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# Editorial

There has been a flurry of activity in the European Union during the past few months. In fact, many people would say there has been too much. More than a small dose of pessimism is beginning to make the rounds, and not just of the variety that we associate with the demagoguery of right- and left-wing populists. The Continent appears to be getting used to those rabble-rousers. One might say that they are perceived as an unavoidable byproduct of the contradictions inherent in the process of politically integrating 28 countries. After all, each of these imports its own long history and traditional identity into the novel enterprise of creating a pan-European community. What is actually at stake here, then, is the palpable loss of balance between the centrifugal forces disrupting the Union and the forces of cohesion that help maintain it. While the former are burgeoning and multiplying, the latter can be mobilized only with great difficulty. Although the centrifugal forces are all very different in nature, they operate in the same ominous direction. The left attacks the loss of the Union's social qualities, while the right rejects supranational sovereignty as such. We must then add to these broad trends some more specific national centrifugal tendencies, including Hungary's anti-liberal authoritarianism and England's temptation to return to its former splendid isolation. Finally, there are fundamental cross-cutting conflicts over the issue of how to deal with the millions of refugees unexpectedly streaming in from the crisis-stricken regions on Europe's doorstep. Even more than in previous decades, one detects a generalized feeling of regret over the lack of genuine European leadership in the member countries. Europe is seen as a piece of complex machinery that makes thousands of rules but lacks a soul that could infuse the whole with solidarity, guidance and future-oriented magnanimity. As long as that continues to be the case, political Europe will be doomed to derive its legitimacy exclusively from its ability to bestow more and more new benefits on all and sundry. In the long run that cannot turn out well. As several of the essays in this volume suggest, it will take the efforts of the strongest members of the Union to find a way out of this dilemma, and for now that means Germany and France. They will have to assume initial responsibility for supplying the most urgent public goods in the community in cases where it is clear that everyone will benefit fairly from their actions. Such goods include an effective system of economic governance with its own budget as well as a solidarity-based social policy. The latter should take seriously the basic social rights to which the EU subscribes and make sure that the people now seeking refuge in the European Union are shown the appropriate solidarity, i.e., integrated humanely and generously into the societies of all the member states.



*Thomas Meyer*

Thomas Meyer  
Editor-in-Chief and Co-Publisher

## The Winds of Change are Blowing in Cuba

It is an equation with two big unknowns and a lot of little ones. If everything goes according to plan, early in 2017 U.S. President Barack Obama will pass the torch to either Hillary Clinton or her Republican opponent after eight years in office. One year later, around the beginning of 2018, political bodies in Cuba will be required by the constitution to select a successor for the current head of state and party chief Raúl Castro, who by then will be almost 87. The latter has held the top offices in Cuba since 2006 when his brother Fidel fell ill. In the meantime the brothers will want – indeed will be compelled – to create facts on the ground in the time they have left, ideally working with and not against each other. They will try to set the course of future American-Cuban relations, seeking to reduce tensions between the two neighbors.

The new era now underway started with a pre-Christmas bang on December 17, 2014. Right after a representative of the United States government in Washington let it be known that the Cuban government intended to free 53 political prisoners, Obama and Castro had a phone conversation, following which they announced simultaneously on TV the end of the old hostility and the impending resumption of full diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana. »We will end an outdated approach that, for decades, has failed to advance our interests, and instead we will begin to normalize relations between our two countries,« Barack Obama said, and added for the benefit of the troglodytes on both sides »the Cold War has been over for a long time. I'm not interested in having battles that ... started before I was born.«

These were the first direct talks between a U.S. President and a Cuban head of state since diplomatic relations were se-

vered on January 3, 1961. The first official personal encounter took place barely four months later, in April of 2015, at the seventh summit meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Panama, which Cuba had been invited to attend once again 43 years after it was expelled at U.S. insistence. Not only was there a handshake between Obama and Castro, which both sides characterized as a historic gesture; the two leaders also sat down for talks before the eyes of the global public.

»Obviously there are still going to be deep and significant differences,« Obama remarked at the conclusion of the summit. Castro concurred, adding that »... we are willing to discuss everything, but we need to be patient, very patient.« But he put on an optimistic face and expressed his conviction »that Obama is an honest man.« It became evident just how serious the United States was about normalizing relations with Cuba when it emerged that, just before the meeting of heads of state, the U.S. Department of State planned to inform Congress that it intended to remove Cuba from the list of »state sponsors of terrorism«, a sort of blacklist to which the Reagan administration had assigned the country back in 1982. By the end of May, the State Department followed through. Republicans in Congress allowed the 45-day period for objections to the removal to lapse, which meant that, after 33 years, there were no more obstacles in the way of ending Cuba's association with the unsavory company of countries such as Iran, Syria, and Sudan. That gesture paved the way for the resumption of diplomatic ties, and perhaps eventually an end to the economic embargo that has been in place against the island nation for 55 years.

It is anybody's guess when that time will come, however. At the urging of hard-

liners from the Cuban exile community, the embargo was tightened sharply and internationalized by the Helms-Burton Act in 1996, passed during Bill Clinton's presidency. Flouting international law and relying on its own arbitrary judgment, the United States arrogated to itself the right to impose painful sanctions on all firms and their managers active in the American market that ignore the embargo and do business with Cuba. The United States went so far as threaten the German shipowning firm Hapag-Lloyd's vessel »MS Europa« with exclusion from all U.S. ports if it should call in any Cuban ports during a Caribbean cruise.

