Editorial

The refugee crisis is convulsing Europe in ways not seen before. In the wake of the events of 2015, even circumspect observers have begun to believe that the European Union's cohesion and functional integrity are gravely endangered, mainly due to its inability to agree upon a common solution to this challenge. For several months the problem has been exacerbated by the intransigent positions taken by some important European member countries. Their policies are quite incompatible with mainstream EU positions and frustrate hopes for a recovery of consensus on basic issues. Germany, along with its Merkel government, is on its way toward irredeemable isolation in the EU because of its obstinate »culture of welcome« and open borders for refugees. In 2015 alone, more than a million arrived in this country. Nearly all the states of Eastern Europe, with Hungary and Poland in the vanguard, refuse on principle to accept any refugees, while countries previously known for their liberal refugee policies now want to grant entry only to small contingents of refugees. The smoldering refugee crisis exponentially intensifies the EU's other unresolved dilemmas: the euro crisis, the looming Brexit, and the anti-liberal trends in certain countries (Hungary, Poland).

During the euro's troubles, Germany, in tandem with France, encountered little opposition when it assumed a firm and even authoritative leadership role, mainly due to its superior economic and financial power (only destitute Greece continued to protest). By contrast, in the refugee crisis it has played the role of a virtually powerless supplicant, not merely in its dealings with the recalcitrant member countries of the Union, but by now even vis-à-vis Turkey with its increasingly authoritarian government. Many people in Europe are uneasy about these developments, but the search for alternatives has not gone well, either. The issue of integration is interwoven with all the others. Merkel's slogan, »We will manage it,« lacks solid foundations, since it has not produced any strategy for supplying the material prerequisites of and financing for the integration of refugees: schools, jobs, lodgings, language courses, etc. One of the most worrisome side-effects of the refugee and integration problems in the major destination countries such as Sweden, Germany, Austria, and even France, has been the rapid rise of right-wing populist parties, which are disrupting the political scene. The prospects are far from rosy.

Without neglecting other important matters, most of the articles in this issue of the Quarterly will be devoted to clarifying the origins, nature, and possible outcomes of the refugee crisis.

Thomas Meyer
Editor-in-Chief and Co-Publisher

Marianne Haase

European Asylum Policy:
Where there's a will, there's a way

The stakes could not be higher: Europe's promise to protect people suffering persecution, solidarity among the member states and the credibility of the European asylum system. The operative principles of free border crossings, the protections afforded by asylum, and controls on the European Union's external borders all have been disrupted on a vast scale, as evidenced by the collapse of the Dublin system, the (temporary) reinstatement of border controls in the Schengen zone, and mutual recriminations among the member states. Asylum policy at the European level and thus *a fortiori* at the nation-state level has reached a crossroads in the face of the so-called flight and migration crisis. Will it be possible to reach consensus about a truly common European asylum policy and thus to rebuild – or simply lay – the foundations for a shared space of freedom, security, and the rule of law?

One powerful reason for harmonizing refugee policy at the European level was the discovery, during the Nineties, that nation-states by themselves could not possibly regulate the movement of refugees toward Europe. Comparatively speaking, the EU countries have set very different conditions for accepting refugees and processing applications for asylum. Also, the lack of clarity among the individual member states concerning jurisdiction over refugees made it seem advisable to reach agreement about the allocation of the refugees and homogenization of standards for admitting them. Then as now Germany came under heavy pressure from migrants seeking asylum at a time when the rates of acceptance of their applications varied significantly. Thus, Germany wished to establish a European-level system for allocating asylum-seekers to different countries, as it continues to do today. These, then, were the crucial factors driving the establishment of a European policy on asylum. Some of the important milestones on the way toward such a policy include the Tampere Program of 1999 and the formalization of EU asylum policy in European law as the result of the Lisbon Treaty. From the German point of view, those steps led to a reduction in the number of asylum-seekers until 2008; thereafter, especially since 2013, numbers evidently have begun to rise again. For those European countries that form the external border of the Schengen zone, the Dublin Accord gave rise to new burdens.

Why do we need a European policy on refugees?

There also has been a humanitarian goal underlying European asylum policy, one that sends a message about what European values are. The guidelines for recognizing and accepting asylum-seekers incorporate binding rules that have introduced basic guarantees of protection throughout the European Union. While they may be entirely self-evident from the German perspective, the guidelines have not necessarily emerged from the historical experiences of other countries, including especially those of the EU-8 (i.e., the newly admitted countries of Eastern Europe, *ed.*). They should lead to some qualitative improvement in the protections accorded to the right of asylum and human rights generally, at least as compared to the circumstances that prevailed before a given country joined the EU. The post-socialist countries, in particular, have had very little experience with asylum-seeking immigration until quite recently. Indeed, many refugees had once fled those very countries; later, after the collapse of communism in the East, a new stream of emigrants left them in search of work.

In reviewing the EU's asylum policy, we first should take note of its positive aspects. The policy succeeds in establishing a set of standards compatible with the EU-wide protection of refugee rights and the upholding of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, not least because it creates a legally enforceable right. In the case of countries in the process of joining the EU, the standards have encouraged them to develop their own systems of asylum. Viewed as an aspect of the EU's foreign policy, the Union's asylum policy acts as a compass toward which third countries orient themselves as they seek to move closer to the EU. If we think of it in this light, the EU's asylum policy possesses a norm-setting power that should not be underestimated.

As far as the incorporation of EU law into the legislation of the member states is concerned, there are some clouds to dim the sunshine. Despite the establishment of common criteria for the recognition of refugees, it has never been possible to agree on a uniform code for guaranteeing them protection. The case of highly disparate rates of legal recognition for Afghan asylum seekers illustrates the lack of uniformity despite the harmonized criteria that are supposed to prevail throughout the EU. In 2014, those rates varied from 20 % to 95 %. The Dublin system, too, has produced outcomes that might evoke surprise. It was not just the countries that form the Schengen zone's external borders that had to bear heavy burdens as a result of the Dublin system. Even member states such as Germany rank among the top countries of origin in Dublin transfers, although they are among the top destination countries as well. Despite the establishment of compulsory standards, the EU member states still have sharply divergent conditions for admitting refugees. In some cases Dublin transfers have even been halted, because it was not possible to guarantee that the refugees would be accorded a humane reception.

So why has it proven so difficult thus far to establish common standards and comparable procedures in the EU's asylum policy? The two most important reasons are divergences among interests and the differing governance capabilities possessed by individual member states. On the one hand, there are countries like Germany, with its many years of experience in providing protection to those in need and its labor-market-driven interest in integrating refugees. On the other, some countries on the periphery of the EU approach the problem from very different premises. One of the most severely affected countries is Greece, which is confronted by a flood of people wanting asylum at the very time that it is undergoing a very stressful economic period. For that reason, it is scarcely able to find sufficient resources to insure that asylum seekers will be given a humane reception. In respect to the integration of refugees, individual member states have quite different needs, traditions, and experiences. France, for example, can draw on its wealth of experience in integrating the nationals of third countries, whereas the nations of Eastern Europe are mostly breaking new ground. Because of their historical experiences and the situation on local labor markets, they will not likely be interested in the medium- or long-term integration of refugees. The European Union has not initiated a process of norm-setting here, because integration policy hitherto has been a lightly regulated EU field.

Successes and failures of Europeanization

Another Achilles' heel of EU policy has been the frequent unwillingness of member states to come up with the financial and material resources required for the Union to show solidarity in its management of the so-called refugee crisis. One symptom of their reluctance is the failure of Italy's European partners to support that country in its attempt to continue its sea rescue program, *mare nostrum*. According to the International

Organization for Migration (IOM), that operation managed to save the lives of some 200,000 people between October of 2013 and December of 2014 alone. Even Frontex operations such as »Triton,« which focus on border security, lack the resources that member states are supposed to provide them. These examples both suggest that, when member states withhold support, it has less to do with the goals of the operation (saving refugees or protecting the border) than with a generalized reluctance to show solidarity. In the past, calls for relocation – i.e., resettling refugees inside the Union in order to relieve the burden on especially hard-pressed countries – rarely have been well received politically in member states without an external Schengen border.

As a general rule, European harmonization only has advanced to the point of setting common standards. Up until now, the procedures themselves always have been adopted and implemented at the national level. So long as harmonization remains incomplete, nation-states can take advantage of this wiggle room to develop a wide range of asylum practices. Neither regulatory mechanisms and procedural homogenization nor the personal and financial aid or activities of the European Support Office (EASO) have been able to respond adequately to the deficiencies in asylum systems in individual countries. They also have been hampered by the fact that the causes of the crisis in Europe's asylum policy lie beyond their reach.

In light of the sharp increase in asylum applications, one consequence of these differing ways of implementing European regulations has been growing mutual mistrust among the European member states. Along with the rising tide of refugees has come another consequence, one that resembles the situation that prevailed in the Nineties: the call for a sharing of the burden, an intensification of the debate about the allocation of refugees around the EU, and a fierce, passionate discussion about the quality of the protection we afford to asylum and human rights.

Given the trends now affecting the European system of asylum, the issue at stake is no longer simply about how to develop potential mechanisms and technocratic procedures for fairer burden-sharing. Rather, the dilemma now is how to revive a common will. The member states will continue to have different historical experiences and needs, and those will continue to be causes of the crisis in the EU's asylum policy. In other words, it will take an enhanced willingness to compromise, an adequate system of incentives, and a recovery of »European values« to take steps toward creating a European asylum system that will restore the member nations' trust in one another. It is encouraging to note that it would be difficult to de-Europeanize asylum policy, since EU law firmly anchors it in the Treaty of Lisbon, and very high hurdles stand in the way of effecting changes in that accord. The current discussions about the EU asylum system and its pros and cons may be salutary and lead to a revitalization of the idea of a genuine EU asylum policy. It is quite clear that, in the middle-term, the member states of the European Union will be able to tackle both ends of the refugee crisis – in Europe and the refugees' countries of origin – only through joint policymaking.

