved to Berlin in 2009, where she works as a freelance writer. She made her breakthrough as an author with her debut novel *Vienna* and subsequent short stories and essays. She was awarded the Gerty Spies Literature Prize, the Austrian Alpha Literature Prize and the Heinrich Böll Prize of the City of Cologne for her novel *Quasikristalle*. In 2015 she was made a fellow of the Villa Massimo in Rome and won the Jonathan Swift Award for satire and humour. Her short story collection *Tiere für Fortgeschrittene* was published in 2017. In the same year she was awarded the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize by the city of Bad Homburg. She won the Ludwig Börne Prize in 2019.

Writing in times of disaster

How do you write in times of war and disaster? When all the questions have been asked and the interviewee has nothing more to say, the news reporter goes off and writes the story. But the writer stays put. Because the real story begins when the person stands up and gets on with their life. Being a writer means putting the answers, the silence, the actions into words and getting them down on paper. *By Åsne Seierstad*

Writers and journalists – their work reveals truths about all of us, about what it means to be human. To achieve this, they usually talk to normal people, ordinary people who are facing difficulties because they live in extraordinary times, in times of war and disaster, oppression and revolution. What distinguishes their literary non-fiction books from news reports about the same events is that a book offers space for depth and detail; it can be more original, more experimental. The language of literary reporting is inspired by great literature. The art of storytelling is borrowed from the great masters and blended with the ethics of journalism.

This combination creates space for understanding. One of the things I love about reporting is that the craft is so simple. To begin with, a reporter doesn't need many tools. You have an idea. Or someone gives it to you, often without knowing it. You think about it. You mull it over. The writer asks herself: What's the story here? How should it be told? And am I the right person to tell it? Being a reporter means asking questions. And listening to the answers again and again. It's about uncovering the story, but it's also about patience. When all the questions have been asked and the interviewee has nothing more to say, silence ensues. The news reporter goes off and writes the story. But the writer stays put. Because the real story begins when the person stands up and gets on with their life. Being a writer means putting the answers, the silence, the actions into words and getting them down on paper. It's like searching for the bricks, the raw materials to shape the story and convert what people tell you into scenes – and then turn it into a book. When it is almost ready to slip out of the author's hands, another team steps in: the editor, the fact checker, the proofreader, the graphic designer, the translator and the printer. And finally the bookseller or librarian.

The most difficult book I have ever written deals with a subject that is hard to grasp: domestic terror; a man who sets out to kill, who is willing to destroy the lives of other people and their families. On 22 July 2011, 32-year-old Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik set off a 900-kg bomb in the government

district of Oslo, directly in front of the office of Labour Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. The bomb completely destroyed part of the building and killed eight people. Most of us thought it was the work of Al-Qaeda. Who else could it be?

Nobody thought the perpetrator was a blond man in a police uniform who left the site of the explosion and went to the island of Utøyafuhr, where the youth branch of the Labour Party was holding their annual summer camp. On the island he hunted down and shot 69 people, half of them under the age of 18. He was arrested. Jailed. Convicted. Now he's serving his sentence. He is locked up and won't kill again. But what about his ideas? Are they buried too, or are they still there to haunt us? Have they inspired anyone? Did they start and stop with him, or do they have something to do with us? Is he an anomaly or part of a trend?

These are the questions that Norwegians asked and are still asking themselves. When we look at Europe today, we can't ignore the horrifying fact that far-right extremism is on the rise. It is stronger today than eight years ago at the time of the Breivik terrorist attack. To fight him, we have to expose him. To stand up to him, we have to understand him.

In Norwegian fairy tales, trolls turn to stone when touched by the rays of the sun. We need to do the same with extremists – lure them out into broad daylight, scrutinise them, expose them. Because their ideas thrive in the dark, in closed circles, in the echo chambers of the internet. As a human being, I was de-

'As a writer, I try to control my anger. My ideal is to look for facts, connections, answers, not to judge.'

eply saddened by the massacre of the young people on the island.

Small words to describe the worst events

I was furious with the killer. I took my kids on the rose marches. And I cried. As a writer, I try to control my anger. My ideal is to look for facts, connections, answers, not to judge. Because a book can only have one judge: the reader. If the writer is angry, the reader doesn't have to get angry. If the writer displays contempt, the reader has no chance of being outraged. If the writer explains everything, the reader is not required to think for themselves. The response should lie with the reader, not in the writing process. In order to achieve this – a description of the worst events, tragedies, the deepest feelings – we need the smallest words. The simplest words. Only when words do not cast shadows on us can we understand the dimensions.

Judging the terrorist would prevent me from trying to find out what led him to commit his crime – modern Europe's deadliest act of terrorism carried out by a lone individual. Was he alone? He didn't think so. He thought he had a gang, a clique, a fan club cheering him on. He had spent many hours in the dark, hate-filled depths of the internet. There, on the neo-Nazi pages, the fascist pages, the anti-immigrant pages, they legitimise each other, find consensus and spur each other on.

Breivik thought that succeeding in committing his crime would inspire others to do the same. He thought this because he had no interaction with the real world: his world view was shaped by a single source – far-right extremism. In today's Europe, two processes of radicalisation are developing in tandem: the growth of far-right extremism and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism.

In my last book, *Two Sisters*, I followed two teenage girls who travelled to Syria. These extremists – at different ends of the spectrum – are the perfect enemies for each other. They feed each other. The fascists point to the extreme Islamists and say: they represent Islam. The Islamists point to the fascists and say: look, they want to ban Islam, they are against us, we have to defend ourselves. Both groups perceive the world as black and white. You're with us or you're against us. We have to fight to expand the area in the middle, the place inhabited by the complex, complicated, vulnerable ideas of tolerance and understanding.

Hatred, anger, victimhood, humiliation and disparagement all serve to fuel radicalisation on both sides. In his manifesto and in court, Andre Behring Breivik said that he committed his massacre to save European culture. To save Christian culture, he added. When he was asked by the judge whether he had actually read the Bible, he answered: in school. Some of the Islamists brought a copy of *The Koran for Dummies* to the war zone (whose author Sohaib N. Sultan is the first full-time Muslim Life Coordinator and Chaplain at Princeton University).

What we are experiencing is not a struggle between religions, but a rift in our society. It's the idea of 'us versus them'. The first step towards radicalisation is to define oneself as different from the rest. 'I am from one group, they are from another', writes the Arab Spring activist Iyad al-Baghdadiin in his '7 steps to radicalisation'.

We are better than them

The second step is to define them as all being the same, to dehumanise them, to deprive them of their human qualities. When that's done, you have to believe or make others believe that they are oppressing us. They are all guilty of oppressing us. And – here comes the kicker – we are better than them. We deserve better. We have the right to kill, to destroy others based on their race, religion or political affiliation. Just before the final step, the person who has been radicalised decides to strike back. In the seventh step, they decide that violence is the only way. That was true of Breivik. And it also applies to Islamic state. It begins with a sense of alienation; it ends with death.

I think there is no better way of putting ourselves in another person's shoes than by reading books. A book isn't finished when the text is printed; every copy of the book is different because a book only exists when it encounters the reader. And every reader is unique. One of us is an oppressive book. Some people have laid it aside after a few pages. It is difficult to sneak into the mind of a murderer and be exposed to his banality, his beliefs and his evil. Page after page, it is painful to get to know the young political activists who will later be slaughtered. It is unbearable to realise that what they stand for – tolerance, solidarity, understanding and integration – are precisely the ideas that Anders Behring Breivik hates. He not only wanted to kill them, but also their entire way of thinking.

'What we are experiencing is not a struggle between religions, but a rift in our society. It's the idea of "us versus them"'.

I'd like to finish with a picture of a girl from the island. A long-haired girl in a jumpsuit. As a young political activist, she had learned that only the best arguments would win over her opponent. She had attended classes on public speaking. She had learned how to convince others, how to win a debate, how to use logic against fantasy. Her tools were words. When she saw Breivik taking aim at her friends and killing them, she said: Someone's got to stop him. Someone has to go and talk to him. So she did. She went up to him and said: Don't do that, you have to stop shooting! He raised his gun to her head and fired a bullet into her brain. To preserve the memory of this incredibly brave girl, we must never give up on the ideas that she stood for. And our only tools are the ones that she chose: words. In the long run, they are more powerful.

Åsne Seierstad is a Norwegian writer and journalist. She is the recipient of numerous journalism awards, including the 2004 British EMMA (Ethnic Multicultural Media Award) and the Prix de Libraires (French literary award). She received the renowned Norwegian literature prize Brageprisen for her book about female Islamists, *Two Sisters*. In 2018 Seierstad received the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding for *One of Us. The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway*. In this book, she investigates the background to the 2011 Norway attacks committed by Anders Behring Breivik, which left 77 people dead.

In defence of the do-gooders

It's easy to go through life as a cynic. It's convenient and comfortable to accept everything, never fight, isolate ourselves, keep our heads down, protect ourselves and lay down our arms before the oppressor, the all-powerful. That's why we hate do-gooders – they call our inertia into question. It's much easier to simply ridicule everything and mock the futile longings of dreamers and utopians. *By Ilija Trojanow*
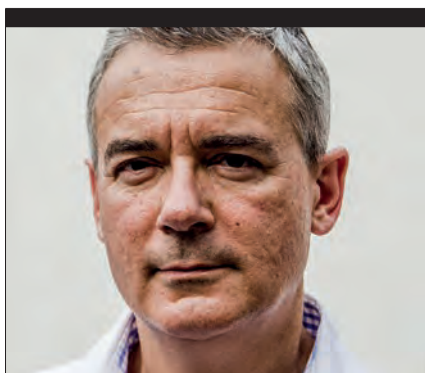
I have heard it said that Heinrich Böll was a do-gooder, and I've occasionally been called one myself. So I think it's time to consider what being a do-gooder actually means. In German, we call it *Gutmenschentum*. It manages to sum everything up in a single word. It's a typical German composite noun made up of three parts: *Gut-menschen-tum*, and four syllables: *Gut-mensch-en-tum*.

Let's start with the first syllable, *gut*. Good was originally the opposite of bad and generally had a positive connotation. We use it all the time. How was dinner? Good! How was your day? Good! How's your marriage going? Good! What do you want to be in life? Here, people don't tend to respond with 'Good!' Instead, successful people want to be in a good position and making good money.

In the German-speaking world, Gut-mensch is also a surname, which causes a problem for some families. Interestingly, this name often originates from what is now the Czech Republic. For example, on 22 August 1896 Mr Josef Gutmensch from Mährisch-Neustadt came 6th at the royal shooting tournament in Littau. In 1897 the hairdresser August Gutmensch patented a kind of hair curler. Rosin & Gutmensch's general store at Favoritenstraße 68 in Vienna's 4th district had to file for bankruptcy in 1915. And in May 1916 Karl Gutmensch, a captain in the Austro-Hungarian army, was awarded the Military Cross of Merit for bravery in the face of the enemy. Officer Gutmensch received the very highest military medal two years later, shortly before dying a hero's death. To loosely quote the good soldier Švejk, the patron saint of all subversives: 'They killed Gutmensch!' 'Which Gutmensch? I know two. I'm not sorry about either of them.'

Some surname researchers believe 'Gutmensch' is derived from Saint Homobonus, the patron saint of tailors. Others claim that it comes from the French word *bonhommes*, the name once given to followers of the Cathar or Albigensian heretical movements in the Middle Ages. They called themselves

'true Christians' and 'God-lovers', a literal translation of the South Slavic *bogomil*. These 'servants of the devil' originated in today's Bulgaria and were called 'cat-kissers', zoophiles, which is why the colloquial English verb 'to bugger', derived from the French *bougrir*, etymologically means 'to make love like a Bulgarian'.

Now we have found the roots of the do-gooder. The Bogomils were the first religious social revolutionary movement in Europe.

In the words of a contemporary Orthodox priest: 'They teach their own people not to obey their lords, they revile the wealthy, hate the Tsar, ridicule the elders, condemn the boyars (the military aristocracy), regard as vile in the sight of God those who serve the Tsar, and forbid every servant to work for his master.' For God's sake. People who not only imagined a free and dignified life on earth, but actually wanted to put it into practice? Do-gooders. Ugh!

Bosnia espoused Bogomilism from 1199 onwards and it continued for two centuries, which must be enough to prove that my colleague the Bosnian writer Dzevad Karahasan is also a covert do-gooder.

And for the sake of completeness: the term *bonhomme* generally means a 'gentleman', so you might think it isn't used in mockery and you can relax in an irony-free zone – until you discover that it is also used as a synonym for fool. Things that seem black-and-white can be deceptive. In the case of *Gutmenschen*, semantics has been upended so now it means the opposite. That's why

it's not possible to talk of a *Schlechtmensch* [do-badder] but only a *Nichtgutmensch* (non-do-gooder). I know, it's confusing. But the confusion is quite deliberate in this context, and not only in German. In Bosnian, the highest expression of enthusiasm is *mrak*, which translates literally as 'darkness'. And in the Krio language of West Africa, the affix *bad bad wan* serves to emphasise qualification. So *Di man fayn bad bad wan wan* – for those who don't speak Krio – means 'The man good bad bad', while *Di polis korupt bad bad wan* means 'the police corrupt bad bad'.

A semantic battlefield

The English equivalent is 'do-gooder', someone who likes to do good things. But the meaning has changed within an astonishingly short period of time to mean someone who is naïve. Balzac alluded to this 'In Paris, when they want to disparage a man, they say: "He has a good heart." The phrase means: "The poor fellow is as stupid as a rhinoceros."'

Nazi propagandist Julius Streicher believed: 'A good person only believes something bad when he sees it with his own eyes.' The semantic battlefield has changed little since then. Non-do-gooders know *a priori* that evil not only exists but dominates everything, so they harbour no illusions and trust only in their sword and shield.

Logically, non-do-gooders are friends of power. They believe that improving the world inevitably leads to the decline of what already exists, so they defend the status quo

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and fight for the continuity of prevailing circumstances, even if they are a direct route to the apocalypse. No problem. The apocalypse is a massage chair for non-do-gooders. This is where they can release all the tensions created by conflict, crisis and catastrophe. Nowadays, for physiotherapeutic reasons, every publishing house has at least one apocalypse or dystopia in its programme – just as everyone once gave their Tamagotchi a daily walk. This is justified by the discovery that we can now explain the destruction of the Earth with scientific precision.

In the Anthropocene we no longer need prophecies. We have physics. While do-gooders are scared, non-do-gooders rub their hands in glee, because the Olympic achievement of their cynicism lies in not even fearing the apocalypse. Particularly as non-do-gooders are richly rewarded for their pragmatism – the apocalypse is a generous employer – while the do-gooder earns little for his efforts but mockery.