Fidel Castro's victory in the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, his expropriation of American property, and his alignment of Caribbean socialism with communism as practiced in the former Soviet Union inflicted a profound and enduring insult on the rather narcissistic economic and political elites of the superpower to the north. Moreover, the stubborn refusal of the Cuban leadership under the Castros to submit to American ideas about freedom, the liberal market economy, democracy, and human rights was taken highly personally in Washington. So personally was it taken that the author of the embargo act, Fidel Castro's nephew and then-Republican congressman Lincoln Díaz-Balart, managed to insert into its paragraph 205a the bizarre section 7. In it the law states unambiguously that a lifting of the economic embargo will not be considered until there is a »transitional government« in Cuba in which neither Fidel nor Raúl Castro is included, and which conforms to the values of the parliamentary majority in the U.S. Congress. The latter requirement means, among other things, that »demonstrable progress« must be made toward »return of or compensation for confiscated U.S. property.«

No one can predict how the successor generation to the political elites on both

sides of the Strait of Florida will handle the Cuban-American legacy in the aftermath of a political reset. Will they continue the old ideological campaigns or act pragmatically? What kinds of claims for the return of former property will be lodged against Cuba by once-exiled Cuban private citizens and their descendants or by companies based in the United States that were expropriated in those days? The members of the Cuban *nomenklatura* and their offspring hardly will want to relinquish their privileges and sinecures voluntarily. That is all the more true of those who perhaps labored long and hard for very little money in order to earn a modest living for themselves. They may be dwelling under the roof of a house that, 55 years ago, belonged to someone – or his/her relatives – who now resides in Miami. For decades now, both sides have been juggling figures that continue to climb into the billions, with each side claiming that the other should pay, either for economic losses or expropriations due to the revolution or else for the damages and devastation inflicted on Cuba's socialist economy by the economic embargo. Perhaps it would be a good idea to allow these claims to offset and then write them off? Or maybe the German process of reunification could set a partial example here? It is said that some people in Cuba followed that process very attentively. Nevertheless, its essential features were oriented to the Western system and the jurisdiction of a parliamentary democracy and free market economy.

However ready the Cuban elite may be to countenance reforms and a cautious opening to the market economy, there is one thing it will never give up: its Caribbean socialism, an authoritarian-parliamentary-communist one-party system run by a patriarch or, eventually, by a political protégé whom he has molded. The latter might well advocate more up-to-date, modern, and maybe even more liberal views and thus be able to win the sympathy

of the critical portion of the populace. In order to gain backing during the transition, such a leader would have to offer the youthful populace the prospect of forging connections to the external world, while at the same time holding onto and developing further the positive accomplishments of the revolution, such as the country's exemplary educational and social welfare system. The Vice-President and designated successor to Raúl Castro, Miguel Díaz-Canel from Santa Clara in central Cuba, at the age of just 55, might have the right stuff for such an assignment. If Cuba were to have a leader who fit this description, one might expect to see an evolution similar to that in Vietnam, China, or Myanmar in the middle term, although it would not have the upbeat tempo typical of those places, which would hardly be a match for the Cubans' Caribbean temperament.

The country is caught between stagnation, retrogression, and progress. Everywhere, people wish that something or everything would change, but at the same time they hope that it won't change

### *Battle with the hydra*

too much or too quickly, although they may keep that desire to themselves. It is a paradoxical state of affairs. In addition, they fear that they will lose their free health care, social welfare benefits, and educational system, and they worry that the country will plunge into chaos, as Eastern Europe did after the collapse of communism. Nor should anyone underestimate the power of corruption and the shadow economy, which is flourishing marvelously in these times, and the total revenues of which have likely long since outstripped the official GDP. There are no shortages on the black market. Those crop up only where economic activity is run by the state. One side of the story is, of course, the average salary, always cited with pity, which amounts to perhaps 20 or 30 euros a month converted. But the other side is that very few Cuban families lack access to the dollar or the

official currency for dollar exchanges, the CUC or Cuban Convertible Currency. The fact that a parallel economy has gradually entwined itself around the entire island like a kudzu vine is due less to the highly-developed criminal imagination and energy of Cuba's people than to sheer desperation plus mismanagement of the centrally-directed economy. Although no one would care to admit it, the shadow economy is a blessing nowadays. Without it, the country would collapse. But trying to do away with it would mean a battle with a hydra-headed monster.

To be sure, at this point the government is making vigorous efforts to enlarge the private sector of the so-called *cuenta propistas*, i.e., those who work on their own account, and to grant a greater degree of small-scale entrepreneurial freedom than would have been imaginable just a few years ago. Yet what has emerged from all this, aside from some good restaurants and lodgings in the country, is rather more touching and picturesque than trend-setting. Even when many of these quite imaginative small businesspeople earn good money and occasionally even pay taxes, that is far from being enough really to move the country forward. By global standards Cuba teeters on the edge of an economic abyss. More than two-thirds of the population is under 30, with more than three-quarters of them having been born after the victory of the revolution on January 1, 1959. They want innovation, they want freedom, they want to live like their cousins over in Florida or in Spain, or their contemporaries in all the countries that send tourists flocking to Cuba, drawn by the charm of a place where time has stood still, everything seems old-fashioned, and genuine friendliness still prevails. The post-revolutionary generations finally want to modernize their country. What is lacking all over Cuba, whether in the large state-owned sector or the small-scale private economy, is investment capital, and that

can only come from outside. But to attract it, there will be a political price to pay in addition to the interest on loans.

Digital technology offers one example. The antediluvian condition of the state-controlled Internet is typical of the many things that could be improved almost overnight with foreign capital. But it is precisely this interface between modernization and stagnation that exemplifies the rigidity and resistance shown by the party-state and

### *Interface between modernization and stagnation*

security apparatuses to changes that threaten their hold on power. The agricultural sector provides another striking example.

Although its fertile soils should enable Cuba to feed itself, the island is less and less able to do so. Farming and livestock-raising are either quite backward or have fallen into ruin. At best, half of the available land is being cultivated and used, and even that in primitive ways. One reason is that the other half of the land gradually has been overgrown by impenetrable, thorny scrub that keeps spreading unchecked. Besides that, despite state incentives, young Cubans would rather do anything than become *campesinos*. This leads to a state of affairs in which this extremely fertile island has to import nearly 80 % of its food every year, mainly from the United States, and must pay cash in advance even for that. For years now, U.S. presidents have allowed food exports under a standing exemption from the embargo.