Where there is a will, is there a way?

(This article reflects the personal views of its author.)

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Forced Migration and the Protection of Refugees: Some global trends

Current debates concerning refugees foster the impression that the overwhelming majority of them are in Germany and Europe. But what do the facts really tell us about global trends? The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in a publication entitled »A World at War« included in the 2014 Global Trends Report, emphasizes that most of the current refugee situations around the globe have been precipitated by violent conflicts and wars. During the Fifties, the UNHCR sought accommodations for several hundred thousand refugees in Europe while also responding to scattered crises outside of that continent. By contrast, current trends concerning forced migration are devastating and find expression in a worldwide rise in the numbers of people fleeing both within countries and across national borders.

According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2014 there were 59.5 million forced migrants, including 38.2 million internally displaced persons, 19.5 million refugees, and 1.8 million asylum-seekers. Whereas internally displaced persons are defined as those who have taken flight within their home countries, refugees are those who have crossed national borders. Asylum-seekers, finally, are migrants whose status has yet to be officially determined. In addition, the UNHCR stresses that, in 2014, there were some 10 million stateless persons worldwide. If one tallies together all three categories of refugees, the total is around 70 million people, although that figure excludes people who don't fit into any of the aforementioned categories, such as those driven to leave their homes by climatic and environmental factors.

If we focus exclusively on refugees, internally displaced persons, and asylum-seekers, we find that their numbers increased between 2013 and 2014 by 16.21%. If we choose to highlight a longer span of time, the upward trend is even clearer: in 2006 there were approximately 37.2 million forced migrants worldwide, yielding an increase of roughly 60% from 2006 to 2014. While in 2012 »only« 23,000 people on average took flight every day, that number had risen to around 32,000 by 2013 and to 42,500 the following year.

In 2014 51% of all refugees were under 18. More than half of all refugees (53%) who fled across national borders came from just three countries: Syria (3.88 million), Afghanistan (2.59 million) and Somalia (1.11 million). To those statistics we can add a few others: By September, 2015, the number of Syrian refugees already had burgeoned to over 4 million, and that figure does not include 7.6 million internally displaced persons there. In contrast to the assumptions made so often by the media and politicians in Europe, the overwhelming majority of refugees stay in their regions of origin, since they usually flee into neighboring countries. To cite a few examples, this is the reason why most Syrian refugees are now in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, most Afghani refugees are in Pakistan and Iran, and most from the Congo and South Sudan are in Uganda. All told, 12.4 million or 86% of all refugees were in developing countries of the Global South, far from European countries, and 3.6 million of those (25%) had sought sanctuary in the least developed countries.

By way of comparison with these global trends, it should be emphasized that in 2014 only 219,000 refugees crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. In the first half of 2015 the number of initial and follow-up applications submitted by asylum seekers in-

creased to 398,895 (Eurostat). But it should be noted that this figure refers not to individual persons but to the number of applications for asylum, and that people are entitled to submit follow-up applications.

The number of people who have taken flight is increasing, but so too is the duration of their refugee status, because the international community has not found or implemented a lasting solution for their plight. »Protracted refugee situations« are on the rise, a term which the UNHCR defines as those »in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have lived in exile for five or more years in a given country of asylum.« According to the UNHCR, in 2014 6.4 million refugees were trapped in 33 such situations in 26 different countries. While the average duration of these protracted situations is estimated at 20 years, 12 of them had lasted longer than 30 years, and another 12 between 20 and 29 years. All of these protracted refugee situations were in Africa, Asia, and South America except for those in Serbia and Kosovo.

The worldwide increase in the number of forced migrants as well as the extended duration of their exile can be traced back primarily to the elusiveness of any real solution. The politically preferable solution is voluntary repatriation to their country of origin. By comparison, relatively less attention is given to alternatives such as integrating them locally into the asylum-granting country or resettling them in secure third countries. Still, during all of 2014 the international community rarely arrived at a solution of any kind. The UNHCR reports that, of the world's 14.4 million refugees, only 126,800 could be repatriated, while just 103,800 were assigned to third countries and 32,100 locally integrated.

If we consider global trends, it turns out that the chief reason people have for fleeing their homelands was to escape violence and war. This suggests that it is not enough to protect and support refugees and other forced migrants in exile. Rather, the international community of states as well as relief organizations must address the causes of flight early and in different ways. This conclusion does not imply that military intervention is called for; rather, it shows the need for early-stage preventive work as well as diplomatic initiatives to promote peace.

Furthermore, at the global level two situations can be identified: short-term humanitarian crises and long-term predicaments. In principle, refugee protection can be regarded as a transitional solution, until one of the three permanent solutions has been chosen and implemented. That being the case, the job of refugee protection is to provide emergency, fast-track aid, in which the basic needs of the refugees can and should be met promptly. In humanitarian situations, this approach has proved to be necessary and crucial, yet its focus on basic needs will not suffice for long-term predicaments. When refugees live for many years or even decades in exile, they need scope and opportunities to develop and make something of their lives. Consequently, different situations call for support approaches tailored to the respective circumstances.

The long-term situations raise two issues: where the refugees are being sheltered and why their plight is dragging on for so long. As for the first question, refugees are often housed in camps, especially in developing countries of the Global South, where aid organizations carry out projects to protect and support them. All over the world these camps are very similar: usually narrowly utilitarian and severely limited spaces. Although programs are implemented in behalf of the refugees, there are limitations and risks for everyone concerned in raising criticisms about their treatment. Refugees are often dependent on services provided by the aid organizations and exposed to a variety of dangers and security risks. In respect to the second issue, we must ask how things

could have reached the point that refugees must remain in exile for so many years, and why the international community fails to find solutions for so many of them. In 2014, only 262,700 refugees benefited from one of the three solutions, or only 1.82 % of all refugees worldwide. This shockingly low figure must be attributed primarily to the failure of many countries to cooperate at the international level in seeking and implementing solutions.

These statistics relate principally to the refugees who have fled across national borders in search of sanctuary. But almost twice as many people – 38.2 million – have taken flight inside the borders of their home countries. Not only do these internally displaced persons receive less attention from the media and politicians; they are not even granted protection under international law, since they are citizens still residing in the sovereign territory of their country of origin. Beginning in 2001, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has issued guidelines intended to protect internally displaced persons, but the guidelines are not binding on nation-states.

Moreover, the definition of a refugee is narrowly drawn. It enumerates certain circumstances that are recognized as legitimate grounds for fear of persecution and entitle an applicant to be granted the status of a refugee. But of course there are many other reasons why people must take flight. In particular, these include environmental and climate changes. According to some estimates, 32.4 million people in 2012 and 21.9 million in 2013 were driven from their homes by such factors. Yet since these people did not flee due to well-founded fears of persecution, they have so far not been accorded protection under international law. Nevertheless, the reasons for taking flight are not static; they are frequently subject to change, and that fact has to be taken into account when the legal framework for refugee protection is reviewed.

Media reports have created the impression that all refugees are fleeing towards Europe, especially since the boat disaster off Lampedusa in 2013 that killed 232. But a closer look reveals the global dimensions of flight and expulsions. Currently, as we have seen, most of the people fleeing are internally displaced persons on the move inside their home countries and thus not entitled to protection under international law. Furthermore, there is a global displacement of refugees fleeing across national borders: they usually flee from one developing country into other ones, and thus remain in their region of origin, far away from Europe.

64 years after the adoption of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, 145 countries have ratified it, while 146 also have ratified the Protocol of 1967, which, in principle, entitles refugees to protection and respect for their rights all over the world. Still, the deeper question must be asked: do the scope and approach to protection implicit in the Convention still suffice, given current trends and challenges? Or does international law need to be overhauled in order to afford better protection to refugees?

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Refugees: Why they flee, what routes they take, and why so many are coming to Germany now

Forced migration can take many forms, including flight or escape from difficult circumstances. Flight occurs when (semi-)state actors broadly restrict the agency and thus the freedom and mobility of individuals or collectivities. We can speak of forced migration when people are coerced into emigrating and have no other realistic options. Typically, it involves flight from violence that directly or indirectly threatens life, physical integrity, freedom and rights. The violence that causes people to take flight often involves ethno-nationalist, racist, gender-specific, or religious motives.

Forced migration was and is usually the outcome of war, civil war, or measures taken by authoritarian political systems. The First and Second World Wars, especially, were catalysts that precipitated key elements in the history of forced migration. Since the Second World War, conflicts surrounding and involving minorities, (armed) disputes about how to organize the political system, and efforts to homogenize the population of a given country have punctuated the long process of decolonization, which triggered numerous expulsions and waves of flight. In addition, the Cold War, as a global conflict of systems, had an enormous impact on forced migration events in the second half of the twentieth century.

To that list must be added the numerous and far-ranging journeys of flight that have taken place during the past few decades, especially in the context of war, civil war, or long-term state failure. They have occurred in many parts of the world: Europe (Yugoslavia), the Middle East (Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen), East Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan/South Sudan), West Africa (Congo, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria), South Asia (Afghanistan, Sri Lanka) and even Latin America (Colombia). In 2014 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted 19.5 million refugees, a figure that came close to equaling the high-water mark of the previous quarter century, which was reached in 1992 with 20.5 million refugees. But in addition there were a total of 38 million »internally displaced persons« who had sought to escape violence and persecution within a state. A further 1.8 million people were subject to asylum proceedings and awaited official recognition as refugees. All told, about 60 million people worldwide had fled their homes.