Disparaging the good is not necessarily part of the German cultural tradition. A man named Goethe, the nation's supreme bearer of wisdom, once wrote: 'Noble be man, helpful and good. For that alone sets him apart from every other creature on earth.' The only characteristic that separates Homo sapiens from Theropithecus or Rhinopithecus would, therefore, be human goodness.

We have now arrived at the middle section of our composite noun, *menschen*, the human being – a creature that is inherently bad, or at least this is the assumption that is always (with respect) directed at anyone who is keen to bring about fundamental and lasting change. If this assumption is correct and humans have been created this way and only this way, then why is it so readily accepted that power (and/or enormous wealth) should be concentrated in the hands of the few?

After all, we would take a gun away from a violent offender or rip a giant pack of gummy bears from the claws of a wolverine. Misanthropes should be fighting to prevent the concentration of power. But the opposite is the case. I have spent years searching for an explanation for this contradiction, but without success. I suppose the answer is that humans are not inherently bad but inherently stupid.

Those who contemptuously mouth the word 'do-gooder' believe they are themselves 'good', but within a framework that they describe as 'realistic'. Exaggerated goodness, on the other hand, is the devil's work. Norbert Bolz, a German media expert, wrote: 'The existence of the devil allows the pious to believe in the existence of Christ. It's just that the devil is harder to spot today. He masquerades as a moralist and seduces us with his cult of do-gooding. But that is precisely why Christian morality is a dangerous path. For the devil himself is a moralist, and a good conscience is his most diabolical invention.'

To turn it into a food analogy: sweet-and-sour food is bitter. Anyone who thinks in terms of these patterns of good and evil must find the extension of goodness to all

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human beings metaphysically ridiculous and firmly believe that their cynical perspicacity has greater moral adequacy than emphatic public spiritedness. The question arises whether today's do-gooders couldn't leave God and the devil and all the other lightning conductors of moral confusion far behind them and postulate the idea of solidarity and the ideal of justice as commandments of reason.

It's easy to see the dark side, you just have to close your eyes. The much-cited new confusion should be called the 'new invisibility'.

The victims of the global crises are seldom seen in this country. Massive walls of perception were erected long ago. I moved to Mumbai in 1998, and my (many) visitors always asked me at some point: 'How can you bear the sight of all this misery?' I would reply: 'Is the misery any less if I look away?'

It's easy to go through life as a cynic. It's convenient and comfortable to accept everything, never fight, isolate ourselves, keep our heads down, protect ourselves and lay down our arms before the oppressor, the all-powerful. That's why we hate do-gooders – they call our inertia into question. It's much easier to simply ridicule everything and mock the futile longings of dreamers and utopians.

Discredited ideology

And finally, in our German noun, we come to the crowning glory, the addition of the seemingly harmless *-tum*. The dictionary tells us that this suffix was previously a noun and is derived from the Middle High German *tuom*, meaning power, dignity and possession. According to the Duden German dictionary: 1. In noun forms, it denotes a state, a condition, a quality or a behaviour of a person: *Chaotentum, Erpressertum, Profitum*. 2. In noun forms, it denotes a group of people: *Bürgertum*. 3. In noun forms it denotes a person's territory: *Herzogtum, Scheichtum*.

Therefore, a grammatically and semantically correct sentence could be: *Gutmenschentum ist kein adäquater Ausdruck des Deutschtums* – being a do-gooder is not an appropriate expression of Germanhood. Through the suffix *-tum*, personal attitudes are equated with a territory or a class and thus exposed as dogma. Empathy – a natural human quality – is discredited as ideology, with fatal consequences because those whose suffering is not ours have to be essentially different, ergo we owe them nothing, ergo they deserve nothing better, ergo they can stay the hell away, ergo if we take a clear view and call a spade a spade (which is what do-gooders stop us doing), they are beasts or barbarians. We know where the story goes from here.

wThe reality is exactly the opposite, because, in the words of F.C. Delius, 'the cynic' is 'the stepbrother of the ideologue, no matter how unideological he may be.' Here in Germany, these kinds of debates are conducted without a hint of humour. In that sense, we could define *Gutmenschentum* as the criticism of humourless know-it-all attitudes by humourless know-it-alls.

Unfair motives are also attributed to literary do-gooders. They abuse literature for perfidious or profane purposes (such as inciting people to change the world). Once their intentions are revealed, their works are flawed per se. The crows caw from the rooftops,

the political writer takes sides and harms literature, which should be open to all sides. This is the typical position of apolitical people who do not understand the essence of the political. It is not a question of dogma, but of attitude, and a political attitude can be excellently brought to the fore through the plural forms of literature, through diversity, multi-perspective narratives and complexity. Literary ambivalence and political convictions are not mutually exclusive.

A writer's world view says little about the quality of his artistic methods. James Joyce is highly esteemed by even the most pernickety of artistic critics, yet he was a thoroughly political writer. This is clear for all to see, without needing to know that his library was packed with hundreds of anarchistic books, which he studied in great detail. *Ulysses* is a literary attack on hypocrisy, morality, the state and the Catholic Church. It was banned and Joyce had to spend decades in exile. Its importance is undisputed, despite its clear, radical political stance. A contradiction? No. The belief in the value of literature can combine with political passion to create an entity of the highest standard. In *The Political Unconscious*, the American literary critic Fredric Jameson even speaks of a 'utopian impulse' that constitutes the political unconscious in important literary works.

Apolitical and über-political attitudes are both narrow-minded. Literature is the vastness of the imagination, and thus a corrective to politics. Literature is the full variety of language, and thus a corrective to politics. Literature is the development of its own discourse against the omnipresent special offers of its time. In this context, it is immaterial whether writers are seeking to improve the world or to hold up a distorting mirror to this unworthy evolutionary joke called humankind.

The white noise of our age

Apolitical cynics can fall victim to tonal poverty, just like the former subjects of communist regimes. But authors who write from the standpoint of freedom and refuse to be dictated to when it comes to themes and forms, hear voices that they have never heard before. This freedom is hard-fought and difficult to defend, because each one of us is mercilessly exposed to the white noise of our age. Those who, out of such freedom, decide to write not only about love and death (supposedly the two most important themes in literature), but also about power and muscle, about betrayal and transformation, will surprise themselves when they write. This is the only thing that matters, the litmus test of real writing – the ability to amaze yourself. Anyone who experiences this while writing is immune to the use of language for a particular end. However, both logically and empirically, it does not follow

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that everyone whose work is apolitical, so the inveterate non-do-gooders, are aesthetically superior to the veganised do-gooders. In fact, the opposite is true. Avoiding anything and everything political requires the same kind of rigid and stubborn energy that is needed to turn all the realities of life into political issues.

Ilija Trojanow is a writer, translator and publisher. Born in Sofia in 1965, he and his family escaped in 1971 and fled across Yugoslavia and Italy to Germany, where they were granted political asylum. In 1972 the family moved to Kenya. Apart from a four-year stay in Germany, Ilija Trojanow lived in Nairobi until 1984. He then moved to Paris before studying law and ethnology in Munich from 1984 to 1989. He went on to set up two publishing houses: Kyrill & Method Verlag and Marino Verlag. Trojanow moved to Mumbai in 1998, then to Cape Town in 2003. Today, when he is not on his travels, he is based in Vienna. Trojanow is the author of many books of fiction and non-fiction, including *The Collector of Worlds* (2008), *Along the Ganges* (2005), and *Mumbai to Mecca* (2007). His autobiographical debut novel was adapted into the award-winning film *The World Is Big* and *Salvation Lurks Just Around the Corner* (2008). He was awarded the Heinrich Böll Prize in 2017.

The digital illusion Virtual Reality can be fun and brighten up our everyday lives. But algorithms force the larger society to take on the risks associated with profits that benefit only the few, says American computer scientist and entrepreneur Jaron Lanier, one of the founding fathers of Virtual Reality. And people have simply acquiesced to cheap and casual mass spying and manipulation. Is the idea that the digital revolution will improve society just an illusion? *By Jaron Lanier*

In order to be a realist I must sometimes be a little dark. When one trusts in realism enough, one can burn through the indulgences of darkness. It often turns out that there is light waiting on the other side. Ours is a confusing time. In the developed world we have enjoyed affluence for long enough to have a hard time appreciating it. We especially love our gadgets, where we can still find novelty – but we also have strong evidence that we would be peering over the edge of a precipice if we opened our eyes more often.

It pains me to intone the familiar list of contemporary perils: Climate change first of all; population and depopulation spirals utterly out of sync with our societies; our inability to plan for the decline of cheap fossil fuels; seemingly inescapable waves of austerity; untenable trends of wealth concentration; the rise of violent extremisms in so many ways in so many places... Of course all of these processes are intertwined with one another. What is the role of someone like myself who is associated with the rise of digital technologies? Aren't digital toys just a flimsy froth that decorates big dark waves? Digital designs have certainly brought about noisy changes to our culture and politics.

So many Gods have failed

Let's start with some good news. We have gotten a first peek at what a digitally efficient society might be like, and despite the ridiculousness of the surveillance economy we seem to have chosen so far, we must not forget that there's a lot to like about what we have seen. Waste can be systemically reduced, it turns out, just when we must become more efficient to combat climate change. For instance, we have learned that solar power performs better than many suspected it would, though it must be combined with a smart grid to be enjoyed with reliability.

This is just the sort of positive option that my colleagues and I had hoped might come about through digital networking. But the practical hopes for digital networks have also been accompanied by a symbolic, almost metaphysical project. Digital technology has come to bear the burden of being the primary channel for optimism in our times.

This, after so many Gods have failed. What an odd fate for what started out as a rather sterile corner of mathematics! Digital cultural optimism is not insane. We have seen new patterns of creativity and perhaps have even found a few new tendrils of empathy transcending what used to be barriers of distance and cultural difference. This sort of pleasure has perhaps been over-celebrated by now, but it is real. For a trivial but personal example, how lovely that I now am in touch with oud players around the world, that I can rehearse a concert over the 'net. It really is great fun. I just mentioned some of the good stuff, but we have also famously used digital toys to acquiesce to cheap and casual mass spying and manipulation; we have created a new kind of ultra-elite, supremely wealthy and untouchable class of technologists; and all too often we now settle into a frenzy of digitally efficient hyper-narcissism.

I still enjoy technology so much that I can hardly express it. Virtual Reality can be fun and beautiful. And yet here I am, so critical. To avoid contradictions and ambiguities is

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to avoid reality. It is a question pondered by online commentators many thousands of times a day. To render opinions on Internet culture can seem as useless as dripping water from an eyedropper onto a sidewalk in a rainstorm. Anyone who speaks online knows what it's like these days. You either huddle with those who agree, or else your opinion is instantly blended into grey mush by violent blades. Thesis and antithesis, one hand and the other, no longer lead to a higher synthesis in the online world. Hegel has been beheaded. Instead there are only statistical waves of data, endlessly swirled into astonishing fortunes by those who use it to calculate economic advantages for themselves.

What is a book?

In this era of digital takeover we must ask, 'What is a book?' The Internet is used to comment on the Internet as much as it is used for pornography or cat pictures, but it is really only media external to the Internet – books in particular - that can provide perspective or syntheses. That is one reason the Internet must not become the sole platform of communication. It serves us best when it isn't both subject and object.

Thus a creature of digital culture such as myself writes books when it is time to look at the big picture. There is a chance that a reader will read a whole book. There is at least an extended moment that I and a reader might share. If a book is only a type of manufactured object made of paper, then it

can only be celebrated in the way we might celebrate clarinets or beer. We love these things, but they are only particular designs, evolved products with their own trade fairs and sub-cultures.

A book is something far more profound. It is a statement of a particular balance between individual personhood and human continuity. Each book has an author, someone who took a risk and made a commitment, saying, 'I have spent a substantial slice of my short life to convey a definite story and a point of view, and I am asking you to do the same to read my book: Can I earn such a huge commitment from you?' A book is a station, not the tracks. Books are a high stakes game, perhaps not in terms of money (compared with other industries), but in terms of effort, commitment, attention, the allocation of our short human lives, and our potential to influence the future in a positive way.

Being an author forces one into a humanising form of vulnerability. The book is an architecture of human dignity. A book in its very essence asserts that individual experience is central to meaning, for each book is distinct. Paper books are by their nature not mushed together into one collective, universal book. We have come to think it is normal for there to be a single Wikipedia article about a humanities topic for which there really can't be only one optimised telling; most topics are not like math theorems. In the print era there were multiple encyclopedias, each announcing a point of view, and yet in the digital era there is effectively only one. Why should that be so?

It is not a technical inevitability, despite 'network effects'. It is a decision based on unquestioned but shoddy dogma that ideas in themselves ought to be coupled to network effects. (It is sometimes said that the Wikipedia will become the memory for a global artificial intelligence, for instance.) Books are changing. Some of the metamorphosis is creative and fascinating. I am charmed by the thought of books that will someday synchronise to virtual worlds, and by other weird ideas. But too much of the metamorphosis is creepy. You must now, suddenly, subject yourself to surveillance in order to read an eBook. What a peculiar deal we have made!

The book as a spying device

In the past we struggled to save books from the flames, but now books have been encumbered with duties to report your reading conduct to an opaque network of high-tech offices that analyse and manipulate you. Is it better for a book to be a spying device or ashes? Books have always helped us undo problems we bring upon ourselves. Now we must save ourselves by noticing the problems we are forcing upon books. But what do we man by peace? Certainly peace must mean that violence and terror are not used to gain power or influence, but beyond that, peace must also have a creative character. Most of us do not want to accept some sort of static or dull existence, even if it is free of violence. We do not want to accept the peaceful order that authoritarian or impo-

sed solutions claim to offer, whether digital or old fashioned. Nor should we expect that future generations will accept our particular vision of a sustainable society forever, no matter how smart we are or how good our intentions might be. So peace is a puzzle. How can we be free and yet not veer into the freedom to be nasty? How can peace be both capricious and sustainable? The resolutions between freedom and stability that we have come to know have tended to rely on bribery – on ever-increasing consumption – but that doesn't appear to be a long-term option. Maybe we could stabilise society with virtual rewards, or at least that's an idea one hears around Silicon Valley quite often. Get people to reduce their carbon footprints by wooing them with virtual trinkets within video games.

The pack switch

It might work at first, but there's a phony and patronising quality to that approach. I don't believe we know everything we need to know yet about solutions to the long-term puzzle of peace. That might sound like a negative comment on first hearing, but it is actually an overtly optimistic statement; I believe we are learning more and more about peace as we go. My darkest digital fear con-

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cerns what I call the 'pack switch'. This is a thesis about a persistent aspect of human character that is opposed to peace. People are like wolves, according to this theory; we are members of a species that can function either as individuals or in packs. There is a switch inside us. We are prone to suddenly fall into pack thinking without even realising it.