To raise agricultural production to a level at which the nation could feed itself and to avoid letting a large portion of the harvest – already meager enough – rot on its way to the consumer, Cuba urgently needs people and machinery. The infrastructure is antediluvian. Agricultural vehicles, trucks, roads, warehouses (including some with refrigeration), slaughterhouses, merchandise management systems, and distribution centers are all lacking. In short, Cuba needs everything that enables effi-

cient production and marketing. And the cultivation of sugar cane, once the sole economic miracle of the revolution, is dead. It is a wonder that cigar production and export still flourish. Because good business opportunities beckon in the areas of food, agriculture, and forestry, the powerful U.S. farm lobby, generally Republican-leaning, has been exerting pressure on American policy toward Cuba for two decades. The shift began in the mid-nineties when George Ryan, then a folksy governor of Illinois who cared little about travel restrictions, organized direct flights to Cuba with two planeloads of businessmen, mostly from this Midwestern »redneck« state. Ryan and his entourage of 500 came to pay their respects to Fidel Castro, who henceforth had new friends, while the Cubans had more food to eat. Even the changes announced by Obama came about due to lobbying by the farm bloc and agricultural machinery lobby.

Once Cuba was removed from the list of states that sponsor terrorism, the country had easier access to international loans. Cubans have also been encouraged by Obama's announcement that he would get around the embargo by issuing additional special exemptions easing Cuba's access to urgently needed construction materials, agricultural equipment, and infrastructure. In the meantime the American government also has loosened travel restrictions even more for U.S. citizens headed to Cuba. It has increased the cap on the value of souvenirs from the Caribbean island from \$100 to \$400 and will even allow the previously-banned import of cigars and rum for personal use. Furthermore, the government has quadrupled the limit on remittances to Cubans from \$500 to \$2000 per quarter.

As early as the first few months of 2009, shortly after taking office, Obama was already proclaiming a new strategy toward the countries of »America's former backyard,« Latin America, which was then



in the midst of a lurch to the left. Of course, six years were to pass before the handshake in Panama. Yet it is not as though there were no communications during the intervening period. There were ongoing secret talks at many different levels between Havana and Washington. As we now know, the Vatican, in the persons of Pope John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis, played a crucial mediating role in those negotiations. The latter, especially, deserves the lion's share of the credit for the breakthrough. Although Fidel Castro was raised by his mother as a Catholic and got a Jesuit education, after the victory of the revolution in 1959 he pronounced a revolutionary anathema on the clergy on account of its support of the Batista dictatorship, throwing all priests out of the country. But then, as he aged and had to confront his country's struggle for survival following the collapse of the Soviet empire, it seemed to him an opportune time to return himself and his country to the bosom of the Church. That move now seems to have paid dividends for both the Castro brothers and Cuba at large.

On the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in January of 1998, Castro reopened the long-closed doors of the churches to Cuba's faithful, also quickly expanding the range of political operations entrusted to the diplomatically skilled Cardinal Jaime Ortega. Fourteen years later the German Pope Benedict XVI returned the favor, honoring him and his brother with a visit to Cuba and a moving private audience for the Castro family. And Fidel's fellow Jesuit, Pope Francis, has announced that he will visit the island in September, 2015. This will be the third visit by a Pope to Cuba within just seventeen years, which may already set a new record. After an audience with the Pope in the Vatican recently, the head of state and atheist Raúl Castro proclaimed himself so impressed by the Argentinian, that he even hinted he might rejoin the Church. In con-

trast to other Latin American countries, only half of Cuba's population is Catholic. However, the Church in Cuba by now has achieved such a remarkable degree of authority even over the powerful that it has almost become a second political party in the country alongside the Communists. Its discreet pastoral activities have not been without effect even in politics, when human rights issues are at stake. In that sense it is to some extent even a substitute for the weak opposition, which, if anything, has lost some of its influence in the wake of the Panama handshake.

As has long been the case, the other and surely more important factor in stabilizing the regime is the military. Here, too, despite all differences, the Castros assumed a defensive posture vis-à-vis the United States after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

*Important factor  
in stabilizing  
the regime:  
the military*

Ever since 1996, at the urging of Raúl Castro, high-ranking military officers on both sides have been meeting occasionally for a discreet exchange of views, essentially ignoring the Helms-Burton Act. These gatherings of retired American four-star generals with active officers of equal rank from the Cuban Armed Forces (FAR) in Havana were organized by a think tank in Washington known as the Center for Defense Information (CDI), now merged with the Project on Government Oversight. Such trans-border issues as combatting the drug trade and terrorism and dealing with refugees came up for informal discussion. But the main focus was on fostering a relationship of mutual trust between the two sides for the day when Fidel Castro might step down. The Americans' chief concern was to dispel Cuban fears of U.S. military intervention. Meanwhile, the Cubans managed to convince the Americans that one part of Latin America's largest armed force had been detached for service in agriculture. Raúl Castro's slogan for the opera-



tion, »beans not cannons,« expressed its goal of ensuring the population's food supply after the cutoff of deliveries from the Eastern Bloc, which once fed Cuba.

Another part of the FAR began to re-structure itself successfully as a major tourism enterprise, thus taking on the task of obtaining hard currency for the depleted treasury. In this way too, the FAR helped to ensure the regime's survival. In any case the Pentagon and the CIA were later able to report that the Cuban Armed Forces no longer posed a threat to the hemisphere. But just as before, the FAR is the crucial stabilizing factor for Raúl Castro in domestic matters. One consequence of the *período especial*, the Special Period of a »wartime economy in peacetime« that commenced during the nineties and endures to this day, was that more and more military men have been filtering into civilian political institutions. Generals are now taking over key ministries, a tendency that has accelerated since former defense minister Raúl Castro assumed the presidential scepter. The trend continues even today and has led Bernd Wulffen, former German ambassador in Havana, to conclude that we are witnessing a stealthy, gradual drift toward a military dictatorship *sui generis*. Such a regime would be prepared to guarantee the continuity of the system once the Castro brothers have left the scene. The military would also be prepared to respond in case this or the next U.S. administration expects too much from the newly launched rapprochement.