There are evident patterns to be found in these journeys of flight: As a rule refugees look for security in the vicinity of the conflict zones, because they usually hope to return to the regions they have left behind as soon as possible. Moreover, many of them lack the resources to flee farther, or they may encounter restrictions imposed by transit or destination countries that hamper or rule out a long-distance migration. For example, 95 % of all Afghan refugees (in 2014: 2.6 million of them) are in exactly this situation, having sought sanctuary in neighboring Pakistan or Iran. Much the same is true of Syria. The majority of the refugees from there, about 4 million, have fled to the neighboring countries of Turkey (2014: 1.6 million), Jordan (700,000), Iraq (220,000) and Lebanon (1.2 million). From this point of view, it should not be surprising that in 2014 countries of the Global South were sheltering no fewer than 86 % of all the registered refugees around the world. As the years have passed, this trend has shown a notable increase: that is, the share of refugees taken in by the countries of the Global South is actually on the rise vis-à-vis the Global North.

Flight is rarely a linear process; instead, most refugees move in stages. To begin with, there is often a hurried escape into the nearest city or some other nearby, apparently safe place of refuge, followed by a further migration to join relatives or acquaintances who live in a neighboring region or country. Then the refugees may look for an informal or official camp. Another typical pattern sees refugees returning to their homes, often more than once, only to be forced to flee again. Several factors underlie this dynamic, including constantly changing and shifting lines of conflict and perhaps the impossibility of finding safety at the place of refuge and the lack of opportunities to earn money or at least get access to the necessities of life. Frequently, people have to adjust to their precarious lives as refugees permanently or at least for a long period of time. That is the source of another stage in the saga of refugees: »camp-urbanization,« in which the camps become quasi-permanent settlements and evolve into »camp cities« with a somewhat urban character.

According to statistics supplied by the UNHCR, the number of border-crossing refugees around the world indeed has grown over the last four years. But that increase has been in line with trends that have been observed in the several decades since the Nineties. By contrast, there has been a much more rapid increase in the numbers of refugees classified as »internally displaced persons,« fleeing within their own conflict-torn countries. That circumstance makes it all the more relevant to ask why the Federal Republic of Germany so often has been chosen as a destination for these movements of flight since 2011-2012. Here we will sketch out six answers.

First: Networks. For the most part, migration is channeled through networks of kinship and acquaintanceship. One reason why Germany has become the most important European destination for Syrian refugees is that, even before the beginning of the civil war in Syria, it already had a quite extensive community of people originally from that country. Thus, Germany tended to become a central gathering place for refugees making their first attempts at resettlement after fleeing from the civil war. Also, because migrant networks increase the likelihood that more migrants will follow (migration begets migration), the immigration of Syrian refugees into the Federal Republic has exhibited a highly dynamic pattern during the last few months. Incidentally, the same holds true for other significant journeys of flight that have made Germany their destination.

Second: Financial resources. Refugees cannot usually migrate very far without (considerable) financial resources. Fees have to be paid upon exit and entry, then travel and transportation costs must be added in. Smugglers or middlemen demand large sums, while delays between stages along the migration route consume still more money. The very poorest migrants would be indulging in fantasies if they thought they could carry out a truly long-distance migration trek. Countless studies attest to the fact that poverty drastically limits mobility. It is primarily the more affluent who can set out on long-distance journeys, a fact that is confirmed by the influx of refugees into the Federal Republic from Syria and Iraq, for example. Finally, from a geographic perspective Europe is not that far from some of the most important points of origin for refugees (Syria, Iraq); hence the costs of a migratory trek for refugees from those countries can be kept within reasonable limits. That is not the case with journeys of flight from other global conflict zones such as those in West or East Africa, South Asia, or Latin America. Refugees from those continents seldom reach Europe.

Third: Prospects for resettlement. Countries have considerable discretion in deciding which migrants to admit and determining the status of those who have been certified as refugees entitled to protection. The willingness to grant sanctuary is always the result of a complex bargaining process among individuals and collectivities – including institutions

of the state – that have ever-shifting relationships, interests, practices, and schemes of categorization. Long-term changes in the political, administrative, journalistic, scholarly, and public perceptions of migration give rise to shifts in the way the issue is viewed, who will be regarded as a refugee and under which circumstances, and who will be accorded protection or asylum, to what extent, and for how long. In the period between 2010 and well into 2015, one can observe a relatively strong willingness in the Federal Republic of Germany to accept refugees, especially as compared to many other countries in the EU. The positive expectations Germans had about the future of politics, the economy, and society in their country, coupled with currently favorable economic and labor-market conditions, were responsible for this welcoming attitude. Public discussions about the looming shortage of skilled labor and an aging society, which had been going on for some years, laid the groundwork for this opening. But other factors were also involved, such as the acceptance of human rights standards and the acknowledgement that the requirements of offering protection, especially to Syrian refugees, could not be ignored. This pro-refugee attitude also manifested itself in a broad willingness among the German population to engage in volunteer work to aid the new arrivals.

Fourth: Removal of barriers to migration. The EU had previously adopted a policy of »securing its periphery,« which in practice meant keeping waves of refugees from coming too close to Europe. One outcome of the Arab Spring and the destabilization of many countries on the EU's margins was the breakdown of that system. The EU had initiated a »mobility partnership« and entered into a variety of cooperative agreements designed to enforce Europe's migration policy with countries such as Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Albania, and Ukraine. Since the Nineties, that cooperation had prevented many refugees from reaching the borders of the EU and filing applications for asylum. Together, the destabilization of those political systems and the shock waves emanating from the global economic crisis of 2007 exacerbated social conflicts within the countries on the EU's borders. The economic and political turmoil effectively curtailed those countries' governance capabilities as well as reducing their willingness to cooperate with the EU and/or limiting the scope of whatever cooperation remained.

Fifth: The global economic crisis also affected countries that, from the viewpoint of »securing the periphery,« constituted the inner circle of the EU. The »Dublin system,« developed in the Nineties, was consciously designed to seal off the EU's core states, especially the Federal Republic of Germany, from the worldwide wave of fleeing humanity. It worked for a long time. But on account of the devastating consequences of the global economic crisis, the various European border states, principally Greece and Italy, were increasingly reluctant to bear the brunt of the Dublin system, which for them meant having to register and apply their own national asylum procedures to the refugees who were arriving in the EU in ever greater numbers.

Sixth: Germany as a replacement »country of refuge.« Inside the EU, the global economic crisis sharply undermined the willingness of classic, high-profile »countries of refuge« such as France and Great Britain to grant protection to refugees. In this context, the Federal Republic was, as it were, cast in the role of a replacement country of refuge; hence it became a new and favored destination for the global wave of migration.

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The Role of the Kurds in the Syrian Conflict

Now that numerous actors have gotten involved in the Syrian conflict, it has turned into an international war. Accordingly, talks at the international level aimed at finding a solution have taken totally different approaches. For example, some have assumed that it is possible to cooperate with President Bashar al-Assad, while others have presupposed that accommodation can be reached only after he is out of the picture. Nevertheless, up until now all such efforts have proved fruitless, beginning with the Kofi Annan Plan of 2012 and including both the meeting held in Geneva early in 2014 and the Vienna Summit of October, 2015.

Originally, the Syrian conflict involved only Assad's government and long-suppressed groups in the population, notably the majority Sunnis and classes that were socially disadvantaged. In short, it was an internal Syrian affair. But due to the intervention of external forces, the situation evolved over time into an international conflict and/or a proxy war among three main alliances. The first of these alliances comprises the EU states and the USA, at times cooperating with local groups like the Kurds. This group always has insisted upon a solution that would exclude Assad. The second bloc consists of Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, which envision no end to the conflict until Assad is removed from power. Hence, they offer direct or indirect support to organizations such as IS and the al-Nusra Front. Finally, the third alliance is a Shiite bloc supported by Russia and consisting of Assad's government, Iran, Iraq, and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In this complex political environment the Kurds quickly made their mark as an important and powerful regional actor. First, they have proven to be an effective and reliable force arrayed against IS on Syrian soil, one with which the West can cooperate. Second, the Kurds are in a position to play a key role in the migration crisis, because their territory, which exhibits a certain stability and semi-democratic character, has the potential to stem the inexorable flood of refugees.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the breakup of Syria offered the Kurds a welcome opportunity to organize politically and militarily. Even in the early stages of the conflict, which began in 2012, they launched a persistent campaign to bring the northern parts of Syria under their control, to some extent with the tacit acquiescence of Damascus. Some 2.5 million Kurds live in this area and have long been considered stateless persons. In 2014 they named this territory Rojava (West Kurdistan, in the Kurdish language). An autonomous, self-administered political unit, it is subdivided, Swiss-style, into three cantons: Cizire, Kobane, and Efrin. The political and structural underpinnings of the cantons are based on the social ideology of Abdullah Öcalan, head of the Partîya Karkerén Kurdîstan (Kurdish Workers' party, or PKK). The latter incorporates certain progressive ideals, as concerns (for example) church-state relations, the rights of women and minorities, and the inclusion of marginalized groups in the political process. However, the system as a whole has been classified as repressive by human rights organizations and opposition forces inside »Rojava« due to numerous violations of international norms and intolerance toward opposition forces.

Progressive or repressive?

Recently the Kurds have drawn worldwide attention – less because of the administrative system they devised for northern Syria than because of their struggle against the self-proclaimed Islamic State and so-called al-Nusra Front. When the Syrian conflict

began, the Party of Democratic Union (PYD), which is closely allied with the PKK, opted for a third way, avoiding hostilities with both the government and the opposition. This approach enabled the PYD to put together – almost unnoticed – an alliance of the existing military and political forces in northern Syria. Additionally, it enabled the party to form a quasi-state in the areas abandoned without a fight by government troops, thus largely consolidating its power. Initially, IS did not set its sights upon the Kurdish area; indeed, it proposed a non-aggression pact. But at the end of 2014 it changed its mind and went on the attack against the Kurds. Nevertheless, the threat emanating from IS and the al-Nusra Front served only to strengthen the PYD's hand, not least because the local populations (Kurds, Arabs, Sunnis, Christians, and Yazidis) all hoped it would give them protection. From these factors emerged a power position resting on interlocking military and social structures that permitted the PYD to move quickly and effectively against IS. Backed by grassroots sentiment in northern Syria society, the PYD rapidly mobilized police and military units. Membership figures for the Asayis (police) and YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, or People's Defense Units) grew to over 50,000 people in a remarkably short time period (as of August, 2015). About 30 % of these cadres are female (YPJ or Yekîneyên Parastina Jinan). Since 2014 they have been allied in their battle against IS with the Assyrian-Aramaic Militia (Sutoro Units), units of the Free Syrian Army, as well as with small opposition groupings such as the »Vulcan of the Euphrates.« Of course, the individual actors in this alliance hold very different views about Syria's future. Taken as a whole, the military arm of the PYD is today the single best organized military force engaged in successful combat against IS in northern Syria.