If there is one thing that terrifies me about the internet, this is it. Here we have a medium which can elicit 'flash mobs' and routinely creates sudden 'viral' popularities. So far, these effects have not been evil on an epochal level, but what is there to prevent that? When generations grow up largely organised and mediated by global corporate cyber-structures like proprietary social networks, how can we know who will inherit control of those designs? Traditional definitions of 'peace' are often only of peace within the pack or clan, so clannishness might be the most pernicious of our sins. It undermines us at our core. Hive identity is almost universally perceived as a virtue. The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament lists a set of sins, including lying, murder, pride, and so on, but also 'sowing discord among brethren'. Similar injunctions exist in every culture, political system, or religion I have studied.

I do not bring this up to suggest an equivalency between all cultures or creeds, but rather a common danger within us, in our nature, that we all face and must learn to deflect. Becoming a loyal part of a pack is confused with goodness again and again, even – especially! – when the people fancy themselves to be rebels. It is always pack

against pack. It is as true for those who identify with pop styles or a particular approach to digital politics, as it can be for traditional ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Within digital culture, one can be vilified for not adhering strictly enough to the dogma of the 'open' movement, for instance. Again and again, our crude 'sins' like greed or pack identity obsession emerge rudely but stealthily from our carefully cultivated patterns of perfect thinking – in fact, just when we think we're close to technical perfection. The lovely idea of human rights is being confounded by gamesmanship during our present algorithmic era. After generations of thinkers and activists focused on human rights, what happened?

Corporations became people, or so said the Supreme Court in the United States! A human right is an absolute benefit, so sneaky players will connive to calculate multiples of that benefit for themselves and their packmates. What are we to do with our idea of human rights in America? It's been inverted. For another example, it is just when digital companies believe they are doing the most good, optimising the world, that they suddenly find themselves operating massive spying and behaviour modification empires. Consider Facebook, which is the first large public company controlled by a single individual, who is mortal. It governs much of the pattern of social connection in the world today. Who might inherit this power? Is there not a new kind of peril implicit in that quandary?

Of course this topic has special resonance in Germany. I would like to say something profound about that angle, but honestly I don't fully understand what happened. My mother was from Vienna, and many of her relatives were lost to the evil and the shiny megaviolence of the Nazi regime. She suffered horribly as a young girl, and almost perished as well. Were I not so close to those events, were the impact more muted for me, I might be more ready to pretend that I understand them more fully, as so many scholars pretend to do. In all honesty I still find it terribly hard to understand the Nazi era, despite much reading. At the very least, the Nazis certainly proved that a highly technical and modern sensibility is not an antidote to evil. In that sense, the Nazi period heightens my concerns about whether the Internet could serve as a superior platform for sudden mass pack/clan violence.

I don't think outright repudiation of pack/clan identity is the best way to avoid falling into the associated violence. People seem to need it. Countries more often than not resist losing identity in larger confederations. Very few people are ready to live as global citizens, free of national association. There's something abstract and unreal about that sort of attempt to perfect human character. The best strategy might be for each individual to belong to enough varied clans that it becomes too confusing to form coherent groups in opposition to one another. Back in the digital beginning, decades ago, I held out exactly this hope for digital networks. If each person could feel a sense of clan membership in a confusing variety of

'teams' in a more connected world, maybe the situation would become a little too tangled for traditional rivalries to escalate.

This is also why I worry about the way social networks have evolved to corral people into groups to be well-targeted for what is called advertising these days, but is really more like the micromanagement of the most easily available options, through link placement. I always feel the world becomes a slightly better place when I meet someone who has ties to multiple sports teams and can't decide which one to cheer at a game. Such a person is still enthused, but also confused: suddenly an individual and not part of a pack. The switch is reset.

That kind of reset is interesting because it is a change in outlook brought about by circumstances instead of the expression of ideas, and that type of influence is exactly what happens with technology all the time. In the past an idea in a book might have been persuasive or seductive, or might in some cases have been forced into belief and practice by the means of a gun or a sword held near. Today, however, ideas are often implicit in the computer code we use to run our lives. Privacy is an example. Whatever one thinks about privacy, it's the code running in faraway cloud computers that determines

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what ideas about privacy are actually in effect. The concept of privacy is multifaceted, widely varying, and always hard to define, and yet the code which creates or destroys privacy is tediously – banally – concrete and pervasive. Privacy is hardly a personal decision anymore, which means it's no longer even something that can be thought about in the old sense. Only fanatical scholastics waste time on moot questions. The only useful thinking about privacy is that thinking which leads to changes in the code. And yet we've mostly 'outsourced' our politics to remote corporations, so there is often no clear channel between thinking and coding, meaning between thinking and social reality. Programmers have created a culture in which they expect to outrun regulators. We ask governments to tip toe into the bizarre process of attempting to regulate how cloud-based corporations channel our communications and coordinated activities with one another.

But then programmers will sometimes contravene whatever the company has been forced to do, rendering government action into an absurdity. We have seen this pattern with copyright, for instance, but also in different ways with issues like the right to be forgotten or in certain arenas of privacy, particularly for women online. (Current architectures and practices favour anonymous harassers over the women they harass.) In each case, many of the most creative and sympathetic activists don't want people to be able to contravene the 'openness' of the network. But at the same time many digital activists have a seemingly infinite tolerance

for gargantuan inequities in how people benefit from that all-seeing eye.

For instance, big data fuels the algorithmic concentration of wealth. It happened first in music and finance, but is spreading to every other theatre of human activity. The algorithms don't create sure bets, but they do gradually force the larger society to take on the risks associated with profits that benefit only the few. This in turn induces austerity. Since austerity is coupled with a sharing economy (because certain kinds of sharing provides the data that run the scheme), everyone but the tiny minority on top of the computing clouds experiences a gradual loss of security.

This, in my view, is the primary negative consequence that has occurred thus far through network technology. To observe that is not to dismiss another problem which has gained much more attention, because it is sensational. A side effect of the rise of the algorithmic surveillance economy is the compelled leakage of all that data into the computers of national intelligence services. We know much more about this than we would have because of Edward Snowden's revelations. Curbing government surveillance is essential to the future of democracy, but activists need to keep in mind that in the big picture what is going on at the moment is a gradual weakening of governments in favour of the businesses that gather the data in first place, through the mechanisms of wealth disparity and austerity. That is only true for democracies, of course; non-democratic regimes take control of their own clouds, as we see, for instance, in China. I do sometimes wonder if we've outsourced our democracies to the tech companies simply in order to not have to face it all. We deflect our own power and responsibility.

Here I feel compelled to foresee a potential misunderstanding. I am not 'anti-corporate'. I like big corporations, and big tech corporations in particular. My friends and I sold a startup to Google and I currently have a research post in Microsoft's labs. We must not put each other through purity tests, as if we were cloud algorithms classifying one another for targeted ads. The various institutions that people invent need not annihilate each other, but can balance each other. We can learn to be 'loyal opposition' within all the institutions we might support or at least tolerate, whether government, business, religion, or anything else. We don't always need to destroy in order to create. We can and ought to live with a tangle of allegiances. That is how to avoid the clan/hive switch.

An honest bell curve

Learning to think beyond opposition can yield clarity. For instance, I disagree equally with those who favour a flat distribution of economic benefits and those who prefer the winner-take-all outcomes that the high-tech economy has been yielding lately. The economy need not look like either a tower overlooking a sea of foolish pretenders, or a salt flat

'The algorithms don't create sure bets, but they do gradually force the larger society to take on the risks associated with profits that benefit only the few.'

where everyone is forced to be the same by some controlling authority. One can instead prefer a dominant middle block in an economy. An honest measurement of anything in reality ought to yield a bell curve. If an economy yields a bell curve of outcomes, not only is it honest, but it is also stable and democratic, for then power is broadly distributed. The focus of economic justice should not be to condemn rich people in principle, but to condemn a basin in the middle of the distribution. The conflict between the Left and Right has been so acute for so long that we don't even have an honest vocabulary to describe the honest mathematics of the bell curve. We can't speak of a 'middle class' because the term has become so fraught. And yet that impossible-to-articulate middle is the heart of moderation where we must seek peace.

As boring as it might seem to be at first, moderation is actually both the most fascinating and promising path forward. We are constantly presented with contrasts between old and new, and we are asked to choose. Should we support old-fashioned taxis and their old-fashioned benefits for drivers or new types of services like Uber that offer digital efficiencies? These choices are false choices! The only ethical option is to demand a synthesis of the best of pre-digital and digital designs. One of the problems is that technologists are often trapped in old supernatural fantasies that prevent us from being honest about our own work. Once upon a time, scientists imagined coming up with the magic formulas to make machines come alive and become self-sufficient. After that, artificial intelligence algorithms would write the books, mine the fuels, manufacture the gadgets, care for the sick and drive the trucks. That would lead to a crisis of unemployment, perhaps, but society would adjust, perhaps with a turn towards socialism or a basic income model.

But the plan never worked out. Instead, what looks like automation is actually driven by big data. The biggest computers in the world gather data from what real people – like authors – do, acting as the most comprehensive spying services in history, and that data is rehashed to run the machines. It turns out that 'automation' still needs huge numbers of people! And yet the fantasy of a machine-centric future requires that those real people be rendered anonymous and forgotten. It is a trend that reduces the meaning of authorship, but as a matter of course will also shrink the economy as a whole, while enriching those who own the biggest spying computers.

In order to create the appearance of automatic language translations, for instance, the works of real translators must be scanned by the millions every single day (because of references to current events and the like.) This is a typical arrangement. It's usually the case that an appearance of automation is actually hiding the disenfranchisement of the people behind the curtain who do the work, which in turn contributes to austerity, which in turn rules out the possibility of socialism or basic income as a way to compensate for all the theatrically simulated unemployment.

Culture of disruption

The whole cycle is a cosmic scale example of smart people behaving stupidly. 'Disrupt' might be the most common word in digital business and culture. We pretend it's hard to differentiate 'creative destruction' – a most popular trope in modern business literature – from mere destruction. It really isn't that hard. Just look to see if people are losing security and benefits even though what they do is still needed. Buggy whips are obsolete, but the kinds of services being made more efficient by digital services lately are usually just being reformatted, not rejected. Whenever someone introduces a cloud service to make some aspect of life easier, like access to music, rides, dates, loans, or anything else, it also now expected that innocent people will suffer, even if that is not strictly, technically necessary. People will be cut off from social protections.

If artists enjoyed copyright, that will be lost in the new system. If workers were in a union, they will no longer be. If drivers had special licenses and contracts, they no longer will. If citizens enjoyed privacy, then they must adjust to the new order. The familiar expectation that one must incinerate old rights, like privacy, or security through the labour movement, in order to introduce new technological efficiencies, is bizarre. Techie idealists often focus on how the old protections were imperfect, unfair, and corrupt – all of which was often so – but we rarely admit to ourselves how the new situation offers spectacularly inferior protections and astoundingly greater levels of unfairness. If you are a technology creator, please consider this: If you need to rely on dignity destruction as a crutch in order to demonstrate a new efficiency through digital networking, it only means you're not good at the technology. You are cheating. Really efficient technological designs should improve both service and dignity for people at the same time. We humans are geniuses at confusing ourselves by using computers. The most important example is the way computation can make statistics seem to be an adequate description of reality. This might sound like an obscure technical problem, but it is actually at the core of our era's economic and social challenges.

There is an exponentially increasing number of observations about how gigantic 'big data' is these days; about the multitudes of sensors hiding in our environment, or how vast the cloud computing facilities have become, in their obscure locations, desperate to throw off their excess heat into wild rivers. What is done with all that data? Statistical algorithms analyse it! If you would, please raise the tip of your finger and move it slowly through the air. Given how many cameras there are in our present-day world, some camera is probably looking at it, and some algorithm somewhere is probably automatically predicting where it will be in another moment. The algorithm might have been set in place by a government intelligence operation, a bank, a criminal gang, a Silicon Valley company, who knows? It is ever-cheaper to do it and everyone who can, does. That al-

gorithm will probably be correct for at least a little while. This is true simply because statistics is a valid branch of mathematics. But beyond that, the particular reality we find ourselves in is friendly to statistics. This is a subtle aspect of our reality.

Our world, at least at the level in which humans function, has an airy, spacious quality. The nature of our environment is that most things have enough room to continue on in what they were just doing. For contrast, Newton's laws (i.e. a thing in motion will continue) do not apply in a common tile puzzle, because every move is so constrained and tricky in such a puzzle. But despite the apparent airiness of everyday events, our world is still fundamentally like a tile puzzle.

It is a world of structure, governed by conservation and exclusion principles. What that means is simple: my finger will probably keep on moving as it was, but not forever, because it will reach the limit of how far my arm can extend, or it will run into a wall or some other obstacle. This is the peculiar, flavourful nature of our world: commonplace statistical predictability, but only for limited stretches of time, and we can't predict those limits universally. So cloud-based statistics often work at first,

'Billons are accumulated around the biggest computers with each cycle. The selfish illusion of infallibility appears over and over again - the serial trickster of our era – and makes our smartest and kindest technical minds become part of the problem instead of part of the solution.'

but then fail. We think we can use computers to see into the future, but then suddenly our schemes fail. (Good scientists who work with theory, beyond statistics, understand this problem and also model the wall that interrupts the progress of your finger. That level of effort is rarely expended in cloud business, however, since billions are still made without it.) This is the universal and seductive pattern of intellectual failure in our times.

Why are we so easily seduced? It is hard to describe how intense the seductive quality is to someone who hasn't experienced it. If you're a financier running cloud statistics algorithms, it feels at first like you have the magic touch of King Midas. You just sit back and your fortune accumulates. But then something happens. You might run out of people to offer stupid loans to, or your competitors start using similar algorithms, or something. Some structural limit interrupts your amazing run of perfect luck, and you are always shocked, shocked, shocked, even if it has happened before, because the seductive power of those early phases is irresistible. (A baseball team where I live in California was celebrated in the book and movie Moneyball for using statistics to become winners, and yet now they are losing. This is utterly typical.)

There is also an intense power-trip involved. You can not only predict, but you can force patterns into the ways users express themselves, and how they act. It is common these days for a digital company to woo some users into a service that provides a new effi-

ciency through algorithms and cloud connectivity. This might be a way of distributing books to tablets, a way of ordering rides in cars or finding places to sleep while travelling, a way of keeping track of family members and friends, of finding partners for sex and romance, or a way of finding loans. Whatever it is, a phenomenon called 'network effect' soon takes hold, and after that, instead of a world of choices, people are for the most part compelled to use whichever service has outrun the others.

A new kind of monopoly comes into being, often in the form of a California-based company. The users will typically feel like they are getting tremendous bargains. Free music! They seem to be unable to draw a connection to their own lessening prospects. Instead they are grateful. If you tell them, through the design of algorithms, how to date, or how to present themselves to their families, they will comply. Whoever runs one of these operations, which I call Siren Servers, can set the norms for society, such as privacy. It is like being king. That is the raw economic snapshot that characterises so many aspects of our society in recent times. It was the story of music early on. Soon it will be the story of manufacturing (because of 3D printers and factory automation), health care (because of robotic nurses), and every other segment of the economy. And of course it has overtaken the very idea of elections in the United States, where computational gerrymandering and targeted advertising have made elections into contests between big computers instead of

contests between candidates. (Please don't let that happen in Europe.) It works over and over and yet it also fails over and over in another sense.