At any rate, the Cubans today are open to whatever others have to offer them. With its eleven million inhabitants, Cuba is already an interesting middle-term market that has enormous tourism potential. What is more, with its well-educated and cheap labor force it is highly suited to be the workbench of and entrepreneurial springboard into the whole Caribbean basin including the southern

*Interesting  
middle-term  
market*

United States. For some time now there has been a busy revolving door in Havana as Russians, Chinese, Canadians, Spaniards, Italians, Central and South Americans, and especially Brazilians flock to Cuba with money, know-how, and hunger for profits. Taking advantage of the cover given by Obama's announcement, French President François Hollande also lost no time traveling to the island. Even the Turkish president Recep Erdogan, who is convinced that Muslims and not the Catholic Columbus discovered America, surprised his colleague Castro with the pious wish to have a mosque built in Cuba.

For its part, the European Union, following in the wake of the United States, is hoping not to miss out on the Cuban connection. For over 20 years the EU had gotten itself deeper and deeper into a political blind alley by adhering to the »common standpoint« advocated by former Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar, who maintained close ties to the Cuban exile community in Miami. That standpoint was defended with special vigor by the then-foreign minister of Germany, Joschka Fischer and some Eastern European politicians after the arrest of 75 opposition figures in Cuba in 2003. Democratization of the country was made into a precondition for economic, political, and cultural support by the EU. As Germany's Eastern Policy and the CSCE process should have taught us long ago, the proper approach is just the reverse. But now, suddenly alarmed by Obama and spurred on by the Netherlands and France, the EU's Foreign Policy Representative Federica Mogherini hurried to see Castro, offering him assistance in carrying out economic and political reforms. Raúl Castro must be pleased with all this, because it makes him a good deal less dependent on conditions set by the United States.

And how has Fidel, the one-time *máximo líder*, responded? Now 88 and in poor health, he has been put out to pasture in

the Siboney quarter on Havana's west side. He watched on TV as Obama offered him and his brother a kind of Christmas gift. But then it took him five weeks to bestow his patriarchal blessing upon this turning point in global politics, and then only with convoluted words. »I don't trust the policy of the United States, nor have I exchanged a word with them, but this does

not mean I reject a peaceful solution to conflicts or the dangers of war,« he wrote on January 27 this year in a letter to the dear »comrades« of the Cuban Student Association (FEU). The only thing that now appears to be a bulwark preserving an aging revolution is the Helms-Burton Act. But of course it does not have to last forever.



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*Maria João Rodrigues*

## **Germany and the Future of Social Democracy in Europe**

Essentially, the project of social democracy is to make sure that unrestricted citizenship for all is made compatible with the dynamics of a market economy. Within that economic order, each and every citizen is to be guaranteed the same economic, social, and political rights. Here it is crucial to recall that this project came to fruition at a time in which a paradigm shift in the evaluation of social inequality was already underway. The poverty of any given individual cannot be explained satisfactorily by attributing it solely to that person's failings, an explanation dear to the hearts of conservatives. Poverty is also the outcome of problems caused by the system in which it arises. Hence, it is important to create conditions that make possible greater equality of outcome or at least greater equality of opportunity.

This paradigm shift in the way that poverty and inequality were understood laid the foundation for the creation of the social welfare state, a redistributive tax system, and growing regulation of the free

market, just to mention the most important social democratic achievements.

Even today this founding principle of social democracy has lost nothing of its validity, although new kinds of challenges make it necessary to come up with different problem-solving approaches. One such challenge is to be found in globalization, a phenomenon that has been proceeding apace since the nineteenth century. Today, social democracy can be implemented effectively only if nation-states can reach agreement about a broad range of trans-border political instruments. Such multilateral collaboration is the only source from which standards might emerge that might be capable of regulating and preserving the global financial system, international trade and its cash flows, and the labor market with its migratory movements, as well as labor and environmental standards, and intellectual property regimes.

When we consider the current political agenda of the United Nations (Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Develop-

ment Goals, climate change accords, WTO agreements) or that of the G20 (regulation of financial markets, strategies for growth and development), it quickly becomes apparent that the social democratic project has fallen far short of achieving its aims in the European Union. The conservative parties argue that national states have a limited sphere of responsibility: adapting to globalization and enacting the structural reforms needed to do so. If the conservative viewpoint were to prevail, national states would have to dismantle the social welfare state and rescind many market regulations. As a rule, such measures would lead to greater social inequality both within and among states. Social democrats cannot evade the discussion about necessary reforms. They must acknowledge that changes are necessary to meet the challenges of globalization. But they must fight for their own agenda, which would focus on improving the economy's growth potential, enhancing sustainability, and reversing social inequalities. A reform plan of this kind will have to set aside the requisite investment funds for future-oriented development.

*Social democrats  
must fight for  
their own agenda*

Social democracy always has been a crucial source of ideas and impetus for European integration, yet it also has helped to erect protective barriers against fluctuating global forces and constraints. Social democratic ideas have contributed much to the gradual creation of an open yet still regulated European market, a common trade policy within the EU, as well as a shared framework for European models of social policy and European institutions designed to broker common, trans-border interests. Of course, in this process the social democratic model always had to confront other political approaches, but in the main its impact on all participating countries has proven to be positive.

However, this win-win situation evaporated for all the member states of the

European Union in the wake of the recent financial crisis, especially that of the eurozone. From that point on, the policy of trying to rescue the euro and European integration has led to an increase in social inequality both within and among the individual member states.

*The demise of the  
win-win situation*

Conservative parties like to shift the blame for these trends onto those citizens and member states that allegedly have not tried hard enough to address their own problems. Here too, the social democratic perspective necessitates a second look at the usual conservative explanation. What if citizens or states make major efforts to extricate themselves from the tough spot they are in, but fail? This may happen for any number of reasons: They may not have access to the loans they need to make crucial investments, or they may lack the financial leeway to carry through the investments they have already begun, or perhaps they are no longer able to compete on global markets, lack access to health care services, or find that their most talented young people have left the country to pursue better career and life opportunities abroad. And what if all of these problems occur at the same time?