To be sure, the PYD often comes in for criticism by virtue of its ideological proximity to the PKK, but at the same time it enjoys international recognition. The USA in particular, and more recently Russia, have facilitated military operations by the PYD by supplying them with armaments while launching air strikes against positions held by the terrorist organization. Because of these actions, the YPG now controls an uninterrupted band of territory stretching from the Euphrates to the Tigris along the Turkish border. Cooperation between the United States and the Kurds also prevented IS from capturing the Sinjar Mountains, thereby heading off an impending massacre of the Yazidi people.

We should not fail to note that the cooperation between the USA and the PYD and/or the YPG is partly a function of Turkey's political position toward IS. To say that Ankara is reluctant to combat this organization would be a gross understatement. The administration in Ankara actually offers IS fighters a sanctuary and provides them with weapons and other logistical supports, above all in hopes of preventing the possible creation of a second Kurdish autonomous region, this time on Syrian soil. These policies have led to a shift in alliances such that the YPG, once branded terrorist in its own right due to its close links with the PKK, has become one of the West's few reliable partners on Syrian soil in the fight against IS. It is now impossible to imagine any military or peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict without the Kurds.

Ankara's attitude causes a shift in the alliances

Furthermore, the Kurds' geostrategic position confers added importance on them in global politics, because they control some two-thirds of the territory along the Syrian-Turkish border. The main routes taken by Syrian refugees pass through these areas. If they could be stabilized, with democratic structures developed within them, that fact would do much to forestall further refugee movement from towns in the country's interior toward the Turkish border. Moreover, those areas, which include major cities like Hasaka, Qamishli, and Efrin, could become a safe haven for internal refugees, whose

numbers are currently estimated at around eight million. In this way, refugee movements could be slowed for a while, and the Kurds' relationship of mutual dependence with Turkey in respect to the control and routing of migration flows could be restructured.

As the states of the West gradually have come to realize the importance of the Kurdish population in Syria, the PYD has managed to establish diplomatic relations not only with the USA but also with EU countries such as France and Italy. However, relations with other members of the EU continue to be fraught. Many consider the PYD to be a branch of the PKK, which the EU officially has branded a terrorist organization. Germany, for example, refuses to enter into diplomatic relations with the PYD even at the lowest level. The aforementioned states do not want to jeopardize their relations with Turkey. Neither do they wish to make enemies out of the Arabs in Syria and its neighbors. Since the PYD has not been able to muster the hoped-for support in Europe, one should expect that it will cooperate more closely with the United States in the future. The USA, for its part, is dependent on the cooperation of the PYD, which it regards as the only entity capable of deploying reliable ground troops against IS. Half-hearted support by EU members also led the Kurds to cooperate with Russia in mid-2015. Because Moscow recognizes the importance of the Kurds for the region, the Russian foreign minister invited the head of the PYD, Salih Muslim, to attend talks aimed at fostering collaboration. This opening to Russia provides greater leeway for the Kurds to negotiate with other international actors. However, it is impossible to say whether that circumstance eventually will lead to diminished regional influence for the EU.

Given that the PYD has assumed the role of stabilizer in the Levant, EU member states should develop more intensive bilateral relations with it, both to keep IS power in check and to create a security zone in Syria that will stem the movement of refugees.

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Jo Leinen
The Long, Hard Road Ahead
A look at some needed reforms in Europe's electoral laws

No matter which problem area we choose to highlight – the rapidly growing wave of refugees, the euro crisis, or the imperative of a stronger European foreign policy – Europe's responses are more sought-after than ever. By now it is almost a truism to say that Europe needs not only a common monetary policy, but also a joint fiscal and economic policy, accompanied by the shift of decision-making powers to the European level.

Claus Offe and Jürgen Habermas even argue that the transfer of responsibilities to the European level and the development of a European democracy capable of decision-

making is the only feasible option for recovering the sovereignty that European states already have forfeited to international financial markets. In an interview with *Die Zeit* (July 9, 2015), Offe warned that the reconquest of sovereignty could only succeed if the European Parliament emerged as the locus of political disputes »from a reasonably integrated party system and a standardized electoral system.« In that case, debates about pan-European policy issues could be conducted even outside the European Parliament.

However, although the development of a standardized electoral system was foreseen as early as the Treaty of Rome in 1957, now as before the European Parliament is

Many attempts, few successes

chosen on the basis of 28 separate national electoral laws. True, the elections take place in the same time frame, but other than that they do not have much in common. Because parties operating at the European level cannot participate in the elections held in the member states to choose EU parliamentary deputies, they remain more or less loose umbrella organizations for the national-level parties. During the past 60 years, member states have been able to agree on little else but to conduct elections on the principle of proportional representation.

Progress in the further development of the European electoral system so far has been – to put it mildly – limited. There are two reasons for its snail's pace.

For one thing, the electoral system is not governed by just any set of rules. Rather, it reflects the organization of each democratic system in the Union. Here tradition sets the tone, whether in the apportionment of constituencies or the scheduling of elections. Different ideas about how to hold fair elections determine a great deal. For example they influence the decision about whether the option of a single transferable vote should be offered. At stake ultimately is access to power. That is the reason why all attempts to introduce trans-national party lists have gone nowhere. If we had them, then the European party families would be responsible for compiling the trans-national lists, and that has stirred up considerable resistance in many national parties. At the same time, the member states would have to give up a portion of »their« contingent of seats in the European Parliament, since the Lisbon Treaty limits the total number of seats to 751.

For another, there are many procedural hurdles in the way of a genuinely European electoral law. It is certainly true that the European Parliament has the right of legislative initiative in this area and is entitled to submit a proposal to the Council. But the Council must give unanimous consent to the proposal, whereupon it has to be submitted to all of the national parliaments as well as the European Parliament for final approval. In other words, the process is more like the procedure for amending European treaties than it is like a normal legislative process. If even one member state failed to give its approval, then the reform would be off the table.

These circumstances also help explain why the numerous proposals made by the European Parliament, which has attempted to reform the Electoral Act of 1976 in nearly every legislative term, have come to naught. The European Parliament rightly considers itself the driving force behind the democratization of the European Union. That is the main reason why all of its legislative bills have aimed to develop and homogenize European voting rules in the most comprehensive possible way. Yet in the end this approach has induced the alarmed and overburdened Council to withhold its approval.

Those are the main reasons why a two-track approach has been chosen this time around for the effort to enhance the European electoral system. On November 11, 2015 a

pro-Europe majority in the European Parliament took up a bill designed to reform the European electoral system, one that also contains concrete proposals to improve voting procedures. It is as ambitious as possible while being as cautious as necessary, in hopes that even the next European elections, to be held in 2019, will constitute a step in the direction of transnational democracy. Now the ball is in the court of the Council, as the President of the EU Parliament, Martin Schulz, emphasized in his speech to the European Council on December 17, 2015: »A reform (of the electoral law) is urgently needed, particularly in light of continually declining levels of voter participation. The Parliament has done its part and now asks the Council to approve the proposal or else enter into negotiations with the Parliament with a view to reaching quick agreement.« Nevertheless, we have not lost sight of the goal of an integrated European party system. Some more visionary ideas will be included in a report of the Constitutional Committee of the European Parliament (AFCO), charged with laying the groundwork for a reform of European treaties.

The goal: an integrated European party system

For the 2019 elections, it is of crucial importance to note that the practice of nominating European »top candidates« for the Office of Commission President, first adopted in 2014, will be consolidated. That will make the European party families much more visible to the public. We are proposing that all member states should list the candidate's European party family on the ballot next to his or her national party affiliation. That way, every voter will be able to see right away how his or her vote will affect the political composition of the European Parliament and which top candidate is being supported. Furthermore, the nomination of top candidates should be included and formalized as part of European electoral law to prevent a few member states from attempting to challenge this hard-fought right. We should expect that these measures will raise the profile of European party families in the public eye, and in the future make it easier for the European parties and Parliament to act as transmission belts between the people and political institutions. Therefore, the Parliament proposes to modify the Electoral Act of 1979 (which provides for the direct election of deputies to the EU Parliament, *ed.*) as part of this first stage of reform. Under the proposed modification, by a decision of the Council an international electoral district would be created as soon as the European party families have attained the requisite degree of visibility. No further amendment of the law would be required to do so.

To insure greater uniformity in the member states and to establish a common time frame for the start of the election campaign, a minimum of twelve weeks will be needed to issue the electoral lists in the member states. One advantage of a common schedule would be to prevent an often-used practice in a few of the member countries: waiting until just a few weeks before the election to issue the lists so that there is almost no time left to field a campaign worthy of the name. All European citizens, regardless of their citizenship, should have the right to participate in these elections even though they may reside in countries outside the EU. Also, the reforms call for a mandatory electoral threshold for entry into parliament. A given party would need to win a higher percentage of the vote than the threshold level of 3 % - 5 % to be awarded any seats at all in the EU Parliament. Most of the member states already have a legal or de facto hurdle of at least 3 % anyway. This requirement should be made a universal standard to insure that the Parliament retains its ability to function. Currently, the latter is in serious jeopardy, not least because of a puzzling verdict of the German Constitutional Court which abolished the electoral threshold in Germany for European elections.