Automated trading crashes spectacularly, and then starts up again. Recorded music crashes, but then the same rulebook is applied to books. Billons are accumulated around the biggest computers with each cycle. The selfish illusion of infallibility appears over and over again – the serial trickster of our era – and makes our smartest and kindest technical minds become part of the problem instead of part of the solution. We make billions just before we slam into the wall. If this pattern is inevitable, then politics don't matter much. Politics, in that case, could at most delay a predetermined unravelling. But what if politics can actually matter? In that case, it is sad that current digital politics is so often self-defeating. The mainstream of digital politics, which is still perceived as young and 'radical', continues to plough forward with a set of ideas about openness from over three decades ago, even though the particular formulation has clearly backfired.

As my friends and I watched the so-called Twitter or Facebook revolution unfold in Tahrir Square from the comfort of Silicon Valley, I remember saying, 'Twitter will not provide jobs for those brave, bright young Egyptians, so this movement can't succeed.' Freedom isolated from economics (in the broad sense of the word) is meaningless. It is hard to speak of this, because one must immediately anticipate so many objec-

tions. One can be convinced, for instance, that traditional social constructions like 'jobs' or 'money' can and should be made obsolete through digital networks, but: Any replacement inventions would need to offer some of the same benefits, which young people often prefer to not think about. But one cannot enter into only part of the circle of life.

Inverted demographic cataclysm

This is a tricky topic and deserves a careful explanation. The 'sharing economy' offers only the real time benefits of informal economies that were previously only found in the developing world, particularly in slums. Now we've imported them into the developed world, and young people love them, because the emotion of sharing is so lovely. But people can't stay young forever. Sometimes people get sick, or need to care for children, partners, or parents. We can't 'sing for our supper' for every meal. Because of this reality, the sharing economy has to be understood ultimately as a deceptive ritual of death denial. Biological realism is the core reason formal economies came into being in the first place. If we undermine both union protections, through the sharing economy, and trap governments in long term patterns of austerity and debt crisis, through that same economy, who will take care of the needy?

'Free language translation services actually depend on scanning the work of millions of real human translators every day. Why not pay those real people?'

Sometimes I wonder if younger people in the developed world, facing the inevitable onslaught of aging demographics, are subconsciously using the shift to digital technology as way to avoid being crushed by obligations to an excess of elders. Most parts of the developed world are facing this type of inverted demographic cataclysm in the coming decades. Maybe it's proper for young people to seek shelter, but if so, the problem is that they too will become old and needy someday, for that is the human condition. Within the tiny elite of billionaires who run the cloud computers, there is a loud, confident belief that technology will make them immortal. Google has funded a large organisation to 'solve death', for instance. There are many other examples. I know many of the principal figures in the antideath, or post-human movement, which sits at the core of Silicon Valley culture, and I view most of them as living in a dream world divorced from rational science. (There are also some fine scientists who simply accept the funding; funding for science these days often comes from oddly-motivated sources, so I cannot fault them.)

The arithmetic is clear. If immortality technology, or at least dramatic life extension technology, starts to work, it would either have to be restricted to the tiniest elite, or else we would have to stop adding children to the world and enter into an infinitely stale gerontocracy. I point this out only to reinforce that when it comes to digital technology, what seems radical – what at first seems to be creative destruction – is often actually hyper-conservative and infinitely stale and

boring once it has a chance to play out.

Another popular formulation would have our brains 'uploaded' into virtual reality so that we could live forever in software form. This despite the fact that we don't know how brains work. We don't yet know how ideas are represented in neurons. We allocate billions of dollars on simulating brains even though we don't really know the basic principles as yet. We are treating hopes and beliefs as if they were established science. We are treating computers as religious objects.

We need to consider whether fantasies of machine grace are worth maintaining. In resisting the fantasies of artificial intelligence, we can see a new formulation of an old idea that has taken many forms in the past: 'Humanism'. The new humanism is a belief in people, as before, but specifically in the form of a rejection of artificial intelligence. This doesn't mean rejecting any particular algorithm or robotic mechanism. Every single purported artificially intelligent algorithm can be equally well understood as a non-autonomous function that people can use as a tool. The rejection is not based on the irrelevant argument usually put forward about what computers can do or not do, but instead on how people are always needed to perceive the computer in order for it to be real. Yes, an algorithm with cloud big data gathered from millions, millions of people, can perform a task. You can see the shallowness of computers on a practical level, because of the dependency on a hidden crowd of anonymous people, or a deeper epistemological one: without people, computers are just space heaters making patterns. One need not spe-

'The pattern we see today is not the only possible pattern and is not inevitable. Inevitability is an illusion that leeches freedom away. The more advanced technology gets, the harder it will be to distinguish between algorithms and corporations.'

cify whether a divine element is present in a person or not, nor precisely whether certain 'edge cases' like bonobos should be considered human beings.

Nor must one make absolute judgments about the ultimate nature of people or computers. One must, however, treat computers as less-than-human. To talk about specific ways out of our stupid digital economics pattern is to enter into a difficult argument. I have mostly explored and advocated one approach, which is to revive the original concept for digital media architecture, dating back to Ted Nelson's work in the 1960s. Ted suggested a universal micropayment scheme for digital contributions from people. Once again, this was not a radinor a corporation should be a person! The new humanism asserts that it is ok to believe that people are special, in the sense that people are something more than machines or algorithms. This proposition can lead to crude mocking arguments in tech circles, and really there's no absolute way to prove it's correct. We believe in ourselves and each other only on faith. It is a more pragmatic faith than the traditional belief in God. It leads to a fairer and more sustainable economy, and better, more accountable technology designs, for instance. (Believing in people is compatible with any belief or lack of belief in God.)

To some techies, a belief in the specialness of people can sound sentimental or religious, and they hate that. But without believing in human specialness, how can a humanistic society be sought? May I suggest that technologists at least try to pretend to believe in human specialness to see how it feels?

Death and loss are inevitable, whatever my digital supremacist friends with their immortality laboratories think, even as they proclaim their love for creative destruction. However much we are pierced with suffering over it, in the end death and loss are boring because they are inevitable. It is the miracles we build, the friendships, the families, the meaning, that are astonishing, interesting, blazingly amazing.

Jaron Lanier is an American computer scientist, artist, musician, composer, author and entrepreneur. From 1984 to 1990 he ran VPL Research, a company that developed and sold Virtual Reality applications. His views on Wikipedia and the Open Source movement have been extensively debated. He was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2014.

The future rulers? Artificial intelligence (AI) has many advantages, but also significant and hard-to-calculate drawbacks for society. For totalitarian regimes, AI is the perfect tool for exercising power. In liberal democracies AI can fuel lack of trust in politicians and institutions and lead to greater polarisation. Russian president Vladimir Putin underlined the strategic importance of artificial intelligence when he said, 'Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world.'
By Thorsten Jelinek

Technology has always been used for good or for harm, and it has fundamentally changed human relations by either extending or constraining both power and opportunity. Today, the discourse on widespread digitalisation and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) amplifies both of these ethical dimensions. On the upside, AI is celebrated as a new source of innovation, economic growth, and competitiveness, as well as for the productivity and efficiency improvements that AI offers across all industries and sectors. Intelligent automation also promises to resolve some of the most urgent global challenges and achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The potential economic and social benefits of AI innovations can be tremendous. For the majority, the rise of AI is already being experienced as an increase in everyday convenience.

Risks and imbalances

On the downside, the rapid advancement and omnipotent nature of AI capabilities has been cautioned against and condemned as a source of unprecedented security and privacy risks as well as a source of severe social, economic, political, and international imbalances in the long term. In the past, the benefits of such dual-use or disruptive technologies eventually outweighed their harm, but this often took place only after a period of misuse and accidents that caused people and governments to demand further improvements and regulations.

As AI won't be an outcome of only human agency but will increasingly develop into an independent agent of autonomous decision-making itself, we cannot readily rely on those past experiences. However, over the next decades the main risk is not that AI itself will cause immediate harm and long-term imbalances, but our existing human relations,

practices, and intentions and thus how AI will be applied is the primary cause and source of disruption. AI won't be external to history but perpetuate and probably accelerate the current trajectory of humankind, and as history has entered a downward spiral and become more divided and unsustainable, the risk of experiencing more of the downside of AI is very high.

Science or science fiction?

With AI on the rise, coupled with other disruptive technologies such as 5G, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, quantum computing, and biosynthetics, our imaginary distance between science fiction and real science has shrunk considerably. AI already beats humans in difficult tasks like playing chess, Go and other complex strategy games, or when conducting medical and legal diagnoses. Besides the intelligent automation of control systems, computer vision and language processing have received the most attention in recent years and vastly outperform certain forms of human perception and expression.

Yet AI is still far away from mimicking human-level intelligence or reaching superhuman intelligence, and it still needs to overcome engineering bottlenecks related to creative and social intelligence. Today's

'Today's algorithms are not able to abstract from one situation and apply general concepts to new contexts and tasks. Nor can algorithms automatically change the methodology of learning itself.'

algorithms are not able to abstract from one situation and apply general concepts to new contexts and tasks. Nor can algorithms automatically change the methodology of learning itself.

While the application of AI systems can be extremely efficient and scalable, training AI systems still takes a long time, is extremely costly, and is much more inefficient than how humans learn. From the perspective of collective intelligence, AI cannot build or compete against large and complex social organisations, which is the human ability that arguably distinguishes humankind from nature. In short, since the rise and collection of mass data, AI has advanced rapidly, but it will not advance rapidly enough to match the apologetic or dystopian fantasies of a post-humanist and post-evolutionist era anytime soon.

The level of risk attributed to AI is not a matter of optimism or pessimism but one of understanding how AI serves existing human behaviour and how it can alter power relations. Even before AI reaches or exceeds human-level intelligence, the disruptions of AI will be twofold; they will be immediate and felt directly, and they will be structural and unfold over a longer period of time. Regarding the former, AI's immediate risks relate to the existing landscape of cybersecurity threats, which will change tremendously due to the malicious use of AI. There has been a steep increase in traditional cybersecurity breaches and cybercrime incidences that mainly threaten individuals, businesses, and national infrastructures.

These are caused by individual criminals, organised crime groups, terrorists, and states or state-sponsored actors, and they primarily involve the disruption of digital and physical systems, theft, and cyber espionage.

Cybersecurity threats

Cyberwarfare is a combination of all of these and also involves information and psychological operations to manipulate public opinion. Due to its scalability and efficiency as well as the increasing psychological distance between the attacker and the target, the malicious use of AI will lead to the expansion of existing cybersecurity threats, create entirely new forms of cyber-physical threats, and carry out attacks and crimes that are much more targeted by optimising the trade-off between effort and harm or gain.

Due to such a changing landscape of immediate threats and risks, cybersecurity (and more recently AI) has become a matter of national security and military priority. While the next generation of mobile networks, or 5G, makes it possible to connect everything with everything and with everyone, at home, in the office, in factories, and in smart cities, AI provides automation for the purpose of efficiency and convenience. The combination of both technologies will tremendously expand the surface for cyber-physical threats and accidents. It will further complicate both the deterrence and attribution of cyber-attacks or other hacking exploits due to the increasing complexity and intercon-

nectedness of computer networks. It won't be possible to prevent those threats, but it will only be possible to mitigate them. For many governments, it's not a question if but when severe cybersecurity incidences will occur. The risk is independent of specific technology providers.

Economic imbalances

In addition to these immediate risks, there are longer-term structural risks associated with AI, which are more difficult to anticipate, but their impact will be even more widespread and pervasive. This is simply because technology is not external to us, developing independently of history. Instead, it is deeply interwoven with history, and the current trajectory of humankind shows little sign of escaping from today's downward spiral of economic, societal, political, and international relations. Economically, mass labour displacement, underemployment, and de-skilling are likely outcomes of intelligent automation and augmentation. AI directly competes with human intelligence, which was spared from automation during previous industrial revolutions.

AI will not just target knowledge work but continue automating the physical labour that escaped previous waves of rationalisation. As a consequence, governments must prepare for profound structural changes. Widespread automation and aging societies will reduce the labour force and labour as a major source of tax revenue. In additi-

on, market forces have already caused the concentration of data, AI technologies, and human talents. Research and development increasingly shifts from publicly-funded to privately-owned laboratories of large AI platform companies that are less willing to share their intellectual property for the social good.

Digital kleptocracies

While the Internet initially lowered hurdles to setting up businesses, AI raises the bar again, which can lead to digital kleptocracies and AI mercantilism if the zero-marginal-cost economy remains unregulated. While rich countries will be able to afford a universal basic income for those who will not be able to re-skill, low- and middle-income countries won't be able to do the same and risk becoming trapped in their stages of development. AI coupled with data — the 'new oil' on which machine learning thrives — will disrupt the global division of labour.

Countries that can't catch up with advanced automation to improve their competitiveness will be left further behind. Labour, and especially cheap labour, won't provide a sufficient comparative advantage in the future, and this will render previous development models obsolete. Income inequality has already reached alarming levels, not just

'Research and development increasingly shifts from publicly-funded to privately-owned laboratories of large AI platform companies that are less willing to share their intellectual property for the social good.'

between rich and poor countries but also among the rich countries. The United States has the most unequal wealth distribution among all OECD countries.

Feeding ground for social unrest

While a small group of transhumanists will effect and enjoy the privileges of digital upgrading, the number of those who are left behind will likely increase and add to the feeding ground for social unrest, populism, and nationalism. Before societies are able to change the meaning of labour and find new sources for improving human dignity, automation will reinforce individualism, alienation, and loneliness, and it will threaten both physical and psychological well-being and social cohesion.

State and political actors will make more use of AI technologies. While businesses employ AI to segment people even more precisely as consumers and compete for their attention, political and state actors do so to better understand citizens as persuadable voters, followers, or potential security threats. This can help make countries more secure and the political process more efficient if AI is used responsibly and balances between economic growth, social good, and national security. However, AI increases the structural risk of shifting the power balance between the state, the economy, and society by limiting the space for autonomy.

Through AI-enabled mass surveillance, psychological operations, and the weaponi-

sation of information, states and political actors might seek to acquire a disproportionate amount of power or amplify populism. The two poles of this political risk scenario are totalitarianism and tyranny of the majority. In both cases, the struggle over power dominates the struggle over progress and threatens the pillars of modern states and governments — bureaucracy, rule of law, and accountability. While authoritarian states could slide into totalitarian regimes by exerting pervasive state control and repression of differences, democracies could witness the erosion of their institutions, the polarisation of their entire societies, and the disintegration of their 'public morality' and 'manufacturing consent'. Unfortunately, we can already witness the world sliding towards either pole of political imbalances.