In fact, this very scenario has played out in several regions and countries of Europe, especially those in which the eurozone crisis has hit hardest. Under these circumstances, the social democratic project can no longer be achieved. Almost inevitably, then, political support for social democracy will evaporate in precisely those regions and countries.

So what can social democrats do in countries where they still participate in government, at least for the time being? To begin with, of course, they should fight for their own agenda, and that of their electoral base in their home countries. But that alone is no longer enough. Sooner or later, the decline of social democracy in other

member states will ultimately lead to the dismantling of social, financial, and environmental standards across the entire European internal market. Eventually, these upheavals will undermine the social welfare state, regulation of market competition, and higher social standards even in countries in which social democratic parties still have some influence on government. For that reason social democrats in Europe must take joint action. Social democracy will not survive on this continent unless European integration is pushed to a higher stage. Thus, the social democratic agenda calls for the expansion and rebalancing of the economic and fiscal union combined with a deepened and more fully democratized political union. These considerations are especially important in Germany, the cradle of social democracy.

If social democracy is to survive, the need for fair treatment of all member nations within the European Union ought to suffice to convince social democrats across all national boundaries that a change of course in the eurozone is urgently necessary. The eurozone should see to it that policymaking responsibilities in the financial markets, the economy, and social and political matters are coordinated, not allowed to drift apart as they are now. That would entail not merely the full implementation of the banking union, but also intensified coordination of economic policies designed to boost demand, as well as the development of a broadened, tax-supported European financial policy. This new financial resource could facilitate the merging of

structures by supporting reforms and investments while sheltering member states from economic shock waves. All this presupposes enhanced coordination and consolidation of taxation in Europe.

Unquestionably, an evolution of this kind cannot be achieved unless democratic legitimacy is enhanced and citizens are more fully included. What arguments might social democrats marshal, especially in Germany, to gain broader support among the voters? I have sketched out a few of the central lines of argument in the following list:

- The euro's exchange rate is an especially important issue for Germany.
- Germany's economy benefits more than others from the European single market.
- The German economy would suffer if Germany were surrounded by countries in recession.
- The German welfare state system could come under pressure if (internal European) migration continues to increase.
- High unemployment figures and social tensions in other countries undermine the political acceptance of European integration generally.
- That, in turn, weakens Europe's cohesion and thus its geostrategic influence.
- Europeans will have to close ranks to deal successfully with growing external challenges.

We need new lines of argument to insure the future of social democracy in Europe. Europe needs a New Deal, which can only be negotiated by social democrats.



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Mario Telò

## Germany's Leadership Role in Europe – a Dilemma

After tough negotiations carried on in a tense atmosphere, the European summit held in Brussels on July 12 finally yielded three political accomplishments as well as some worrying reports. First, the compromise between strict adherence to the letter of the treaty on one hand and solidarity toward the Greek people on the other, avoided a Grexit. Moreover, the political nature of the compromise underscored the fact that the common currency is something more than what Robert Mundell called it: an »optimal currency area.« Instead, it is a political project; hence, Greece's exit from it would have been a political and geopolitical error. A political decision in favor of »more Europe« was taken in the face of two kinds of risks: the escalating danger of internal disintegration and a weakening of the EU's ties due to international factors. The former risk, internal to the EU, stems from Euro-skeptical movements in nearly all countries and a possible Brexit in 2017; the latter encompasses a rising tide of migration, a menacing »Islamic State«, and Putin's power politics. Even though it still appears uncertain whether the Greek bailout will work, it is an important step in the right direction.

Second, the compromise was achieved thanks to the pronounced multilateralism operating within European institutions. The primary role of institutions was reinforced because the alternative route – bilateral negotiations between Angela Merkel and Alexis Tsipras and the technocratic leadership in the European Central Bank – was not taken. To be sure, Mario Draghi pursued an expansive monetary policy held in high esteem by the international community (quantitative easing), but it would be a mistake to refer to him as the »the EU's most prominent political leader,« as many media sources have done. Here

too, one can speak of the compromise as a victory of politics.

Third, the contents of the agreement give evidence of willingness to compromise and an inclination to exercise self-restraint in the face of a high-drama situation. It is extremely important that Wolfgang Schäuble's proposal for a temporary Greek exit was not approved. Even though it might have seemed reasonable from an economic standpoint, that option would have been a political wrong turn for Europe. We should also regard it as a positive sign that the Greek extremists and the European populists took a drubbing. Greece will be able to remain in the eurozone and didn't have to accept humiliating terms to do so, such as the proposed Greek Guarantee Fund, required to be headquartered in Luxembourg, would have been.

Obviously, the Greek crisis has not been put to rest, but a certain degree of financial stability has been achieved, with several new investments from abroad in the works. Furthermore, negotiations to restructure Greece's enormous debt burden are being conducted in the public eye.

On the other hand, there are some political dangers that must be identified. A series of important editorials and interviews in newspapers such as *Le Monde*, *Corriere della Sera*, and *The Guardian* (the last by Jürgen Habermas) have lamented the collapse of mutual trust in the Union. At fault for this is not only the Greek government, which cynically applied game theory for months on end, but also the German government, which (Habermas claims) »gambled away in one night all the political capital that a better Germany had accumulated in half a century.«

I would not speak of a collapse but rather of a decline that, without serious countermeasures, might become very

dangerous indeed. For historical reasons Germany, the pre-eminent power in the EU, requires political trust much more than, say, Brazil does in Mercosur, Indonesia in ASEAN, or South Africa in the African Union.

To reach the desired turning-point, we cannot avoid a courageous and innovative international, pluralistic debate. When in just six years a country has granted the major portion of a 250 billion euro loan to Greece and in addition agreed to another loan for 87 billion, but is still accused by most countries in Europe and even the moderate press (e.g., *The New York Times*) of exercising dictatorial power that humiliates loan recipients, one has to conclude that the marketing of German policies has failed. What is to blame for this – the propaganda of Yanis Varoufakis and Alexis Tsipras or the striking images of social dislocations caused by austerity policies in Greece? Are we perhaps witnessing an international conspiracy against Germany or is the Federal Republic simply incapable of »selling« its leading role in Europe and the world?