It should also be made easier for the voters to participate in European elections. Accordingly, the European Parliament calls upon the member states to consider reducing the voting age to 16 and introducing mail-in ballots and electronic voting (e-voting) via the Internet. Democracy must complete the leap into the digital age. If that does not happen, there is some risk – and not just at the European level – that dwindling voter turnout rates will erode the basis of legitimation that underlies our fundamental democratic order.

Building on these measures and in the aftermath of a major amendment to the treaties, we could address the remainder of the legal adjustments needed to create a genuinely trans-national party system. Toward that end, we must find ways to improve the position and financial resources of European parties. But the main objective is to put those parties in a position to compete for seats in the Parliament and go to the voters with electoral programs that speak directly to European policy issues. In addition, the principle of »one person, one vote« has to be bolstered. Variety is inherent in all federal systems, and this is true of the electoral law as well; nevertheless, every European citizen should be able to vote in accordance with the same basic principles. We cannot say that this is the case, as long as active and passive voting rights (i.e., the right to vote and the right to stand for election, *ed.*) lack uniformity throughout Europe.

The need to put the currency union on a more solid foundation also has revealed the urgency of a comprehensive reform of the European treaties, which should be undertaken sooner rather than later. That will require strong institutions able to formulate and then defend the European interest in a democratic process. But if we want the decisions reached at the European level to find broad acceptance, we must make sure that they are not just democratic in a formal sense. The substantive debates among different political currents, such as we have in the European Parliament, must find an echo in public discussions.

The law is not everything

An improved European electoral law can make a contribution to that broad goal. But the quest to build an integrated European party system will succeed only if the national parties act in more »European« ways between elections. No change in the treaties would be required to have close coordination on substantive issues among the European party families. That cooperation must become lived political practice, if only through the identification of the European party families in publications and election posters.

National parties should not view European parties as their rivals, but as an opportunity to let European citizens determine the direction of policy inside the EU and the role of the EU in the world through competitive democratic procedures.

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A Conversation with Philip Kovce and Julian Nida-Rümelin

»People don't work just for the fun of it«

The Basic Income Guarantee – Ivory-tower utopia or workable model for the future?

The basic income guarantee refers to a scheme that would provide a monthly, state-mandated, tax-supported payment to every person regardless of his/her income or wealth and employment status. Here Klaus-Jürgen Scherer interviews Philip Kovce and Julian Nida-Rümelin about the proposal. The former is the author of the book, »Was fehlt, wenn alles da ist? Warum das bedingungslose Grundeinkommen die richtigen Fragen stellt« *(What Is Missing When We Have Everything: Why the basic income guarantee is asking the right questions).* The latter, a philosopher, warned against the divisive tendencies implicit in the basic income guarantee as early as 2008 in an article for the Quarterly's German-language parent publication, Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte.

NG/FH: Debates about the basic income guarantee have been going on for years, most recently in the context of digitalization. Mr. Kovce, why do we need such a guaranteed income?

Philip Kovce: There are many good reasons to institute an unconditional basic income guarantee. The basic income promotes freedom rather than coercion, solidarity instead of paternalism, initiative rather than obedience. It is not a reform that would merely adjust a few set screws in the social welfare state. Rather, it is an idea that would make us reflect in fundamental ways about ourselves and how we want to live and work together. But of course nothing forces us to enact a basic income guarantee. We can decide freely for ourselves whether we want to adopt it. Switzerland – not exactly a country known for embracing revolutionary ideas – is asking itself this very question by holding a referendum in 2016 about the enactment of a basic income guarantee. The Swiss debate shows that the basic income guarantee is more about trust than it is about money. The trust issue is the »Gretchen question« of the basic income guarantee.

NG/FH: Mr. Nida-Rümelin, isn't it true that you, as a philosopher, have a much more skeptical view of this quite different version of the social welfare state?

Julian Nida-Rümelin: The idea is not new. It has been around for decades. Its ideological roots – and I mean this not in a derogatory sense, but simply descriptively – lie partly in the anarchism of the nineteenth century and partly in free-market liberal and radical market conceptions. That also explains why there is such a broad alliance behind it. Economists who are close to employers' associations at last want to replace the current social welfare state as we know it today – an institution of which they are not fond – by a simple system.

On the other hand there is an implicitly pro-emancipation attitude here as well, according to which a person should be supported no matter whether s/he has ever worked or even wants to work. Maybe some people would like to get involved in civic projects, while others would prefer to look after their children. Still others might say: »I need some downtime for two years and it would be really nice if I had an income during that period.« At first glance, that is a humane and appealing idea.

Philip Kovce

My argument is that, currently, here are in fact some formidable challenges facing the social security system, more so in other countries than in Germany. But as far as I am concerned, a complete system-makeover would carry big risks by exacerbating even more the social tensions that are already apparent today.

Here is one example: the so-called »stay-at-home parenting bonus« advocated by the CSU. This is a taxpayer-financed transfer payment to parents who want to care for their children at home, and it offers the wrong incentives. The message delivered by the program is: »You don't need to work. The state will support your choice to stay at home.« In social milieus where paid employment among women is the great exception anyway, this is bound to widen even further the gap between men and women. I am sure that, if the stay-at-home parenting bonus were increased fivefold in the form of a basic income guarantee, women living in those social milieus would not go back to work. In this way one of the goals we are currently striving to achieve – namely, the equal integration of women and men into the world of work – would be frustrated once again.

What is more, it sends the illusory message that everything is easy and playful. We are footloose and fancy free; sometimes we do one thing and sometimes another. I may take a sabbatical from the workaday world for five years, or maybe I am still young and don't want to enter the world of work just yet. But those young people would be surprised: At the end of five years, they will no longer be able to enter the labor market at all.

NG/FH: So the system-switch would jeopardize our social welfare state, generate social tensions, and lead to a situation in which work is no longer genuinely valued?

Kovce: The basic income guarantee values work as an activity, not merely as a means to earn a living. Mr. Nida-Rümelin emphasizes that paid or »gainful« employment is necessary to integrate people into society and worries about a society with a lot of free time. That is a pseudo-choice; it is based on the assumption that people would not do anything meaningful unless goaded by external incentives.

Nida-Rümelin: That's not so. Volunteer work for the community and child-raising are very meaningful activities.

Kovce: For decades we have imagined – or the state authorities have imagined – that we needed a defining culture that identifies the concept of labor with its atrophied form, the notion of gainful employment. This perverse culture has brought us to the point where we do everything in our power to force people to work for a living no matter how pointless the work is that they have to do. This does not square with the values of either social democracy or classical liberalism. Besides, a plea for forced labor has nothing to do with social integration. The fact that we cling to the coercive aspect of labor, even though more and more jobs are being taken over by machines and thus taken out of our hands, shows that we can't resist worshipping the idol of gainful employment. Incidentally, Hannah Arendt predicted precisely this outcome: that a laboring society might very well run out of labor to do, but that this society would never let go of labor because that is all it really understood and knew how to do. So if we do not decide to abandon the society of gainful employment, we will continue to devote all of our intellectual energy to creating ever more absurd and meaningless jobs, which we assume are important from the point of view of integration and discipline. In this respect the SPD is undermining its original mission. For 100 years now it has been committed to empowering workers to create space for personal freedom vis-à-vis the capitalists. Today, the party is doing exactly the opposite. At a historical moment in which we truly could escape from the pressure to work for a living, the SPD is not committed to doing so: instead, it is inventing schemes designed ever more cleverly to force us to continue with the system of gainful employment. I think that is cynical.

> **»The basic income guarantee values work as an activity, not merely as a means to earn a living. «**

Philip Kovce

Nida-Rümelin: Most advocates of the basic income guarantee adopt the strategy of trivialization. They say: »Well, it makes sense to structure all these social service payments in a way that's easier to understand and make them independent of the issue of whether a person is able to work for a living or not.« But anyone who is not capable of working for a living, whether due to age, illness, or parental obligations, even now has a claim to social service payments that replace his or her wages or salary.

Your line of argument is a bit different; in fact, it resembles certain anarchist currents of thought from the nineteenth century, which the social democratic movement has pointedly repudiated – and for good reason. As an example of the kind of argument that the SPD has always spurned, let's consider the claim that the best of all possible worlds would be one in which labor were done purely for enjoyment. In fact, people work partly out of a sense of duty toward themselves, partly to ensure that others, such as their children, can survive, and to make their future more secure. There are numerous empirical studies showing that gainful employment plays a crucial role in bringing about integration and recognition. That is why the gender gap is so worrisome.

Gainful employment has a variety of important functions. Even civic engagement is mainly to be found among those who are integrated into working life. I imagine a fairer, more just, inclusive, and humane world of work. But it is very clear from everything you have said that you have downgraded gainful employment to the level of a hobby, and that is a serious mistake. In Aristotle's time things were different, since gainful employment

was something for the lower classes. But that has changed. In fact, we live in a society in which social integration essentially happens via work for pay.

NG/FH: But what about Hannah Arendt's argument?

Nida-Rümelin: This is an argument that has been bandied about really ever since the nineteenth century. It implies that productivity gains ultimately lead to the end of work in industrial societies. The keyword here is digitalization. These debates have been carried on inside the SPD as well. Yet such theories have turned out to be wrong again and again, for some decades now. The volume of work is not shrinking; it is growing. That is especially true of Germany.

Kovce: The volume of work is growing because we are contorting ourselves politically to make sure that it does grow.

Nida-Rümelin: No. Even though productivity is very high in certain sectors of the economy and fewer workers are required, human beings have other needs as well, e.g., cultural ones. Currently, the field of culture is experiencing an unprecedented boom. There, more paid employment is needed. There is no reason to believe that society is running out of opportunities for gainful employment.