Fierce global competition

AI is not the cause, but it is an increasingly weaponised tool used both within and beyond national boundaries to disrupt the political process of adversarial countries. The Edward Snowden and Cambridge Analytica affairs are the most known and disturbing cases of widespread cyber espionage, privacy violation, the manipulation of public opinion and interfering in the democratic process within the West. Conversely, the West frequently accuses Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and Syria of state or state-sponsored cyber intrusions and attacks and of pervasive mass surveillance.

A fierce global competition over AI supremacy is already raging and threatening to disrupt existing international relations. All of the leading economies have laid out or updated their AI national strategies with the goal of promoting the development of nascent AI capabilities and ecosystems and being able to compete globally. The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, most clearly stated the strategic importance of AI in 2017 when he said, 'Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world.' Russia is not leading the AI race; currently, the United States leads the race, followed closely by China. The United States wants to maintain its 'leadership in AI', while China aspires to become the 'primary centre for AI innovation' by 2030.

Europe also seeks to become the 'world-leading region for cutting-edge AI', but it is lagging behind the United States and China in its number of AI talents and businesses, filed patents, published research papers, and investments into the AI industry for research and development. All governments emphasise AI as a source of growth and competitiveness. At the same time, AI is classified as a 'dual-use' technology and is therefore subject to national security, export controls, and FDI screening mechanisms. Governments have hastily passed new regulations to mitigate cybersecurity risks, ensure privacy protection, and empower law enforcement. The new regulations also protect domestic markets under the banner of digital and data sovereignty. The head-to-head race has extended to national defence

agencies that are preparing for a 'hyperwar' and making 'battlefield-ready AI' a priority. Most troubling of all is the development of lethal autonomous weapons (LAW). While the European Union is calling for a ban of 'automated killing robots', the United States, China, Russia, and other countries are all advancing or acquiring LAW capabilities. Compared to conventional weapons, cyber weapons are low-cost and more easily accessible, which will accelerate the diffusion of cyberwarfare and LAW capabilities.

Risk of asymmetric conflicts

This will also empower otherwise weaker actors, thus tremendously increasing the risk of asymmetric conflicts. Due to the proliferation of cyber technologies and the ongoing rush by many states (over 40 states) to obtain offensive cyber capabilities for potential use in conflict, the actual risk of international cyberconflict and cyberwarfare has increased significantly, that is using digital technology by one country to disrupt vital digital systems of another country. Such proliferation of technologies also holds the risk of 'friendly fire' and 'second order consequences' because many cyber networks rely on some private sector infrastructure.

There are numerous international organi-

'Through AI-enabled mass surveillance, psychological operations, and the weaponisation of information, states and political actors might seek to acquire a disproportionate amount of power or amplify populism.'

sations dealing with cybersecurity and cyber operations, but cyberspace and AI enable cyber conflict while lacking international treaties and attempts to build familiarity, mutual trust, and confidence, especially between the major powers. On the contrary, the United States is trying everything to decouple its technology and research from that of China and is pushing its allies to do the same. The United States is doing this to confine China's rise based on national security concerns, yet it has failed to provide evidence of misconduct. In addition, conventional arms-control treaties have been ripped apart or put into question.

Debate on ethics and governance

While we cannot anticipate the outcome of the digital and AI revolution because history gives us little or no reference point for what could be the final technological revolution, such sobering lists of immediate threats and longer-term structural imbalances have sparked an international debate about the ethics and governance of AI. In this debate, the term ethics is often used to summarise those legitimate concerns about these potential disruptions of AI. The debate about AI ethics and governance has resulted most notably in the definition of numerous AI principle frameworks worldwide, which have been primarily proposed by large Internet platforms and multinational corporations, as well as by international and non-governmental organisations and governments.

Despite subtle but crucial differences in selecting and emphasising certain ethical principles, the various principle frameworks commonly emphasise that future AI should be secure, safe, explainable, fair, and reliable, and they also stress that its benefits should be distributed across society. There seems to be an international consensus that AI should be developed and used for the greater good of humanity. It should be responsible, human-centric, and trustworthy, and it should always retain human agency and human oversight.

The trajectory of history

Yet this positive framing primarily confirms, conversely put, that today's ethics and governance are ill-equipped to prevent or sufficiently mitigate the disruptive forces of AI and that those potential forces are clearly of global and historical proportions. However, almost all frameworks analyse the risk of AI in a narrow sense: that is, without developing a link between the dual-use character of the technology and the actual state of social, political, economic, and international affairs. Those frameworks ignore how AI will most likely reinforce rather than alter the current trajectory of history as indicated above. AI will increasingly make autonomous decisions, but it won't escape and be completely autonomous from human practices any time soon, and we cannot expect it to become a transcendent, super-beneficial, and human-centric compass directing hu-

manity toward universal equality and dignity. While many of these AI principles were quickly defined, the definition of new governance approaches, which are supposed to implement these principles, will be more difficult given AI's complex and uncertain risk scenario.

Governance is the possibility for collaboration directed by common principles. Collaboration is necessary, as each stakeholder faces different responsibilities and no stakeholder alone can tackle AI risks in their entirety. However, fundamental political and cultural differences especially between the major economic blocs undermine international collaboration. Even so, collaboration and cooperation will become more urgent in the future to effectively address the risks of AI. Those fundamental differences make the looming ethics and governance gap seemingly insurmountable. Accordingly, the United States is a market foundationalist economy and individualist society following the motif of profit and personal self-fulfilment. The government emphasises AI as an opportunity for research and development, growth, and job creation. Cybersecurity risks are treated as a liability. In contrast, the Eu-

'Europe also seeks to become the "world-leading region for cutting-edge AI", but it is lagging behind the United States and China in its number of AI talents and businesses, filed patents, published research papers, and investments into the AI industry for research and development.'

ropean Union stresses solidarity and a human rights approach to AI. According to the European Union, AI should be lawful, robust, and ethical. The mitigation of AI risks is a matter of regulation.

In China, harmony and compassion are emphasised as the country's underlying moral obligations. For the Chinese government, data and AI are a means of ensuring stability and discipline through surveillance and control. While Chinese people largely perceive the digital revolution as an opportunity, Western people tend to emphasise its dangers. While the former has trust in their central government and in how it handles the digital revolution, the latter tend to be sceptical towards their governments.

Pushing for responsibility

Undoubtedly, such representations omit the many differences within each region and the similarities across all the regions. People in the Europe, the United States, and China have become increasingly aware of the privacy and security risks related to ubiquitous digitalisation and AI. Governments have hastily sought to create a balance between security and autonomy to harness the benefits while simultaneously minimising the risks. Large Internet and AI platforms have been pushed to become more responsible. The big powers face the same challenges, but they approach them from different ends. Their differences are firmly rooted in their history and culture but are amplified these days. Especially, the United States and China have lost patience working together. Instead, they forcefully articulate and defend their otherness.

Today's global context brings us dangerously close to a never-ending pre-war scenario between China and the United States. Both powers are pushing towards the Thucydides Trap. The past globalism of the 1990s and 2000s threatens to turn into a post-global reality, one of competing national globalists repeatedly failing to reach a consensus for the development of a new equilibrium and multilateral order. The disintegration of the World Trade Organization and erosion of the old United States-led order brings us back to an era where 'might is right'. It is an era of allegiances and fragmented bilateralisms. It is an era of high uncertainty and seemingly uncontrollable risks, where many have lost trust in businesses, technology, and local and global institutions, certainly within the West. Europe has become more 'real'.

A precarious balance

Yet Europe's realism is precarious as the region mainly balances between breaking up, heightened xenophobia, and protecting the 'European way of life' but without the capacity for global stewardship. Like the United States, Europe has yet to find an escape path from the growing rift between its 'Brahmin left' and 'merchant right'. Like the United States, Europe fails to represent the struggles and anxieties within its societies. Europe will remain sandwiched between a 'protectionist' United States, an 'aggressive' China, and the rivalry between the two countries.

Although the United States seems to fear its future the most, China must also try harder to find a way to reduce such fear. For now,

further harm is only prevented as each of the three powers is an important trading partner of the other two. Against such hyperbolised backdrop, it becomes obvious that AI will be used for good and for harm and to gain a strategic advantage over other competitors and rivals. Like capitalism, AI is disruptive and lacks the ethics of social good. Therefore, it's a matter of human agency, collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders on national and international levels that could break through the current downward spiral and largely ensure that technology is used for good. For the time being, AI won't be history's primary cause but a technology with the high-risk amplifying history's symptoms.

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Without a European public sphere, Europe cannot free itself from its national filter bubbles. A European platform and a European newsroom for pan-European discourse on European issues could be the starting point for Europe of the future. And it could stem the polarisation fuelled by the populists who benefit from the social media algorithms, which are not driven by the public good but solely by the tech companies' need to capture our attention. *By Johannes Hillje*

In recent debates about how Europe can escape its permanent state of crisis, people like to brandish the words uttered by the 'Father of Europe', Frenchman Jean Monnet: 'If I were to build Europe again from scratch, I would start with culture' In fact Monnet never said this – it's a fake quote that was attributed to him at a later date. According to the Jean Monnet Foundation in Lausanne, this myth goes back to the words of Jack Lange, the former French Minister of Culture, when – with the best of intentions – he commented: 'Monnet could, or should, have said that if he were to build Europe again from scratch...' and so on.

The fact that this is something that Monnet could have said is a fitting metaphor for the state of Europe. Much of the European Union's recent history should also be written in the subjunctive. Since the Brexit referendum, EU politics has revolved around could and should, but with very little do, decide and plan. In the immediate aftermath of the bombshell in summer 2016, it seemed that Europe was prepared to take the bull by the horns. In politics, civil society, science and literature there was an outpouring of optimism about European renewal. In September 2017, Emmanuel Macron's speech at the Sorbonne in Paris unleashed a kind of pro-European emotion. He called for a new start for Europe, waxed lyrical about European sovereignty and presented a long list of specific reform proposals. For many months, citizens took to the streets as part of the Pulse of Europe initiative, painting their faces blue and wrapping themselves in EU flags. For a short time, Europe was actually quite cool.

Experts sketched out scenarios for enhancing democracy in Europe, spearheaded by political thinker Ulrike Guérot with her idea of Europe as a Republic. A new pro-European zeitgeist also swept through the publishing world. Prominent German journalists Heribert Prantl and Evelyn Roll published

pro-European works that replaced the ubiquitous literature about Europe's swansong. And, despite the fact that everything always takes a little longer in Europe, the timing was good: the elections had just been held in France and Germany, there were two years to go before the next European elections, and finally it was possible to get on with the work.

Unfortunately, this was not to be. The German government simply failed to respond to Macron's proposals until, after more than a year, it 'scotched them one hundred percent', as noted by Jürgen Habermas. Germany's only response to France's outstretched hand was to offer small-scale reforms to economic and monetary policy. There was no major breakthrough. In today's Europe, one side's lack of courage has to be understood in tandem with the excessive courage of the other side.

Populism and nationalism are on the rise in every corner of the European Union, from Scandinavia to Germany, France, Austria, Italy and the Visegrad states. In Austria, Italy, the Czech Republic and Poland, their proponents have now moved from opposition to government, and any hope that they would show moderation when in power has generally been proven naïve. It's true that parties such as the FPÖ and the Lega have moved away from 'exit' demands, whether from the euro or the Union as a whole. Instead of getting out, they now tend to support the EU – but a Union that is totally opposed to the spirit of European integration. Their fight with politicians like Macron

'Citizens painted their faces blue and wrapped themselves in EU flags. For a short time, Europe was actually quite cool.'

is essentially about the role of sovereignty. It is a conflict between those who support European sovereignty and those who seek national sovereignty.

One side believes that EU Member States will only retain their capacity for action and self-determination if they pool their sovereignty within the European institutions. The other side, which includes representatives of both right and left, insists that sovereignty has to be firmly tied to the nation because this is the only source of political legitimacy.

Disputes over the distribution of refugees, which was imposed by a majority against individual governments, are an expression of this fundamental conflict. But it is less about the issue at stake than about who has the last word, whether such decisions should actually be taken according to the majority principle as currently envisaged, and to what extent the European Court of Justice can impose European legal principles on the constitutional law of Member States.

If Macron is the shining light of the European sovereignty camp, then Viktor Orbán is his counterpart on the other side. Since 2010, Orbán has been transforming his country into an illiberal state and increasingly coming into conflict with EU institutions by placing restrictions on academics, suppressing civil society, controlling the media and abolishing the separation of powers. Orbán labels any criticism from Brussels an insult to the Hungarian people, who are only exer-

cising their right to self-determination. And if the self-determination of the people is contrary to the principles of the Union, then the nation has the final word. Regardless of the actual issues – because politicians like Viktor Orbán and Matteo Salvini totally disagree about the distribution of refugees – this logic of sovereignty has become the European zeitgeist of a strengthened populist nationalism. Autocratically, but not out of thin air, Orbán says: 'We used to believe that Europe was our future. Now we feel we are the future of Europe.'

Europe could have turned the tide at the time of this European awakening in the wake of Brexit. Opinion polls throughout the Member States revealed record levels of support for remaining in the EU. It was a window of opportunity for reform, indeed for a meaningful deepening of the EU in certain areas. So why have pro-Europeans not taken advantage of this, while Eurosceptics have been pushing their agenda for years? On the one hand, it is a matter of political will, particularly on the part of the German government. On the other hand, populists and nationalists have a structural advantage in the EU's political competition: the dysfunctionality of the European public sphere. Nowadays, such public spheres are primarily digital and organised at national level. This may sound like a contradiction in terms, as digitalisation is generally associated with breaking down communication barriers. Technically and structurally this is true, but not discursively. In terms of topics, actors and perspec-

tives, public debates on European policy are very national in character, irrespective of whether they take place via analogue or digital channels. The current structure of the public sphere plays into the hands of populist nationalists in two ways. On the one hand, they do not need to justify their nationalist positions in terms of Europe's public good, because this is practically non-existent as a benchmark for evaluation in the public debate. But, on the other hand, they benefit from the social media algorithms, which are not driven by the public good but solely by the tech companies' need to capture our attention. It allows armies of trolls, fake news and hate speech free rein to manipulate public opinion. These 'digital rights' operate across borders, coordinating global attacks, for example on national elections. In the worst case, the result is misinformed voters, as happened during the Brexit referendum, when specific groups of people were bombarded with mendacious 'dark ads' on Facebook. The public spheres in Europe have certainly become echo chambers for populism and nationalism, but they offer an extremely poor environment for the legitimisation of European politics.