Germany's bad image in Europe and the world is a huge political problem not only for Germany *but also* for the EU. Worse still is the fact that Angela Merkel's declining popularity outside Germany is accompanied by a growing, mutual domestic wave of criticism, in which she has been branded as »too generous« not only by the populists and the Alternative for Germany (AfD), but even by her fellow CDU/CSU deputies and influential economists.

Given this double-barreled criticism, it makes political sense that the Federal Chancellor should receive support from Sigmar Gabriel and the SPD. For Europe and the Federal Republic it would be important politically to deepen the splits between Merkel and the hardliners. To be sure, Wolfgang Schäuble must be respected as a competent, pro-Europe minister.

However, his idea of a »core Europe,« initially expressed in 1994 in the so-called Schäuble-Lamers paper, displays the small-minded mentality characteristic of the Bonn Republic and is wholly unsuited to Germany's present role in the EU.

Schäuble is certainly well aware that Germany's history precludes it from assuming a classic leadership role in Europe. In this regard he is correct. But it is impossible for Germany to evade the new regional and global responsibilities. They require a new interpretation of concepts such as civil power and constructive hegemony, precisely to avoid concentration on power relationships alone. Neither a »transfer union« nor a mutualization of national debts would be a viable alternative. Germany has to take seriously the implications of its leadership role on several fronts. The numerous advantages for the Federal Republic of a common currency need to be explained to domestic audiences again and again. Furthermore, the EU must be strengthened considerably as an economic and political union, which would entail a further delegation of sovereignty in matters affecting the economy as well as foreign and immigration policy. These steps represent the only way to legitimize Germany's role as leader and offer new hope to our fellow citizens of Europe.

Without making this politically fundamental decision, the EU and Germany will reach a dead end. In point of fact, the »unwilling hegemon,« as *The Economist* dubbed Germany, will generally be regarded as a dictatorial power by the public, even if that judgment is unjustified in many ways. The road from the current sad, negative image toward a constructive, self-confident leadership role will be long and complex, but it remains open. Here in Europe we need a broad, many-faceted discussion about this historic challenge,

*A democratic  
and constructive  
hegemony*



and it should begin in Germany. A democratic and constructive hegemony is, in fact, the very opposite of domination and relations based exclusively on power.

Three things are necessary for a constructive and democratic leadership role. For one, many leading scholars (such as Robert Owen Keohane, a former president of the American Political Science Association) believe that a true leading power should offer the peoples of Europe »international common goods,« just as the United States did for a Europe in ruins with the ten-year-long Marshall Plan (1947-1957) and for Germany in 1953 when restructuring that country's debt. Financial stability, made possible by the European stability mechanism and other solidarity-based measures, is certainly necessary, but obviously insufficient. The Juncker Plan, which provides for an investment of 315 billion euros, offers a good opportunity: A European job-creation plan to spur qualitative growth could finally prove that the German model is compatible with economic growth in the EU.

Secondly, if one pays heed to intellectuals such as Antonio Gramsci, the development of constructive hegemony features a central role for culture and the life of the mind as well as respect for the other nations' perceptions and efforts to achieve consensus. Why was this possible in the USA during the 30 »golden years« after the Second World War (on a global level), and why shouldn't it be possible in Germany now on a continental scale?

Germany has great cultural potential. Admittedly, the German Federal Government, the states, municipalities, universities as well as private and party-affiliated foundations and the Goethe Institute invest substantial sums of money to make German culture better known abroad. Nevertheless, we have to recognize that this is still not enough for Europe's leading country. Additional shrewd investments are needed to enhance this soft power.

To make it more likely that such projects will be accepted, they should be implemented in the context of partnerships. More cultural and scientific joint ventures and networks of experts should be funded, even if German institutions do not play the leading role in them. A variety of programs should be initiated that will encourage Germans to move abroad and vice versa. Many more language courses should be offered for free to publicize the diversity and democratic vitality of German civil society.

Third, it is indeed correct to respect EU rules, yet that alone does not constitute a European policy. In the wake of seven years of crisis, it is certainly time to reform the EU's economic policy control system, but deliberate steps must also be taken towards a political union.

On June 15, the five EU-level presidents presented their plan to complete the economic and monetary union. According to that plan, institutional changes are needed to strengthen the eurozone: The Euro-group should have a permanent president, a European treasury should have its own budget, and the democratic legitimacy of the eurozone should be enhanced, e.g., by giving the EU Parliament a say in budgetary-policy coordination.

Certainly, France is the premier partner in a stronger EU leadership, but only under two conditions. First, Germany should take seriously the important speech delivered by François Hollande on July 14, which advocated an economic government for the eurozone. But the French would also have to accept fully the implications of that position. It would entail that they surrender aspects of their national economic sovereignty, something that has been a taboo topic for the French public so far. Second, the age of the two-nation directorate is over. Other important countries, such as Italy, Spain, Poland, or the Benelux states, should be capable of playing an active role within a collegial leadership group.



An institutional reform of the EU is on the agenda. The measures that have been carried out thus far are insufficient, while intergovernmentalism, which has become more and more important, has drawn increasing criticism. Considering the major financial challenges facing the EU, government-level negotiations in the European Council certainly are necessary. In some instances, intergovernmentalism and supranationality are closely linked to one another. On the other hand, the new »Merkel method« of economic governance must be complemented by a more central role for the Commission and by multilateral – not hierarchical – coordination. As Martin Schulz, Matteo Renzi and other have urged, the European Parliament should be strengthened to enhance overall legitimacy.

The SPD has an historic opportunity to make its mark in European policymaking; indeed, among all political parties it alone is capable of pursuing a plausible third way between leftist-Keynesian rhetoric and the moribund austerity policy associated with

*The role of the SPD*

Schäuble. The SPD should develop a realistic alternative that emphasizes policies of genuine qualitative growth and employment in Europe as well as a political union, all to be built on a supranational – and not only national – European and economic policy. That is the only way in which the European Socialist Party, currently paralyzed by internal feuds and its considerable credibility gap in the debtor countries, could launch a revival of its political fortunes. Many other parties as well as social and intellectual forces could have a hand in the renewal of the European Socialist bloc.