> » **The argument in favor of a basic guarantee of a subsistence income for everyone has become superfluous, because we already have it.** «
> *Julian Nida-Rümelin*

Kovce: I am with you on this one. My point is not to demonize gainful employment, but rather to point out that it is diabolical when people are coerced into working for a living. When it comes to digitalization, one simple principle holds: Anything that can be quantified can be automated. That is, we need human beings only when we face non-quantifiable situations. The future of work, regardless of whether we are talking about paid employment or volunteering, lies in self-determined activity, not in heteronomy.

Nida-Rümelin: The market does not respond to needs and wishes of this kind. The market follows its own intrinsic laws, which are very different. It is not as though political decision-makers wished to see business enterprises looking in vain for employees nor would they want to see entire branches of industry get in trouble because the next generation of properly skilled workers is lacking. This is not just a fantasy of philosophers or politicians; it is simply the way that the economic market works.

NG/FH: A social welfare state based essentially on gainful employment only has a future if gainful employment continues to evolve and change, isn't that right?

Nida-Rümelin: To cite one example, in Germany and France we have a social security system that is financed primarily through a tax on labor. In the Scandinavian countries things are different. But one cannot simply swap systems overnight. In other words, I am in favor of de-linking social security systems from labor as a source of financing, be-

cause that arrangement makes labor more costly and thus artificially scarce – the polar opposite of your position.

Step by step, we should expand elements of the social security system financed from general revenue, since that would enhance freedom. A common »citizens' insurance« or universal flat rate benefit would be a good idea. But I do not endorse a radical new start in which the social welfare state would be dismantled, including the cooperative structures embedded in it. In the German social welfare state one earns entitlements by having contributed to the generation of the social product. Those are entitlements that accrue even to people who might not need them, but who can claim them as earned benefits of paid employment.

Incidentally, to abolish all this with the stroke of a pen also means wiping out 110 years of social history and 150 of struggle by the workers' movement.

Kovce: Your point is expressed in a marvelously polemical way. Of course a basic income guarantee would be introduced in evolutionary stages, not as a single revolutionary act. We could allow

Reiner Zensen

Julian Nida-Rümelin

various elements of social security as we know it today to become unconditional guarantees. One might imagine that not only family allowances but basic pensions as well might be treated as guaranteed forms of income, thus importing an element of the unconditional basic income into society. If the basic income guarantee were a revolutionary project, 100,000 Swiss citizens would not have signed a petition calling for a referendum on it. The basic income is an idea that involves multiple perspectives encouraging us to think about tomorrow as we act today. But I would like to come back to one issue that, as far as I can see, embodies our essential disagreement. You mistrust human beings.

Nida-Rümelin: No. People don't work just for the fun of it. That is a middle class ideological illusion. I also work because I have to earn money.

Kovce: And you can continue to do that. The basic income guarantee does not forbid anyone from earning money. In a society with a basic income guarantee, self-actualization can also have a financial dimension. Yet, the fact that we drill ourselves to get up at 6:00 AM to work at a job that financial need forces us to take and which we will therefore neither do well nor cost-effectively should not be regarded as an act of heroism, but

rather as an indictment of our society. I would get up at 4:00 AM every day to engage in an activity about which I am enthusiastic. Such activities spur me to perform at my highest level, but also make me suffer the most when my performance falls short. This has nothing to do with hobbies; it is a matter of passion. The basic income guarantee does not stand in the way of human effort, but it does discourage drilling people in ways that undermine their humanity.

Nida-Rümelin: What concerns me is the humanization of the economy and a critique of self-instrumentalization. You can look that up in my book, *Die Optimierungsfalle* (*The Optimization Trap, ed.*). But your utopian exuberance, which is of course appealing, implies: »Well, the best thing of all would be if people had no more reason to earn an income by working and worked only because they had an inner calling to do so.« That is a dangerous illusion, because it comes out of a tradition that says nothing should be arduous, strenuous, or difficult.

But that is wrong. There are obligations, among which is that people should take care of earning their own income and not rely on others to do it for them. And as far as I am concerned, it is part of being an adult to accept that.

Kovce: Now you've been taken in by the old canard that we are still like hunter-gatherers, working directly for ourselves, even though we live in an economy in which everything is provided by others. Today, we live in a society marked by the division of labor, in which others help to provide my income and I help to provide the income of others; that is, I satisfy my needs thanks to what others do, while I act to meet their needs as well. I no longer feed my own clan or family directly; instead, I am involved in a global network that provides goods and services. In a society of this kind, in which I count on the services of others, it is then reasonable for me to wonder how best to enhance others' ability to render those services. Of course, forcing them to do so is the worst way to optimize their abilities; things work out better if they can act in my behalf from their own free will.

Nida-Rümelin: Excuse me, but that is a mental error. Do not underestimate the hunter-gatherer cultures. They also relied on a division of labor to go about their business. It is not as though an isolated individual went out and killed the mammoth and then dragged it home. Rather, they lived together in large groups featuring a division of labor. Anthropologists today speak of groups of 300.

And that's the way it is today. As a matter of fact, we live in a highly cooperative economy based on an intense division of labor coupled with the social welfare state. The two institutions have a difficult, tension-filled relationship. We have now passed through a phase in which economic rationality was increasingly dominant – maybe we even agree on this point – and overshadowed the rationality of the social welfare state, putting it on the defensive. A great deal depends on realizing that cooperation must not be defined simply as a function of paid labor. That much is quite clear. Thus, to cite an example, those who take care of their relatives, do volunteer work for the community, and raise children are performing an essential service to advance this cooperation.

As a part of growing up, we must learn to play our part in the division of labor, contributing to the process by nourishing and sustaining ourselves and our dependents. And the idea that we should do this only when we feel like it is basically a form of protracted adolescence, whether people are aware of that or not.

Kovce: I too embrace work with enthusiasm. I can manage to get through the worst crises posed by that work, when I see in it a set of tasks that are my own. You would like to humanize labor, but you understand that task as a paternalistic act of the state. You don't trust individuals to humanize work for themselves.

Nida-Rümelin: Quite the contrary. You are suggesting that the state would skim off and redistribute income earned by work on a grand scale, and that these incomes would be very high, since productivity would insure highly productive jobs for a few. I have no objection to state intervention, but to invent a contrast here, making it seem as if I were for a coercive state that imposed a form of labor, while you favored the freedom of the market and self-determination, is truly absurd.

NG/FH: In the digital world of the future, to what extent will algorithms replace work?

Nida-Rümelin: I don't know what will happen. If it is true that all processes that can be controlled by algorithms eventually will be taken over by machines, then we would be facing a completely new situation. Nevertheless, it is striking that precisely this argument has been advanced in debates, following the same pattern, ever since the nineteenth century – albeit not in respect to digital technology, of course. One sees that fewer and fewer weavers are needed, and proclaims the onset of a catastrophe.

But each time things have turned out differently. At each juncture new branches of industry, new markets, and new needs have arisen, even those of a non-material character. That is my great hope: that the non-material sector will grow substantially, so that continuing development will occur in a way that is sustainable and in keeping with the resources we have.

It is hard to say exactly what will happen. What I see is that those seized by the euphoria of digitalization have predicted a lot of things – the paperless office, enormous leaps in productivity, needing almost no time for communication – and that none of them has actually come to pass.

Kovce: The real issue with digitalization is not whether a text gets printed on paper, but whether it is produced with a typewriter or a computer. Thanks to the computer, printing out a text on paper has become a matter of free choice. Our consumer choices, too, are becoming freer all the time. Corporate marketing and PR budgets are increasing, because – given our freedom and amidst our affluence – they can't keep up with people's desires. Even politics increasingly is carried on more in placards than in discussions, because people worry about flagging interest among voters. In this situation we do not need to inflate the welfare state into a surveillance state to pillory alleged laggards in our hyper-competitive society. Rather, we need a civil right that enables everyone to participate in the life of society. Of course, the reality today is that we don't allow anyone to starve and we do assure everyone a subsistence-level income. However, our social legislation unconstitutionally restricts this fundamental right. The basic income guarantee is nothing more or less than the implementation of constitutionally guaranteed rights that we grant ourselves even today. The unconditional guarantee of a basic income insures that a subsistence-level income cannot be cut back under any circumstances and that it will be granted to every single person.

NG/FH: What, really, is the most important difference between a social democratic »safety

net« providing a minimum level of financial security and the unconditional basic income guarantee, if we disregard for now all the rhetoric about principles and philosophical approaches?

Nida-Rümelin: The argument in favor of a basic guarantee of a subsistence income for everyone has become superfluous, because we already have it. That is particularly clear in the case of Germany, because the Federal Constitutional Court has of course prohibited all forms of discrimination, e.g., even in respect to refugees. Besides, the carrot and stick approach of the Agenda 2010 reforms has been successful throughout much of Germany. Since 2005 we have been one of the few industrialized countries not to have registered an increase in inequality.

The demand for a subsistence-level basic income is an entirely different matter. The prevailing support levels seem to me to be too low. But when I hear people say: »I don't care who it is, whether it's someone who earns a few million or not, everyone gets the same amount,« then I wonder why the general public should waste scarce resources on this instead of investing them in the care of children, the elderly, and others who need help, as well as in education.

Kovce: Everyone is eligible for a fundamental right.

Nida-Rümelin: We are not talking about a right here. The right relates to the fact that I receive a minimum subsistence income. But the right does not say that a millionaire gets an extra 1,000 euros a month.

Kovce: I understand the basic income guarantee as a fundamental right, not as a need-based social welfare payment. The basic income guarantee has nothing to do with money. The fact that money is being paid out is the final act in a drama, the catharsis of which lies elsewhere – namely, in how we answer the question of whether we want to grant ourselves a floor under our existence with no conditions attached. When we take note of the fact that this makes us more efficient and productive, we also acknowledge that we are doing ourselves a disservice in economic terms as long as we do not enact an unconditional basic income guarantee.