In 1995, Helmut Kohl declared that European integration was 'irreversible'. He went on to explain: 'For me, irreversible means that the pace of integration in individual policy areas can be discussed later, but the direction can no longer be changed.' The Brexit vote is merely the most obvious proof that Kohl got it wrong. In 2019,

disintegration is a political fact in the EU and, indeed, is the declared aim of some governments. Meanwhile, other countries are saying: 'This far, but no further'. And it is not only conservatives and right-wingers who are openly opposed to closer European integration. There are just as many doubters on the left. Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France and Sahra Wagenknecht in Germany lead leftist parties in Europe that have a nationalist orientation. They believe that the EU operates in a neo-liberal fashion and is systematically on the wrong side of the struggle between capital and labour. This makes it impossible to push ahead with redistribution, stronger workers' rights and higher levels of corporate tax.

A window of opportunity

There is also a growing disenchantment with Europe in the social democratic camp, where there is a sense that the social democratic trophies of the 20th century can only be defended where they were gained – within the nation state. Such arguments are not based on sovereignty but on solidarity: the nation is the only community where solidarity in the sense of material redistribution can be reliably organised. In short, Europe is not a welfare state. And it is true that European integration has, to date, been a liberal success story, not a leftist or social democratic one. In the EU, economic freedoms are much more developed than social protections. But harking back to a 'golden age' also has its limitations when formulating future policy. There is always an unresolved contradiction in the apologia of the nation state: how to incorporate a capitalist system that operates independently of national borders into a nation state? Shouldn't democratic oversight be organised at the level where the actors who are to be overseen actually operate? One does not have to like the real, existing European Union, but one cannot reject it as a framework for action if democratic sovereignty and social rights are to be defended in globalisation. They have to be changed through political majorities.

One thing is clear: it is not a contradiction to criticise the EU while supporting the EU. On the contrary, anyone who defends the EU has to criticise it. Now, at this time of crisis, Europe should be beset by fierce arguments. But they should be about the 'how' of common European policy, not about the 'if'. In 1970, the renowned economist Albert O. Hirschmann (who escaped the Nazis) wrote a seminal work entitled Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. In it, he outlines three options for action for citizens whose institutions are in an existential crisis: exit the institution, collectively raise their voice, or keep their frustration under wraps and remain loyal. Today, most people in the EU have to resort to the last option, to some extent because many countries' constitutions prevent the first option, even via a referendum. They would have to elect governments that would somehow make an exit possible. However, it would make much more sense

to finally make the second option possible by giving citizens a voice.

If we want to change the EU, make it more democratic, more social, more sustainable, then we need an appropriate space for communication where we can discuss how to go about it. My prognosis is as follows: from this point on, it will not be possible to make a substantial step towards European integration without a European public sphere. Without a European public sphere, at some point the European Union will cease to exist. Any next step, however logical, such as the appointment of a European Finance Minister, is rejected by a national filter made up of fear, prejudice and self-interest. The vast majority of people in Europe feel they are EU citizens. People today do not necessarily lack a European identity, but there is no structure to bring them together to agree on their common civic concerns. Meanwhile, EU politicians make far-reaching decisions without the public sphere that is needed to legitimise them. On top of that, the fact that the legitimate decisions of European institutions can be ignored by national governments almost with impunity means that any further step towards integration is doomed to failure if it is not accompanied by the creation of a public sphere as an essential mechanism for reproducing precisely this democratic legitimacy.

Over recent years, Europe's crisis discourse has turned out to be a vicious circle of crisis, news and nationalism. The media love European politics when it can be portrayed as a crisis. Behind the crises there are conflicts between Member States, which the media ramps up in a confrontational manner and which also promotes differences between nations by talking them up and talking them down. This discourse builds citizens' sense of nationalism, while support for joint solutions is beset by crisis.

What are the reasons for this toxic discourse on Europe? Europe has no public sphere, which to date has failed to be created through the Europeanisation of national public spheres, a European super-medium, or with the help of digital channels. The Member States talk about the EU and about each other, but not to each other. Europe negotiates European issues in national bubbles instead of in a European communication space. This means that citizens are served up information about European politics through a national filter. This filter is not an algorithm but a media discourse system that is characterised by a one-sided, nationalist view of European concerns. It focuses on the national position rather than on European solidarity and constructs the European collective on the basis of national narratives. In other words, in the public sphere there is an understanding of and a preference for a 'French Europe', a 'German Europe' or a 'Hungarian Europe', but not for a European Europe that is made up of a European France, Germany and Hungary. The walls of the national bubbles are

'The public spheres in Europe have certainly become echo chambers for populism and nationalism, but they offer an extremely poor environment for the legitimisation of European politics.'

too strong to allow communication. Consequently, there is no sense of belonging in Europe, because this cannot be created solely by the sum of national feelings of belonging to the EU. Social networks have become echo chambers for populists; their algorithms do not distinguish between facts and fake news; they pursue a business model rather than basic democracy.

Tech giants like Facebook, Google and YouTube have privatised the digital public sphere and turned it into an oligopoly. Very little data in the digital ecosystem passes them by. They control the relevance, visibility, dissemination and presentation of public concerns. They have sovereignty over personal data; indeed they own the infrastructure that allows the democratic public sphere to establish itself on the internet. You could say that digitalisation means the public sphere has been lost to the public sphere. This is the basis for my proposal for a publicly owned European platform. This platform has two main objectives. The first is to make the digital space in Europe more democratic, thus creating a digital public sphere that is in line with European values and serves the common good and European democracy. Putting such a platform into public hands could certainly be seen as a step towards the institutionalisation of the internet – but first it is necessary to ascertain that the uninstitutionalised internet has failed by democratic standards, or even become a danger to democracy. Second, the decentralised structures of the internet that work across borders should finally be harnessed for the purposes of Eu-

ropean integration.

In his highly acclaimed book *The People vs Tech*, British journalist Jamie Bartlett argues that democracy and the internet are essentially incompatible. My argument is that democracy is very well suited to the digital world, it's just that the digital world is not yet well suited to democracy. Because the digital revolution is still controlled by the economy, not by democracy. Europe could change that. It has to change it. Because the internet is basically made for European democracy. More than any other medium, it transcends geographical, linguistic and cultural boundaries. That's why a European platform should be concerned with creating the infrastructure for a European communication space that can meet the key requirements of European democracy. Even if the specific functions and content of a European platform (as opposed to an EU platform) should, without fail, be developed in a bottom-up rather than top-down fashion, I would like to propose four areas that should be at the heart of it: a European newsroom for a pan-European discourse on European issues; entertainment and cultural offerings to represent a European way of life; instruments of political participation to reduce the participation deficit in the EU; and apps that allow all citizens, regardless of their mobility, to benefit from European integration. Today, language barriers can be overcome with the help of artificial intelligence – even in real time. Yes, advances in technology mean that we can expect the next stage in digital development

'Citizens are served up information on European policy through a national filter. This filter is not an algorithm, but a media discourse system that is characterised by a one-sided, nationalist view of European concerns.'

to be the 'translated internet'. This will be a milestone for the European public sphere.

Platform Europe

On the platform, data privacy would be oriented to the interests of users rather than companies. The algorithms would combine personal preferences with social relevance but would not reward people who spread hatred and propaganda. The content would be supplied by partners such as media companies, theatres, universities and museums, which are currently in search of distribution methods that are more attractive than YouTube and similar channels. Content (such as European series) would also be produced or commissioned if they are in short supply in Europe. In this postnational communication space, Europe will be able to defend its democratic values against illiberal governments, which are rapidly transforming national media and cultural institutes into propaganda organs. According to the 2017 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders, Europe has seen a greater decline in press freedom than any other region. Platform Europe would provide European democracy with a watchdog to keep an eye on EU institutions and national governments alike. Finally, it would be a powerful European player in today's platform society, which, unlike its mostly American competitors, would first and foremost be driven by a social mission rather than a business model. Populism, disinformation and hate speech would then no longer be ways of creating value but treated as punishable violations of the legal and normative framework in which the European Union was established.

However, I am fully aware that Europe's problems will not be solved simply by talking; decisive political action is needed. Institutional changes are also needed to create a culture of conflict in European politics so that the media views it as newsworthy. For example, there would need to be a dispute between the 'governing majority' and 'opposition' in the European Parliament, while political rather than national camps would need to face each other in the European Council. But everything is connected: political Europe cannot function without a public Europe of equal standing. I experienced this in autumn 2013 when I was working as campaign manager for the European Green Party in the run-up to the 2014 European elections. In the European Parliament I represented my candidate in the negotiations between parliament, the parties and the media on organising the first European TV debate. This was the first time that the European parties had nominated candidates for the office of President of the EU Commission. The fact that the results of the European elections were now more closely connected

to the question of who filled the most important post in the EU was a step forward for democracy. In Brussels, we hoped that this increased voter influence and personalisation would make the European elections more attractive and lead to a higher turnout. Unfortunately, we failed to convince the national TV stations to include this piece of EU history in their main programming. Instead, the debate was broadcast by special interest channels such as Phoenix, the BBC Parliamentary Channel and France24. The sobering result was that by the time election day came around, very few voters knew who was standing for the EU presidency – just 5% of the electorate in the Czech Republic and the UK. Worse still, most people didn't realise that their vote now had much more influence on who became the next president of the EU Commission.

However, it mobilised the few voters who knew about it, and a poll showed that one of the reasons they voted was the candidates themselves. Once again, it was a case of could have, should have. The time of missed chances and unused windows of opportunity must now be over – otherwise the EU is over. Over the last few years, the truism that every cloud has a single lining certainly hasn't applied to Europe. Perhaps this is Europe's last chance, by providing a space for discussion, constructive debate, empathy, commonality, a place where the positives and negatives of the European Union can be aired. Platform Europe is this opportunity.

One thing is clear: in today's Europe, there are two spheres where its citizens lack

sovereignty – the political and the digital. In a democracy, they act as the pillars of sovereignty, but the power to make decisions is subject to conditions. Only someone who is adequately informed, has a grasp of the various facets of an issue, understands political responsibilities and can name the actors involved is in a position to make independent, autonomous decisions – such as at the ballot box. These conditions are not currently being met in the decision-making processes of European politics. This has less to do with people's lack of interest than with the absence of a European discourse. In the national discourse, the language revolves around 'us' and 'them': Europe has not become part of our home, of 'us'. As a result, the public debate focuses on the national interest, which is often the only yardstick used for assessing European policy. The national bubbles exclude the plurality of European voices and the European common good as an analytical framework. For European democracy, this means that civil society lacks an adequate public sphere of influence on EU policies, while EU institutions are unable to link decisions back to citizens within a public framework.

Instead, the national public spheres simply ignore or delegitimise the legitimate decisions made by EU institutions. These national bubbles are the first structural ad-

'Perhaps this is Europe's last chance, by providing a space for discussion, constructive debate, empathy, commonality, a place where the positives and negatives of the European Union can be aired. Platform Europe is this opportunity.'

vantage that nationalist populists currently possess in Europe's public spheres. Their second advantage relates to the second sphere where Europe suffers a lack of sovereignty: the internet. The digital space is dominated by private American platforms whose existence relies on the collection and monetisation of personal data, and whose content is subject to the rules of the attention economy – which are not always compatible with democracy. Provocation brings publicity. Users who do not want to pay by providing their personal data are excluded from key areas of the platform economy. Things are much harder for providers who finance themselves via fees rather than data and value objectivity above sensationalism.

The prevailing conditions in the digital sphere mean that citizens are unable to control their own data and European democracy is unable to organise a democratic discourse. Nationalist populists are well-versed in how to make the most of attention algorithms. Their messages have such an enormous reach precisely because they break with democratic conventions, provoke emotional responses (both positive and negative) and thus meet the algorithms' key criterion of relevance. They use private user data to personalise their election campaigns through 'cognitive warfare', even if this data is obtained illegally by companies like Cambridge Analytica.

The second structural advantage that the propagandistic nationalists and populists have in today's public sphere is the way the digital space is organised according to criteria that separate commodified attention from the culture of democratic discourse. Platform Europe should be a publicly funded communication space set up in line with democratic and European standards. It would enable Europeans to conduct a supranational discussion about common concerns, something that is only made possible by a vibrant European democracy. It would enable European citizens to acquire both political and digital sovereignty. A European public sphere would allow EU institutions to be held accountable and civil society voices to be heard. Similarly, citizens would no longer be lulled by nationalist propaganda, because national governments would no longer be able to shift the political responsibility for uncomfortable decisions onto European institutions.

A European 'We'

In the Member States, people could revise their stereotypical images of foreigners and their inflated view of themselves and base their opinions on European pluralism. They would feel part of a European 'We' through the presentation of a common European Way of Life and develop a European identity that is free of nationalist exploitation. Europeans can only exercise their sovereignty in this kind of arena, where Europeans can actually live their EU citizenship in a democratic fashion. By asserting European values in every area of this digital infrastructure, Platform Europe will help people to achieve greater digital sovereignty. It is a question of

setting a European standard for the organisation of the digital public sphere. The platform would have to ensure the transparency of its algorithms, identify bots, and work in a way that is sparing of data rather than devouring it. It would take responsibility for the content and opinions that it presents, ensure its independence from advertising and provide maximum data protection and privacy.

The platform's users would have full control over their data, which could mean that it would receive no data at all. But it could also mean that users would be able to personalise the content that they see and how it is presented on the platform. The main thing is that the decision would be made by the user, rather than the platform operator's business model. Europe has already lost valuable time in establishing a European standard for the digital space. Now it has to clean up from the rear.

To put it simply, there is an American and a Chinese internet, and to some extent a Russian one, but there is no European internet. The American and Chinese internet both have their own platform ecosystems. The Chinese counterparts to Facebook/WhatsApp, Amazon and Google are WeChat/Qzone, Alibaba and Baidu. But WeChat isn't merely a Chinese version of Facebook. Behind the American and Chinese internet lie two completely different value systems: this is where data capitalism and data authoritarianism face off. In the American model, the data is primarily used to increase corporate profits, while in the Chinese model it serves to expand the surveillance state. It's true that

'This is where data capitalism and data authoritarianism face off. In the American model, the data is primarily used to increase corporate profits, while in the Chinese model it serves to expand the surveillance state.'

some other countries use Facebook as a means of surveillance, and Chinese networks are also operated by profit-oriented corporations, but the Chinese platforms cannot operate outside the state's surveillance machinery. For example, WeChat's terms of use state that the operator, Tencet, will pass on user data to the state upon a simple request by a government body. Amnesty International's data privacy check gives WeChat a score of 0 out of 100.