In Germany it makes sense to support the Grand Coalition. However, that should not mean that the SPD abandons the goals of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt: i.e., to influence the Federal Republic's international role by reasserting its own fundamental values and offering concrete

proposals. Only the SPD can convince Europeans that its alliance with the ordoliberal CDU does not entail a commitment to neoliberalism, but rather to a social and innovative vision of the European future.

How might it accomplish that work of persuasion? For one thing, it could communicate certain ideas more effectively: especially the fact that Europe, too, benefits when Germany upgrades its internal market, raises the minimum wage, and counteracts the tendency toward a dual labor market. Moreover, it is well-positioned to explain to the German public why it should heed the warnings of the European Commission that a foreign trade surplus of 7% is incompatible with a leadership role in Europe. At the EU level, it could also create a vision of how economic power and competitiveness might be combined with social cohesion, such that the European social market economy can hold its own against China, the USA, and other rivals. Is the SPD prepared to concentrate and summon up the requisite intellectual energies?

In contrast to what has happened under Merkel and Schäuble today, the »German model« should be presented to our 500 million fellow citizens of Europe with a clear message: that it represents the optimal combination of the social welfare state, competitiveness, worker co-determination, environmental policy, sustainable energy policy, technological innovation, modern educational and administrative systems, a dynamic research policy, gender justice and equal rights regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

For another, the SPD could work out a realistic path as the core of a Common European Foreign Policy, going beyond clichés of the »timid Teutons« on one hand while, on the other, avoiding the arrogance typical of stronger countries. In light of the dangerous international conflicts that we currently face, Europe cannot play the role

of a big Switzerland. Instead, it needs to lead the way toward a new regional and international policy featuring regional integration, global multilateralism, and the power to engage in peacekeeping and peace enforcement, including having available

the necessary means, all to be attained by coordinating the capabilities of the individual EU countries. This approach would be more suited to the German leadership role and provide more credibility to a new phase of civil power.



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## **Putin's State**

Russia annexed Crimea in February of 2014. Barely a year later, the Russian President said he had brought the formerly Ukrainian province back to its proper home. Is he the master of hybrid warfare? Is he the official advocate for the interests of the Russians in Crimea? This year, on March 19, tens of thousands of people fêted Vladimir Putin in Red Square. He told the applauding crowd that Russians and Ukrainians were »one people«. What sort of turning point are we witnessing in East-West relations? Crimea was a gift given by Khrushchev to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic in 1954, based on a decision reached by the leadership of the Soviet Union. In 1994 Russia accorded recognition to that transfer under international law. Vladimir Putin loves Russian history. Does he see himself as someone who wants to correct a deeply-felt historical injustice? Does he think that he has a mission to put the Russian idea into practice?

A few hundred meters from where the national fête was held, Boris Nemtsov was gunned down from behind. So far the investigation has turned up no leads. Will any light ever penetrate the dense thicket of absurdities surrounding the state's claim

to live by the rule of law? In the speeches that were delivered before Nemtsov's funeral, one could discern a certain pervasive tone. The struggle between European and Eurasian ways of life has flared up again as Russia seeks to define its identity. The dividing line between the two alternatives has been well-defined for quite a while: it runs between democracy and autocracy. With the re-founding of the Russian Federation in 1991, it seemed as though the path toward Europeanization had become irreversible. However, a strong civil society never emerged to overcome the ills of corruption and the national predisposition to anticipatory obedience toward whatever power managed to fuse itself with the state. Thus – once again – the entrenched predilection for introversion trumped the forward-looking forces of transformation.

Even the compulsion to modernize, recognized as necessary, has so far been incapable of easing Russia's way into global modernity. Instead, the power elite has reversed course. But there has been a mismatch between Russia's old role as a hegemonic superpower dependent on superannuated insignias of military might, and the grass-roots-based, inwardly felt yearn-

ing for an autonomous life free from superfluous anxieties and crippling hatred. Has the leaden gloom lifted that settled over so many Russians in the wake of Boris Nemtsov's death? How will society handle attempts to attribute meaning to the death of this former star of the political stage in Boris Yeltsin's Russia as the country grapples with its own future? President Putin has given hints about how the deed should be interpreted. Even before investigations by police and public prosecutors had begun, he wanted to point officials in the right direction. He claimed that the murder should be understood as a provocation. But who is the agent provocateur? What were his intentions? Whose interests were served by Nemtsov's death and what were those interests? These presidential language-signals may serve to complete the picture of a »directed democracy« that underlies Putin's understanding of the state. The country's majority is supposed to realize that the man in charge knows what he is doing. You can rely on power. It will pursue any agent provocateur relentlessly regardless of his origins, domestic or foreign.

This is the way demonizing images arise. Immediately after Nemtsov's death, Vyacheslav A. Nikonov, a member of the State Duma and leading thinker in the foundation Russki Mir, spoke of a murder with religious significance. The alliance between secular and spiritual powers was to be given symbolic reinforcement. Further insinuations from Kremlin circles created the impression that dark powers outside of Russia may have been arrayed against the inner core of Russian power, thus confirming the demonizing images. At the Sakharov Center an alternative picture of Russian reality was presented before Nemtsov's funeral. Here European Russia was assembled – a nation that would like to form a new partnership with the European West. The goal is to develop a participatory form of democracy. Those

with a Western outlook know that they are still a minority. And they also know that a truncated, authoritarian-technocratic version of modernization is beckoning from just south of their Far East, one that has blocked the channels of participation and engagement. Many of those who are on »our side« fall victim to this temptation. Both points of view claim to understand how the strands of tradition influence the way in which Russians understand themselves. They are grounded on historical experiences. The basis of their legitimacy evidently shifted when the Russian Federation entered the world of states a quarter century ago.