Nida-Rümelin: That means we supposedly need a universal, unconditional basic income guarantee in order to spur productivity and enhance economic prosperity. Probably what you have in mind here is the fact that productivity gains presumably would be achieved by the exodus of many people from the labor market, so that the few who remained would be the highly productive ones. These are extremely speculative assumptions, and would entail what I consider to be undesirable effects from the point of view of social policy. We would then have a tiny elite of high-earners who would be supporting all the rest of us. But that is a different topic.

Thymian Bussemer / Christian Krell / Henning Meyer

Social Democratic Values in the Second Machine Age

It is only rather recently that we have begun to discern the outlines of the dawning digital society. As far as we can determine, digital machines – by now an omnipresent part of everyday life – are expanding the range of our possibilities while also imposing upon us new limitations and constraints. They have changed our institutions and social practices in equal measure and opened up previously-uncharted dimensions of action. The digital society ushers in both a new empowerment and new limits for human beings. On the one hand, hitherto undreamed-of possibilities for self-actualization and self-determination have come to light. On the other, and in relative isolation from those bright prospects, it has become apparent that individuals need protection from excessive digital demands, social stigmatization, and the plunder of their intellectual property by data-obsessed Internet firms. Few observers in years past could have anticipated any of these trends.

In economic terms, we can expect to see an »automation dividend« from the digitalization of industrial production as well as the emergence of new digital services. All prognoses point to an increase in society's overall wealth. But at the same time, the number of persons who profit directly from this boost in productivity will decline. This is the case both because job opportunities in highly-automated operations will tend to dwindle and because the lion's share of the economic payoff from the digital economy will benefit just a few sectors of the export and digital businesses. However, the latter will provide a fairly small number of positions for what will become an employee elite. In this respect there is a danger that the distribution of income derived from wages and salaries will become polarized: ever-higher wages in areas dominated by highly competitive industries operating in the global market, which are largely insulated from ordinary income trends in any given country.

A danger that the distribution of incomes derived from wages and salaries will become polarized

Thus, digitalization raises new questions of distribution: What are the best uses of the automation dividends? How can we prevent the income gap from widening? And how can we share the gains in prosperity so as to create a more livable society – as, for example, by bolstering the »caring professions«?

Seen against this backdrop, the time has arrived for a fundamental rethinking of the emerging digital society. In the Social Democratic Party's Committee on Fundamental Values, we have subjected the three basic social democratic norms – freedom, justice, and solidarity – to a systematic re-examination in respect to their validity, applicability, and capacity to adapt to the new social formations. Re-examining social democratic values is not a novel undertaking. Again and again, from the start of the industrial age through the dawn of the knowledge economy, from the Imperial era to post-reunification Germany, fundamental values always have been reinterpreted and tailored to changing circumstances in an effort to maintain their core content.

Digitalization has made a renewed process of re-examination necessary for two reasons. First, the ongoing transformation is altering existing patterns of work, life, and learning. Second – and far more importantly – it adds an entirely new sphere to the familiar realms of action: namely, virtual space, in which people spend more and more of their time, both at work and in their private lives. Although this space meshes tightly with the real world, it exhibits properties uniquely its own. In terms of its social and legal norms, its scope, and its »fit« with our societies, virtual space has barely begun to be de-

fined, let alone ordered and regulated. Let us review the outlook for the aforementioned three basic social democratic values in the digital age.

First: Freedom. Since its very inception, social democracy always has been a movement for liberation. As understood by social democracy, freedom is not simply a matter of deliverance from arbitrary treatment and repression, as implied by the concept of defensive or negative liberties, i.e., those that protect a person from possible infringements by the state or society. Freedom also means liberation from want and fear and thus the power of disposition over the material prerequisites for a self-determining life. In other words, it also includes those »positive« rights that promote personal empowerment.

Digitalization has conflicting impacts on our prospects for leading a free, self-determining life. The Internet can enhance the self-organization of social minorities and foster new forms of participation and inclusiveness, in addition to increasing our sovereignty over our living environment. At the same time, digitalization exhibits the »paradox of freedom« that dates back as far as Plato: Without regulation, greater scope for freedom means the few strong will have greater discretion to do as they please and the weak will end up with less freedom.

Thus, digitalization opens up new spaces in which interests take shape and get articulated. The scope for freedom enjoyed especially by small groups widens. But as masses

An open society needs protected spaces, trust, and confidentiality

of data continue to grow exponentially, the potential of digitalization to jeopardize freedom becomes apparent. Every person leaves behind a digital footprint, and the data involved can be mined by ever more refined algorithms. The upshot is not only that human behavior can be predicted with mathematical precision, but even that social relations become quantifiable parameters. There are two sources of interest in such data. Private companies seek to maximize their profits, while the state wants its secret services to keep people under surveillance. Although the range of interests here differ, the effects are similar. They aim to make human action completely transparent.

But what happens to an open society when social relations become completely transparent or »naked,« as it were? In a word, it becomes unfree. Privacy is the prerequisite of autonomy. Truly free decisions are only possible when we can be sure that not all our actions are publicly accessible. As Juli Zeh has so aptly expressed it, »When you are stared at from all sides, you forfeit any chance of developing freely.« An open society needs protected spaces, trust, and confidentiality, as well as the certitude that individuals get to decide for themselves what they choose to reveal to others and what not. That is the only way in which such a free society can develop.

So what should be done to make best use of digitalization's potential contributions to a free society while minimizing the risks it poses? At this point we need to look more closely at the actors with the greatest interest in making individuals transparent and predictable and rendering society »naked« to private corporations and state surveillance.

When it comes to preserving a free society, state actors play an ambivalent role. They are the ones that have driven surveillance to a point that even George Orwell could hardly have imagined. This is especially the case with the »five eyes« – the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. And yet we cannot do without democratic state structures to negotiate and implement the framework for the digital society. The institutions of the European Union could play an especially important part here if they would only recognize that there is a need for action in this area and do what needs to be done.

Turning our attention to corporations operating in the private economy, we must take into account the technical infrastructure itself. Crucial European data links are in the

hands of British and American companies that, in turn, have been penetrated by the secret services of their respective countries. To cite Peter Glotz, writing back in 2000, anyone who does not wish to see the »most important branch of industry in the twenty-first century signed over to a handful of international conglomerates has to talk about public infrastructure and public goods.« For the time being, that would imply that net neutrality must be guaranteed.

Nevertheless, the decisive issue will be the way in which one deals with data themselves, the »raw material of the twenty-first century.« Here too, there is a problematic tendency for a few companies to secure data monopolies. Naturally, those companies desire to increase their profits, and to do so they need to use, combine, and market increasing amounts of data. But for the sake of a free society this interest has to be contained – an enormous task facing European civil society.

Second: Justice. What does justice mean in an age when access to the networked world increasingly has become the prerequisite for knowledge, career opportunities, work-related skills, and social consensus-building?

Digitalization has put tremendous stress on labor markets. As argued persuasively by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, the so-called Second Machine Age makes possible giant leaps in productivity that also will cause significant job losses. This is so because a major portion of the tasks that today are performed in an office or on the production line soon will be automated. Although the long-term consequences of the digital revolution are still being passionately debated, experts generally agree that we should be concerned about serious short-run bottlenecks in labor markets. Consequently, there is an urgent need for government to anticipate what might be coming and try to influence its direction. If jobs become obsolete or job classifications change completely, proactive labor education and labor market policies will become crucial.

The organization of labor and distribution across the entire society must be reconsidered

Yet the organization of labor and distribution across the entire society also must be reconsidered. Will the digitalization dividend make a few individuals obscenely rich while drastically ratcheting up the pressure on labor markets for the vast majority? Or will it lead primarily to a restructuring and rebalancing of labor and leisure across the board? Essentially, these are questions of distribution, and as such they pose a direct challenge to the way that social democrats conceive of justice.

Third: Solidarity. For the workers' movement, solidarity presented the opportunity to enable freedom to flourish even under conditions of inequality. Because people were willing to share in the lives and fates of others, dehumanizing circumstances could be made more bearable through joint action. Solidarity assumed a more concrete, palpable form in the social welfare state. In many respects the age of digitalization has changed the conditions governing solidarity-based cooperation. As the public sphere becomes more balkanized, jobs migrate out of traditional workplaces, new demands are placed on the social welfare state, and libertarian discourses grow more powerful, solidarity becomes both more difficult and more necessary to attain.

In this day and age, the public sphere is being throttled, which puts particular pressure on solidarity. Social networks, search engines, and news items aimed at a single user or a subset of users lead to a blinkered vision of the broader social reality. Solidarity implies a willingness to step into the shoes of other people, above and beyond what moral obligations would require. But that kind of empathy becomes less likely as we lose sight of the other.

The workers' movement faces immense challenges today, not least because of the migration of jobs out of old-style factories and office buildings. In many cases the physical

locations in which solidarity traditionally blossomed have been shuttered. New forms of solidarity-based organization for the »click and cloud« workers so far remain underdeveloped. Nevertheless, labor unions have begun to adapt successfully to the new circumstances and are finding preliminary answers to these questions.

There also have been enormous upheavals affecting national social-welfare states. If American cultural trends become a model for digitalization in Germany and Europe, then the institutionalized solidarity characteristic of European welfare states is open to (re)negotiation. One hears from Silicon Valley ever more frequent calls for an unconditional minimum income guarantee grounded in libertarian principles. That proposal is not intended merely to solve macroeconomic problems arising from the supply side of the digital revolution; after all, every supply ultimately requires a corresponding demand. It also reflects a libertarian understanding of social organization. Proposals to introduce a basic income imply that the existing package of state-funded social welfare services either should be trimmed back or eliminated altogether. In effect, this version of a basic income would erode social solidarity, leaving individuals to fend for themselves against life's risks. In this respect, the proposal saps the foundation of the European social welfare state model: collective protection against the vagaries of unemployment, illness, and old age.