And Tencet is expanding: since November 2017 it has been possible to use the WeChat payment system in shops at Munich airport. If Europeans decide to pay with this app, the Chinese state could receive a copy of their shopping list. This means that the expansion of the Chinese internet is also an expansion of China's surveillance network. Communication spaces are also part of the global struggle between value systems. For years, international TV stations such as CNN, RT, CCTV and Al Jazeera have been competing to impose their own particular narrative. Particularly in the case of state-funded stations, this is based on the understanding that communication is not just communication about politics, but that communication is politics. This can be clearly seen in the spread of disinformation. The fictitious rape of 13-year-old Lisa by refugees

in Germany was reported as fact by Russia's state media and triggered demonstrations in Germany. If disinformation is used as a political tool, then this should apply even more to information. This means that Europe has to be a much stronger player in the global contest for information. If the European model of democracy is to survive, it needs public spaces that, both externally and internally, can resist anti-democratic attempts at destabilisation and ensure a discourse conducted in line with democratic standards. Europe has to create these public spheres.

Of course, a European public sphere cannot single-handedly resolve all the deficits of European democracy. But I maintain that there will never be a mature European democracy unless there is a European public sphere. However, the EU's political decision-making processes also have to change in such a way that they become the subject of public debate. This requires a stronger culture of conflict in both the European Council and Parliament. It is also high time for more transparency about the position of individual governments in the Council. This is not currently documented, which makes it difficult to hold governments accountable. In addition, when uncomfortable decisions have to be made, the Council is all too happy to refuse to make a decision at all, after which the burden of decision falls legally on the EU Commission. Jean-Claude Juncker has, quite rightly, made repeated complaints about how the buck was passed during his time as President of the EU Commission. Citizens also need real opportunities to par-

ticipate in order to fuel their interest in EU politics. These shortcomings cannot be remedied by creating a space for communication, but must be addressed institutionally, if necessary by treaty change. Europe still has a long way to go in this respect. But it requires the people of Europe and our EU community to take this step together. The starting point is called Platform Europe.

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Giving voices to the voiceless

Human beings have engaged in the arts: music, visual imagery, dramatic performances – including rituals – and language arts, including tale telling, ever since they have been recognisably human. And, of course, writers should speak truth to power, tell the stories that have been suppressed, give voices to the voiceless. That applies today as much as in the past, says author Margaret Atwood. *By Margaret Atwood*
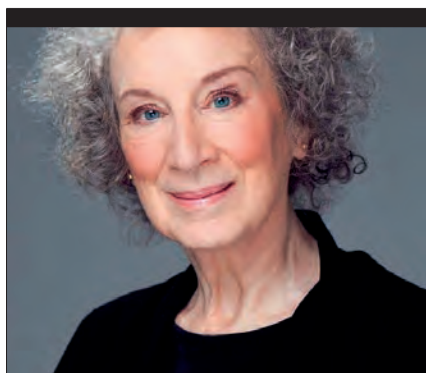
Every author writes for the Dear Reader who will find the bottle with the message in it that you, the writer, have thrown into the ocean of words and stories, and will open it, and will read the message, and will think it actually means something. For a writer from a recently colonial country such as Canada – a country where writing, and the arts in general, were not taken seriously until the past few decades—it is almost incredible to me to be receiving this acclaimed honour at your hands. Being Canadian, I cannot take personal credit for my appearance on your excellent list. Canadians shy away from taking personal credit. If told we have won something, we look behind us to see who was really meant, since it surely could not have been us. Nor can I take any credit for being an activist, which I am often label-

led as being. I am not a real activist – a real activist would view her writing as a conduit for her activism – for her important Cause, whatever it is – and that has not been the case with me. It's true that you can't write novels without looking at the world, and that when you look at the world you will wonder what's going on, and then try to describe it; I think a lot of writing is an attempt to figure why people do what they do. Human behaviour, both saintly and demonic, is a constant amazement to me. But when you write down an account of human behaviour, that account may look a lot like activism, since language has an inherent moral dimension, and so do stories.

The reader will make moral judgments, even if the writer claims only to be bearing witness. What may seem like activism on my part is usually a kind of blundering puzzlement. Why DOES the emperor have no clothes, and why is it so often considered bad manners to blurt it out? What strange historical moment are we living through? It is one of those times when the ground – which only a little while ago seemed steady enough, with seedtime following harvest, and birthdays one another, and so on – that ground shifts beneath our feet, and mighty winds blow, and we are no longer sure of where we

are. Also, we are no longer sure of who we are. Whose face is that in the mirror? Why are we growing fangs? Just yesterday we were filled with such goodwill and hope. But now?

The United States is experiencing such a moment. After the 2016 election, young people in that country said to me, 'This is the very worst thing that has ever happened'; to which I replied, both 'No, actually it's been worse," and also, "No it isn't; not yet.' Britain is also having a difficult time of things right now, with much weeping and gnashing of teeth. And – in a less drastic way, but still – in view of its last election – so is Germany.

Much weeping and gnashing of teeth

You thought that crypt was locked, but someone had the key, and has opened the forbidden chamber, and what will come creeping or howling forth? Sorry to be so Gothic, but there is cause for alarm on many fronts.

Every country, like every person, has a noble self – the self it would like to believe it is – and an everyday self – the good-enough self that gets it through the mundane weeks and months when everything is going on as expected – and then a hidden self, much less virtuous, that may burst out at moments of threat and rage, and do unspeakable things.

But what causes these times of threat and rage – or what is causing them now? You will have heard many theories about that, and you will doubtless hear many more. It is climate

'You thought that crypt was locked, but someone had the key, and has opened the forbidden chamber, and what will come creeping or howling forth?'

change, some will say: floods, droughts, fires, and hurricanes affect growing conditions, and then there are food shortages, and then there is social unrest, and then there are wars, and then there are refugees, and then there is the fear of refugees, because will there be enough to share? It is financial imbalance, others will say: too few rich people control too much of the world's wealth, and they are sitting on it like dragons, and causing large financial disparities and resentments, and then there will be social unrest, and wars, or revolutions, and so forth.

No, say others: it is the modern world: it is automation and robots, it is technology, it is the Internet, it is the manipulation of news and opinion that is being done by an opportunistic few for their own advantage: the army of Internet trolls and astroturfers, for instance, who took such pains to influence the German election, and, it seems, the similar Russian efforts in the United States via Facebook. But why are we surprised? The Internet is a human tool, like all others: axes, guns, trains, bicycles, cars, telephones, radios, films, you name it – and like every human tool it has a good side, a bad side, and a stupid side that produces effects that were at first not anticipated. Among those tools is possibly the very first uniquely human tool: our narrative capability, enabled by complex grammar. What an advantage stories must once have given us – allowing us to pass along essential knowledge so you didn't have to find our everything for yourself by trial and error. Wolves communicate, but they do not tell the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Stories, too, can have a good side, and bad side, and a third side that produces unanti-

cipated effects.

As a writer of stories I am supposed to say how necessary they are, how they help us understand one another, how they build empathy, and so forth – and that is true. But because I am a writer of stories, I am also aware of their ambiguities and dangers. Let us just say that stories are powerful. They can change the way people think and feel – for better or for worse. So what is the story we are telling ourselves about this present moment and its tribulations? Whatever the cause of the change we are living through, it is the kind of moment when the rabbits in the meadow perk up their ears, because a predator has entered the scene. Along will come a wolf in sheep's clothing, or even a wolf in wolf's clothing, and that wolf will say: Rabbits, you need a strong leader, and I am just the one for the job. I will cause the perfect future world to appear as if by magic, and ice cream will grow on trees. But first we will have to get rid of civil society – it is too soft, it is degenerate – – and we will have to abandon the accepted norms of behaviour that allow us to walk down the street without sticking knives into each other all the time. And then we will have to get rid of Those people. Only then will the perfect society appear! Those people vary from place to place and from time to time. Maybe they are witches, or lepers, both of whom were blamed for the Black Death. Maybe they are Huguenots, in eighteenth century France. Maybe they are Mennonites. (But why Mennonites? I asked a Mennonite friend. You seem so harmless! We were pacifists, he answered. In a continent at war, we set a bad example.)

Anyway, the wolf says: Do as I say and all will be well. Defy me, and snarl snarl, gobble gobble, you will be crunched into tiny bits. The rabbits freeze, because they are confused and terrified, and by the time they figure out that the wolf does not in fact mean them well but has arranged everything only for the benefit of the wolves, it is too late. Yes, we know, you will say. We've read the folktales.

We've read the science fictions. We've been warned, often. But that, somehow, does not always stop this tale from being enacted in human societies, many times over. Here I must apologize to the wolves. I used your name, dear wolves, only as a metaphor.

You Privileged Human Idiot!

Please don't swarm me on social media, with messages such as: You Privileged Human Idiot! What do you know about the inner lives of wolves, you anthropocentric élitist snob? Have you ever had your paw caught in a trap? If it weren't for us wolves you'd be over-run by deer and rabbits, and then what? Point taken. And I realize that you wolves are kind at heart, at least to other wolves, or at least to wolves of your own pack. I have experienced your polyphonic music, and find it haunting. Perhaps I should have used dinosaurs; but they would have been less well understood and possibly not as en-

'The rabbits freeze, because they are confused and terrified, and by the time they figure out that the wolf does not in fact mean them well but has arranged everything only for the benefit of the wolves, it is too late.'

tertaining. That is always a consideration, for storytellers. We are a devious lot, and given to frivolous decision-making.

This little fable I have concocted comes from my deep past – from the time when I was a young child growing up in the northern Canadian wilderness, far from villages and towns and cities, but quite close to rabbits and wolves. Up there, when it was raining, there were three forms of activity: writing, drawing, and reading. Among the books I read was the collected, unexpurgated Grimm's Fairy Tales – complete with the pecked-out eyes and the red-hot shoes. My parents had got it by mail order, and when they saw what was inside it, they worried that this book might warp their children.

It probably did warp me. It must have warped me in the direction of being a writer, for without Grimm's Fairy Tales – so crafty, so compelling, so complicated, so frightening, so many-layered, but with notes of hope at the ends of the stories that are heartbreaking, because so unlikely – how could I ever have written – you know I am going to say this – how could I ever have written T*he Handmaid's Tale*? The cover of the first United States edition is suggestive. There are the two Handmaids, in their red garments, resembling two Red Riding Hoods with their baskets over their arms. There behind them is a high brick wall – like THE wall, the famous Berlin wall. And there are the shadows of the two women cast on the wall – and these shadows are the shadows of wolves. I began writing that novel in West Berlin, in the year 1984 – yes, George Orwell was looking over my shoulder – on a rented German typewriter.

The Wall was all around us. On the other side of it was East Berlin, and also Czechoslovakia, and also Poland – all of which I visited at that time. I remember what people said to me, and what they did not say. I remember the meaningful pauses. I remember the sense that I myself had to be careful of what I said, because I might unwittingly endanger someone.

All of that made its way into my book. This book was published in 1985 in Canada, and in 1986 in Britain and the United States. Although my rule for it was that I could put nothing into it that human beings had not done, somewhere, at some time, it was regarded by some critics with disbelief. Too feminist, yes, with all its talk of controlling women and their never-ending bodies, but also too far-fetched. It could never happen there – not in the United States – because then, during the Cold War, wasn't the United States viewed as a power for good? Didn't it stand for democracy, liberty, and freedom – however imperfectly enacted on the ground? Confronted by closed systems such as the Soviet Union, America was open. Confronted by top-down tyrannies, America promised the dream of opportunity, based on merit.

Blue marble in space

Even though America had some very sinister history to overcome – weren't those the ideals? Yes. They were. But that was then. Now, some thirty-odd years later, this book has returned, because suddenly it no longer seems like a far-fetched dystopian fantasy. It has become too real. Red-clad figures are appearing in state legislatures in silent protest at the laws being enacted there, largely by men, to control women. Their aim seems to

be to push back the clock, to the nineteenth century if possible. What sort of world do these legislators want to live in? They want a very unequal one: so much is clear. An unequal one in which they themselves will have more power, and other people will have less.

If you put the ants in charge of the picnic, the ants will rearrange the picnic for themselves: there will be no people, only egg sandwiches and cookies. The ants at least know what sort of a world they want to live in, and they are very frank about it. Ants are not hypocritical. The citizens of every country must ask themselves the same question: what sort of world do they want to live in? Being of a Plutonian and sinister cast of mind, I would reduce that sentence to: Do they want to live? Because, drawing back from our human picture – drawing back so that the borders between countries disappear, and the earth becomes a blue marble in space, with much more water on it than land – it is evident that our fate as a species will be determined by whether or not we kill the oceans. If the oceans die, so will we – at least 60 percent of our oxygen comes from marine algaes.

But there is hope: brilliant minds are already at work on such problems. But meanwhile, what is an artist to do? Why make art at all, in such disturbing times? What is art, anyway? Why should we be bothered with it? What is it for? Learning, teaching, expressing ourselves, describing reality, entertaining us, enacting truth, celebrating, or even denouncing and cursing? There's no general answer. Human beings have engaged in the arts – music, visual imagery, dramatic performances – including rituals – and language arts, including tale telling – ever since they have been recognizably human. Children respond to language and music before they themselves can speak: those capabilities seem to be built in.

The art we make is specific to the culture that makes it – to its location, to its driving energy system, to its climate and food sources, and to the beliefs connected with all of these. But we have never not made art. For a great many centuries, art was made in the service of the rulers – the kings, the emperors, the popes, the dukes, and such. But ever since romantic and post-romantic times there has been a different expectation of the artist. Surely she or he should speak truth to power, tell the stories that have been suppressed, give voices to the voiceless. And many writers have done that; it has frequently gotten them into trouble, and sometimes it has got them shot. But create they must. They have written in secret, they have smuggled their manuscripts out of unsafe places at risk to their lives.

They have arrived from afar, like the messenger in the Book of Job, fainting from exhaustion, to say: I only am escaped alone to tell thee. To tell thee. To tell thee, Dear Reader, singular. A book is a voice in your ear; the message is – while you are reading it – is for you alone. Reading a book is surely the most intimate experience we can have of the inside of another human being's mind. Writer, book, and reader – in this triangle, the book is the messenger. And all three are

'I remember the meaningful pauses. I remember the sense that I myself had to be careful of what I said, because I might unwittingly endanger someone.'

part of one act of creation, as the composer, the player of the symphony, and the listener are all participants in it. The reader is the musician of the book. As for the writer, his or her part done when the book goes out into the world; it is the book that will then live or die, and what happens to the writer is at that point immaterial, from the point of view of the book.

Any award winner in the arts is the temporary representative of all the practitioners of that art, and of the community that allows that art to exist – those who have gone before, those from whom we ourselves have learned, those who have died before they were recognized, those who have had to struggle against racial discrimination to find their writing voice, those who have been killed for their political views, and those who have managed to live through periods of oppression and censorship and silencing.

Then there are those who never became writers at all because they were not given the possibility – such as the many North American and Australian and New Zealand story-bearers and oral poets from indigenous cultures of the past and even the present. Doors are opening for such voices all around the world; but other doors are being closed. We need to pay attention to that. So to my teachers, both dead and alive, by whom I mean the very many writers in my life and library; my readers, into whose hands I have entrusted my stories; to all my publishers, who have not considered my work a waste of paper, and who have taken a chance on me; to my agents, companions on this journey; and to all those friends and professionals who have helped and supported me over the years, including my family, both immediate and extended, my mother, a wonderful reader-aloud – thank you for those gifts you have given me. is A gift should be returned or passed on – it should pass from hand to hand, like a book. Let us hope for a world in which such gifts remain possible. Let us not close the doors or silence the voices. One day I will be walking along a beach, or inside a bookstore, and I will find a bottle, or a book, and I will open it, and I will read the message to me from you – yes, you out there, a young writer who perhaps has just been published. And I will say: Yes. I can hear you. I can hear your story. I can hear your voice.

Margaret Atwood, born in Ottawa, Canada in 1939, is one of the most significant storytellers of our age. *The Handmaid's Tale* has become the cult book of a whole generation. She continues to display her keen sense for politics and her awareness of dangerous developments and currents. She has received numerous awards, including the the renowned Man Booker Prize, the Nelly Sachs Prize, the Pen Pinter Prize and the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. Margaret Atwood lives in Toronto.

The power of conspiracy

Whether it's the 'stab-in-the-back' myth after World War I, the international Jewish conspiracy, or the child pornography ring that supposedly involved presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (Pizzagate), conspiracy theories have a long history. And today, with the advent of fake news and internet trolls, they are more prevalent than ever. Their impact on the public also depends on a nation's cultural factors. *By Michael Butter*

Conspiracy theories. Hardly a day goes by without the term appearing in the news, and a quick search reveals countless books and websites uncovering alleged conspiracies. And it's true that conspiracy theories are experiencing a renaissance in terms of their dissemination and impact.

This is being fuelled by two factors: the advent of the internet and the rise of populist movements. In Europe and the US, conspiracy theories are much less influential than in the past, but their impact on politics is once again proving to be highly problematic.

US political scientist Michael Barkun identifies three characteristics of conspiracy theories: they assume that nothing happens by chance, nothing is as it seems, and everything is connected. So conspiracy theo-rists believe in the existence of a secret group – the conspirators. They are systematically plotting to take control of an institution, a country or even the whole world, or they have done so in the past and now want to consolidate and expand their power. Therefore, conspiracy theories convey an almost romantic image of today's world and humankind.

They assume that small groups of people can put their intentions into practice over the space of years, decades or even centuries – such as the conspiracy theories about the Illuminati. Since this contradicts the assumptions of modern social sciences that emphasise chaos, contingency, and structural factors, Barkun describes conspiracy theories as 'stigmatised knowledge'.

They may have a considerable following, but they are not taken seriously by the scientific discourse and the public at large because they are based on false assumptions. The people who formulate them must expect to be excluded from the scientific community and may even be socially ostracised.

However, this diagnosis only applies to the last few decades and to the Western world. From the 18th century until well into

the 20th century, conspiracy theories were both mainstream and elite phenomena in Europe and North America. The scientific debate of the time made it inevitable, as demonstrated by numerous studies.

The mechanistic world view of the 18th century promoted belief in conspiracies and the belief that the moral quality of an action always corresponded to the intention that motivated it. Accordingly, intellectuals and politicians believed that large-scale conspiracies determined the course of history.

Echo chambers and filter bubbles

Conspiracy theories only began to lose this status in the late 1950s, when they became increasingly stigmatised and migrated from the centre of society to the fringe. In the terminology of the sociology of knowledge, they moved from being orthodox knowledge to heterodox knowledge and the term 'conspiracy theorist' became an insult.

However, this loss of legitimacy was limited to the US and parts of Europe. In the Arab world and Eastern Europe, conspiratorial ideas continue to be part of everyday discourse. Bookshops in every major Arab airport stock the latest edition of The Pro-

'Conspiracy theories became increasingly stigmatised and migrated from the centre of society to the fringe. In the terminology of the sociology of knowledge, they moved from being orthodox knowledge to heterodox knowledge and the term "conspiracy theorist" became an insult.'

tocols of the Elders of Zion, the most notorious conspiracy theory text of all time. Meanwhile, in Russia, Vladimir Putin's chief ideologist Alexander Dugin has even elevated 'conspirology' to the status of a scientific discipline. Politicians in these countries adopt such ways of thinking as naturally and uncritically as the media that report them.

However, it should be stressed that conspiracy theories retained a degree of popularity in the West, it's just that they disappeared from the public eye, where they were no longer accepted, and migrated to subcultures. Conspiracy theorists had a correspondingly difficult time reaching a wider audience. They often had to self-publish, and as a result, their alternative explanations had little impact. Anyone who doubted that John F. Kennedy was actually killed by a lone gunman or that the Americans really landed on the moon had to invest a lot of time and effort into finding alternative explanations for these events. This meant doubts often failed to solidify into conspiracy theories.

But all this changed with the advent of the internet. It is now very easy for conspiracy theorists to present their ideas to their fellow man (or, more rarely, fellow woman). You only have to Google: 'What's happening in Ukraine?' or 'Who's responsible for the refugee crisis?' to find links to conspiracy sites on the first or second results page, depending on the particular search algorithm. As a result, the internet increases the visibility and availability of conspiracy theories, and it means that conspiracy theorists are now more connected, making it easier to solidify

their beliefs. As a result, more people once again believe in conspiracy theories.

When studies show that more than half of Americans believe in at least one conspiracy theory, or that popular theories in Germany resonate with a quarter to a third of the population, it is clear that they are affecting more people than thirty years ago, though still much less than a hundred or two hundred years ago. It seems we are indeed experiencing a renaissance of conspiracism, but we are not (yet) living in an age of conspiracy theories.

But the fact that the situation has drastically changed over the last twenty years is partly due to how the internet has significantly accelerated and intensified the fragmentation of Western societies. Former subcultures on the fringes of society have become virtual and real subpublics and counterpublics with their own media systems generating their own truths.

Populism and conspiracy

People in Germany who get all their information from Russia Today, KenFm and Compact magazine live in a totally different world to someone who reads the respected Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and watches public broadcaster ARD. In some of these echo chambers and filter bubbles, conspiracy theories have once again become orthodox knowledge, while they are still stigmatised in other parts of the public sphere. To put it simply, some people are afraid of conspiracies and others are afraid of conspiracy theories.

On the other hand, the presence of conspiracy theories in the (far-right) populist movements that have been gaining enormous traction in the US and Europe over recent years is a source of concern to many observers. This is explained by a series of parallels between populism and conspiracy theories: both are conservative in the sense that they are concerned with preserving a threatened order or restoring a lost order. Both tend to be based on a sense of nostalgia for a past that never existed. Both reduce the complex political arena, in which a multitude of actors are pursuing partly identical, partly divergent goals, to a binary opposition: the people against the elites in populism and the victims of conspiracy against the conspirators in conspiracism. Since becoming stigmatised, conspiracy theorists tend to accuse elites of plotting, so populism and conspiracy theories generally target the same group.

Ultimately, conspiracy theories provide a specific explanation of why the elite is acting against the interests of the people. Non-conspiratorial populists might state that elites are detached, corrupt and simply looking to enrich themselves. But for conspiracy theorists, they are part of a plot whose interests run diametrically opposed to those of the people. But when it comes to joint protests, it generally makes little difference whether or not they are accusing the elite of conspiracy. They can all chant 'Merkel out', regardless of whether they believe the Chancellor

is simply useless or whether they see her as being part of a global conspiracy.

Equal stigmatisation

After all, populism and conspiracy theory are equally stigmatised. In everyday discourse, both are generally used in a derogatory way and often even as explicit insults. We can, therefore, assume that members of populist movements who reject conspiracy theories may still sympathise with their supporters because they are also looked down on by the elites.

Despite a lack of reliable data on how many supporters of populist movements believe in conspiracy theories about power elites, initial surveys and studies suggest that although they are not in a majority, they make up a significant proportion. So it is hardly surprising that populist leaders regularly seek to fuel these conspiracies. This is where conspiracy theories can turn into fake news. They are usually spread by people who are genuinely convinced that they have uncovered a hidden truth, but we can assume that not all populist leaders really believe their claims.

'In Hungary, where conspiracy theories have always retained more legitimacy than in the West, Prime Minister Orbán can openly accuse American philanthropist George Soros of orchestrating a secret plan for the Islamisation of Europe, known as the "great replacement" theory.'

The degree to which populist leaders are able to articulate these claims depends on the specific national context, and particularly on whether conspiracy theories are orthodox or heterodox knowledge. In Hungary, where conspiracy theories have always retained more legitimacy than in the West, Prime Minister Orbán can openly accuse American philanthropist George Soros of orchestrating a secret plan for the Islamisation of Europe, known as the 'great replacement' theory.

Scoring point with former non-voters

In the US, Donald Trump also made strategic use of conspiracy theories in his election campaign. This strategy worked for two reasons: firstly, conspiracy theories are even more widespread in the US than in Europe, which is why Trump was able to score points with them, especially among former non-voters. Secondly, in the extremely polarised political climate of the US, many voters supported him not because of, but in spite of, his conspiracy theories – simply because he was the Republican candidate.

In Germany, this public espousal of conspiracy theories would still be counterproductive. Conspiracy theories such as the 'great replacement' are very popular with Pegida supporters and the AfD's base, and parts of these theories have been integrated into the party's manifesto. Despite this, the AfD's leaders are still reluctant to explicitly articulate conspiracy theories in public, because

they are aware that they are still very stigmatised in Germany and would deter voters.

As a result, they make insinuations that are understood by the initiated but not by the general public. However, the AfD has had a lasting impact on the public discourse as a whole, not only but chiefly with regard to migration and refugees. The CDU's sister party the CSU has now fully adopted the AfD's line. When we bear in mind that these are essentially fuelled by conspiracy theories, it becomes clear that such theories also have a political impact on Germany, though not – yet – to such a direct extent as in other countries.

Michael Butter is a German specialist in American studies. He has been Professor of American Literary and Cultural History at the University of Tübingen since 2014. His research interests include conspiracy theories, film and television, the colonial period and the Early Republic. An English translation of his recent publication *Nichts ist, wie es scheint: Über Verschwörungstheorien*, Edition Suhrkamp Berlin 2018 is due to be published in 2020. This article is based on an article that appeared on the Forschung und Lehre website, a German site that provides information on the latest academic research.

Press freedom under pressure For forty years, the United States was an active leader promoting press freedom as a vital pillar of democracy. But now that President Trump calls journalists enemies of the people and Turkey has jailed more reporters than all other current dictators combined, the EU seems reluctant to fill this vacuum in the fight for press freedom. *By Frank Vogl*

Three bold numbers jumped out at me from the half page advertisement by the Stockholm Center for Freedom in the 4 May 2019 edition of *The New York Times*: '191 Turkish journalists are jailed, 167 are in exile and have arrest warrants out for them, and 34 foreign reporters are being targeted.' Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has jailed more reporters than all other current dictators combined. No doubt his friend in the White House, President Donald Trump, is applauding.

As Erdogan faces mounting political opposition in Turkey, it is likely that he will go even further to muzzle the media. Just a few days ago, six journalists who had been freed on appeal were jailed again on so-called 'counter-terrorism' charges.

President Trump delights in calling jour-

nalists 'enemies of the people'. His ceaseless war on mainstream journalism is encouraging dictators across the globe. The number of jailed journalists globally now stands at about 250. The World Freedom Map published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RWB) has been getting progressively darker – the number of violations in 2018 was 11% higher than five years earlier.

Many of the journalists imprisoned and intimidated today, from Azerbaijan to Egypt to Venezuela, have had the temerity to report the truth about the massive corruption in the governments of their countries.

Trump recently invited Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to visit the White House. I do not think the issue of suppressing the media – Orbán is a grand master – will be on the agenda. Maybe I am wrong — Trump would like nothing better to hit the 'fake news' press and ensure that Fox News, now his official propaganda organ, enjoys greater influence.

Where is the leadership?

For many decades, the United States was the active leader in its international diplomatic efforts to promote press freedom as a vital pillar of democracy. Trump and his State Department are, by contrast, sharp and constant critics of the press. The result is

an acute leadership vacuum. European leadership ought to fill this gap, but to a large extent it has been reluctant to go beyond cautious diplomatic comments.

Yes, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was swift in calling for a full investigation by Saudi Arabia into the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. To be sure, the Council of Europe is an important and outspoken official voice of protest against the mounting harassment of reporters, but detailed reports have not had a major impact on the European Union Commission.

A core value of the EU

Before the last European Parliament elections, Christophe Deloire, chief executive of RWB, argued that the time had come to make freedom of the press a core value of the EU, putting it at the heart of its treaties and institutions and at the forefront of today's campaigns.

Tom Gibson of the Committee to Protect Journalists went further by arguing that the issue of protecting journalists should be a priority for the leadership of the next EU Commission, which should develop a plan of action to build a favourable environment for independent and critical journalists. These

'Trump's ceaseless war on main-stream journalism is encouraging dictators across the globe.'

calls for EU leadership partly reflect concerns that even dramatic events within the EU have not been able to secure effective and sustained Commission responses.

For example, in Malta there has still not been a meaningful investigation into the murder in October 2017 of journalist Daphne Galizia as she was investigating grand corruption in the Maltese government. A report on Malta by the Council of Europe concluded that certain institutions, such as the Permanent Commission Against Corruption, have not produced concrete results after 30 years of existence.

Maybe Slovakia's new president Zuzana Čaputová can influence the EU's leaders. She surprisingly won the recent election on an anti-corruption/press freedom platform, which responded to the largest public protests seen in her country since the end of Communism. These demonstrations were sparked by the murder of Ján Kuciak, a 27-year-old investigative reporter, and Martina Kušnírová, his fiancée. Kuciak was investigating alleged corrupt dealings involving some of the country's wealthiest businessmen and the government.

European Green Party co-chairs Monica Frassoni and Reinhard Bütikofer have made protecting the press part of their European Parliament campaign, noting: 'Press freedom is our greatest guarantee against corruption and abuse and must be defended at all costs to protect basic human and civic rights.'

Government efforts to curb the press

Meanwhile, almost every day sees a report of yet another effort by a government to curb the press.

I hear quite frequently from Azerbaijani journalist Emin Huseynov, who lives in exile in Switzerland. For a long time, he was striving to build public pressure to get his brother, Mehman Huseynow — also a journalist — out of prison in Baku. Eventually, in March, after two years in jail, he was released, but the government has imposed a strict travel ban on him, as well as on other reporters. He could be arrested again at any time.

In Iran, Mohammad Reza Nassab Abdollahi, Editor-in-Chief of Iranian news websites Anar Press and Aban Press was jailed for six months in 2018 for allegedly 'spreading false statements'. Recently he was arrested again, and his websites were closed down. The government of Iran has given no explanation.

Frank Vogl is co-founder of Transparency International and author of *Waging War on Corruption: Inside the Movement Fighting the Abuse of Power,* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Washington D.C., United States 2016.

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