Such attacks on time-tested welfare state institutions show how important it is for social democrats to try to refashion both the principle of solidarity and its institutional forms for the digital age. Technological change requires increased social cohesion if we are to make the fullest use of its inherent potential while insuring ourselves collectively against its dangers. However, libertarian notions of »every man for himself« already have found a wide audience.

Our brief inventory of the challenges posed by digitalization to social democratic values has aimed to clarify the Janus-faced character of current trends. While offering the prospect of global freedom and progress, digitalization also exposes us to unprecedented limitations and dangers.

The revelations about the activities of the NSA & Co. have demonstrated impressively just how vulnerable our digital communications structures really are. As consumers we are aware of myriad minor and major attempts to swindle people on the Internet. As politically engaged citizens we know the force and defamatory power of a shitstorm. And as Europeans we value the multi-dimensional plurality that shapes our identities, one which is put at risk by the monocultural leviathan that one might call the »California ideology« as advocated by the big Internet corporations. All of these observations« reveal the ambivalence and vulnerability of European, German, and even social democratic values in a digitalizing society. And our investigation makes one other thing obvious: Whoever wishes to uphold the validity of fundamental social democratic tenets must try to shape the course of digitalization. Social democracy once humanized industrialization and put the forces that it unleashed in the service of prosperity for the entire society and in support of individual rights and liberties. For that reason, social democracy is well positioned – indeed, is obliged – to take on the responsibility for shaping the digital future.

(This article is based on a project being carried out by the SPD's Committee on Fundamental Values.)

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Roger Liddle / Florian Ranft

On the Brink of Brexit

How the referendum puts the future of Britain and Europe at great risk

On June 23, citizens of Great Britain will vote on a referendum to decide whether the country will remain a member of the EU or not. Following successful negotiations at the EU summit in February, the British Prime Minister cemented Britain's special status and returned to London with a small package of reforms in his pocket. They include a four-year waiting period for migrants from other EU countries before they can gain access to certain social services, a guarantee that Britain will be consulted whenever members of the euro group make decisions that might affect London, and a final refusal of Britain to participate in any further deepening of European integration.

Analyses of the EU summit suggest that a great deal is hanging in the balance. The future of David Cameron, of Great Britain, and even Europe is supposedly at stake, since, despite the accord between Cameron and the rest of the EU premiers, the outcome of the referendum is still very much in doubt. Currently, proponents and opponents are tied in the opinion polls, although approximately a fifth of the population remains undecided. The compromises reached at the summit are unlikely to change opinions much. How could David Cameron maneuver Great Britain and the EU into this fraught situation, and what are the dangers of a possible Brexit?

The pledge to hold an in-out referendum on Britain's EU membership was something that David Cameron never intended to make. A central part of the analysis that Conservative modernizers came to believe was that a main part of the reason why the Conservatives lost three successive general elections in 1997, 2001 and 2005 was their perceived obsession with Europe. In a key speech, shortly after Cameron was elected leader of the party in December 2005, he could not have been more emphatic: »Instead of talking about the things most people care about, we talked about what we cared about most. While parents worried about childcare, getting the kids to school, balancing work and family life – we were banging on about Europe.«

Since going into opposition in 1997 the Conservatives had opposed the ratification of all four European treaties that the Labour government signed and pledged that, under them, Britain would »never« join the euro. When Cameron became leader no one imagined he was a pro-European enthusiast given that he had joined the Conservative head office in the Eighties at a time when Margaret Thatcher emphasized her EU skepticism and later went on to advise Norman Lamont and Michael Howard, both leading Euroskeptics. Yet for all that, it is difficult to believe that someone of his naturally conservative disposition would see his place in history as leading Britain out of the European Union. Yet Cameron has never faced up to the anti-Europeans in his party head-on. He has paid a high price for this as prime minister.

The Eurozone crisis in 2010 and 2011 brought back the European question to British, and more specifically Conservative, politics with full force. Many Conservatives wanted the euro to fail: George Osborne deflected that pressure by arguing that the more federal integration was necessary if the euro-zone was to survive and Britain should go along with this as long as we could re-negotiate a »new looser relationship« as members of the EU. This led to a Commons vote in October, 2011 in which over a 100 backbench

Conservative MPs called for an in-and-out referendum. Cameron was forced eventually to offer an in-out referendum on Britain's membership by the end of 2017 in advance of any general treaty change. In his Bloomberg speech in January, 2013, he made a well-argued, measured case for a »reformed EU« with which many people across Europe would agree, particularly on the center right, in business and among northern member states.

However, the increasing salience of immigration as a political issue continued to give a massive boost to the UK Independence Party, an upsurge that culminated in their

Political pressure from the right

victory as the first place party in the May, 2014 European parliamentary elections. Nigel Farage, UKIP's populist leader, made an explicit connection between immigration and EU membership, arguing that Britain could never regain control of its own borders as long as Britain remained a member of the EU. Cameron was forced to pledge that in his renegotiation he would somehow deal with the issue of free movement and in December, 2014, came up with a package of policies that included restrictions on access to in-work social benefits for EU migrants.

The majority of the British public is not fanatical in their opinions of the EU. They are genuine skeptics in a way members of the political class who describe themselves as Euroskeptics often are not. In the three years prior to the general election in May, 2015, polling suggested that public opinion had shifted to be significantly more positive about Britain's membership of the EU. The figures varied according to polling company, but the trend was clear. However, the refugee crisis, particularly the scenes of chaos at Calais, as well as Europe's seeming inability to get a grip on its borders have led to a sharp narrowing of the polls. A recent poll shows that public opinion is closely split over remaining in the EU, with 41 % compared to 38 % in favor of leaving and 17 % who are undecided.

Although »Europe« played a minor role in the May, 2015 general election campaign, it will become the most important issue in British politics from this autumn until the referendum. A decisive factor that will make it more difficult for pro-Europeans than in 1975 to convince voters to stay in will be a press that is today predominantly hostile to the EU, in particular to free movement and European identity.

It is also still unclear to what extent the Conservative party will divide over the referendum. David Cameron and George Osborne will make a case for Europe, emphasizing the great potential for British business on the continent. On the other hand, leading figures who are potential candidates for the Conservative succession to Cameron against George Osborne, such as Theresa May, the trenchant Home Secretary who has made it her mission to reduce immigration, and the popular Boris Johnson, currently Mayor of London but also an MP and keen to join the Cameron cabinet once his mayoral term is over next May, will not decide which side to back until the results of the renegotiations become more certain.

Aside from these intra-party uncertainties, a big new wave of populism triggered by a resurgence of the refugee crisis in the summer of 2015 could also mark the end of Britain's EU membership. The picture is complicated here. Although the strident anti-immigration populism of Nigel Farage has strong appeal (to roughly a fifth of voters), that appeal simultaneously affronts many others. Public attitudes to migration are nuanced. Objections to migration would be much diminished if there were seen to be »fairer rules.« Pro-Europeans can make a powerful argument in that the anti-Europeans assume they can win free trade with Europe outside the EU, but not have to allow free movement.

Yet Switzerland, often held up as an example of a successful European country that has kept itself free of the »incubus« of the European Union, is home to far more EU migrants than Britain as a proportion of its population. As with any referendum there are also concerns that voters could end up using the results of the balloting as a confidence vote to express discontent with the self-referential political class in Westminster.

In case of a »no« vote there is much to lose for both sides, the UK and EU. For the UK a vote to leave would mean that it would lose access to its most vital trading partners and the single market, which represents a far higher degree of economic integration »behind the border« than could easily be achieved through free trade, since it depends for its existence on a complex body of European regulation. As Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, put it in a recent speech, Britain has benefited economically more than most other member states from its EU membership, especially as a magnet for internal investment from the rest of the world and the EU. In any case Brexit would leave Britain as »rule taker rather than a rule maker,« as it would still have to comply with the great majority of EU regulations if businesses were to continue trade with the EU (Pat McFadden/Andrew Tarant: *What does Out look like?*).

The stakes for everyone are high

The great risk for the EU lies in the fact that, in times when economic and political power is shifting away from Europe, the EU itself would be seriously diminished without the UK's economic weight, global reach and vision, transatlantic affinity, and military capability. There is also a more direct political argument. If Grexit was worth avoiding because it would have compromised the irreversibility of European integration, how much bigger a gift would Brexit be to anti-European populists throughout the EU? It remains in the interest of EU members to keep Britain in the EU, but at what price are other countries willing to submit to Cameron's demands? And even though Cameron has wangled a compromise, the race is still not over, either for him or for the EU. So the plot thickens.

(This article is based on a study by Roger Liddle and Florian Ranft entitled »Brexit – what is at stake for the EU and Great Britain.« Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin 2015.)

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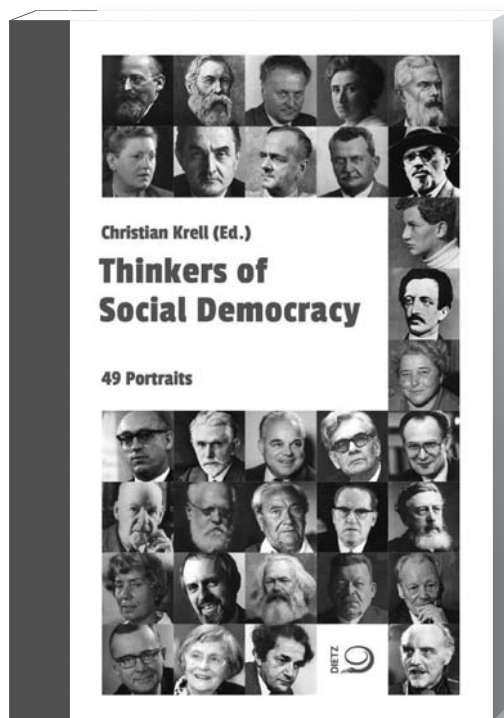
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