A Russian future that followed the Nemtsov model would be premised on Russia's accession to European-style modernity. By contrast, Putin's version of contemporary Russia features limited openings accompanied by autocratic surveillance. The two viewpoints are starkly opposed: closure as the strategy of imperial thinking versus openness as the approach of a trans-European mentality. The seed has sprouted. A professional assassin shot Boris Nemtsov in the deep shadows of the Kremlin walls. The other Russia was supposed to be executed along with him – the Russia of openness, democracy, and liberality. Anyone who was acquainted with the murder victim will remember him as a fighter for European values. This man, who was gifted in analytic thought, sharp as a tack, and tough, was able to expose the ills that plagued Russia's transition from a communist dictatorship to Putin's regime of directed democracy, which is gradually becoming more and more of a farce. He was aware of the Russian president's lust for power, since both he and Putin had been advanced by Boris Yeltsin so they could prepare themselves to assume leadership roles in the state.

Did the ex-KGB man get the promotion because he alone could offer an iron-clad guarantee that the first president of

Russia would not be punished for corruption after he left office? Corruption and contempt, the true insignias of Russian power, have fostered a climate of fear ever since Putin's second term in office began. Indeed, the longer he rules, the more palpable the fear becomes. Whether this execution was ordered or whether someone anticipated that the order soon would be given, the point was to incite terror. Putin's path as President of the Russian Federation has been marked by a bloody trail of political murders. These started with the death of Sergei Yushchenko, a decent social liberal who wanted to follow a prudent but decisive course of internal reform in the Duma. Having been a military man previously, he understood the dangers that the war in Chechnya posed for Russia's internal development. In April, 2003 he was gunned down. Scarcely a year passed without some pesky opponent of Putin meeting with an unnatural death. What dark logic is behind this violence?

Quite apart from any conspiracy theory, it seems clear what impact this coldblooded operation upon the heart of the Russian political system is supposed to have: assassination as censorship. Critical journalists, politicians who will not kowtow to Putin's regime, civil society groups – all are to be intimidated. Internal enemies have been identified. Anyone who opposes the rule of directed democracy and makes use of the

### *Assassination as censorship*

constitutionally guaranteed right to free expression will be threatened. On February 10, 2015 Boris Nemtsov told the Russian news agency Sobesednik: »I fear that Putin is going to kill me.« He was convinced that Putin had given the green light for the war in Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea appeared to him to be a blueprint for the aggression in eastern Ukraine. And he talked openly about things that, for him, were more than mere surmises. He wanted a European Russia capable of relying on its own energies to free itself from

the terrors of the past. Because he thought he could see that Putin was leading Russia into ruin, he wanted to offer the counterimage of an alternative future for his country. He was certainly aware of how difficult it is to make the power of civilized reason prevail over the madness of nationalism. He tried to set an example through the clarity of his own thought, the openness of his character, and the resoluteness of his courage. And he knew which failures, in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise, might be laid at his doorstep. For far too many Russians, the leap into wild-west-style capitalism ended in a drama of downward social mobility. The majority sought a way out, spurred on by the growing rage often felt by people who believe that they have been hoodwinked.

Behind the glittering facade of this world, a narrow elite has walled itself off. It guards the treasures plundered during the transition from the communist to the capitalist systems, defending them with mafia-style violence. The clashing tendencies of Russian society give rise to anxiety. Every murder committed against political dissidents serves to deepen the divisions. Intra-state enemies lists attest to power. The person who assumes the right to control the rights of others counts as sovereign. By contrast, traitors are those who insist upon their right to have rights and who lay autonomous claims to freedom. That is the reason why Anna Politkovskaya had to die. She wanted to expose the lies behind Ramzan Kadyrov's rise to power in Chechnya.

Boris Nemtsov's goal was to strengthen the pro-modernization forces in Russia, and he hoped to achieve it by cooperating with the European West. For those reasons he saw the Ukraine as a bridge to a future of partnership. He was less influenced by geopolitical ambitions and more inclined to reinforce cross-border ties. His plea for a new kind of modernization put him fundamentally at odds

### *Russia's European Future*

with Putin's conception of the state. Boris Nemtsov became an internal antagonist because he had begun to develop an alternative image of Russia's path.

What will happen to Russia in the aftermath of this shock? Will the opportunity for reflection offer a way out of the country's internal divisions, perhaps leading to an open, self-critical discussion? All over Russia there are civil-society groups waiting for this to happen and prepared to

participate in it. The European West can also take part, more energetically than it has hitherto. There is no reason for Western participants to be overbearing and smug. One could decode Russia's domestic troubles as the mirror image of the risks inherent in Western modernity. Did the murderer want his shots to kill the yearning for a different Russia too? This murder will not culminate in despair. Russia's European future cannot be assassinated.



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## **Will a New Eastern Policy Help End the Ukrainian Crisis?**

### **A reality check on hopes for peace**

The time has come to take stock. We are still in the midst of the most profound crisis in relations between the West and Russia since the end of the Cold War. Fighting continues and people are still dying in eastern Ukraine – civilians as well as armed combatants, right in the middle of Europe. We are still preoccupied with crisis management; nevertheless, discussion has long since begun about matters that extend beyond the day-to-day. We had become accustomed to a European peace system that served its purpose. We had come to rely on the assumption that, despite a few differences of opinion, clashing interests, and conflicts, the relationship between the West and the Russian Federation would continue to be characterized by partnership and trust. That period in the relationship endured for 23 years, from the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 until the be-

ginning of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. For years, numerous official documents described ties between the two as a »Strategic Partnership.«

Even if all thirteen points of the package of measures agreed to in Minsk on February 12, 2015 were considered to have been implemented – and currently that would be a wildly optimistic, best-case assumption – it would be a profound illusion to think that the status quo ante could be restored. Minsk embodies a roadmap to a diplomatic and political solution to the Ukrainian conflict, but it brackets out the Crimean problem for the time being. And it cannot possibly heal the wounds that have been inflicted already on the body of the European peace system by shattered trust and what appears to be an unlimited appetite for confrontation. A different political process definitely would be required to accomplish those things.

In this context, a few actors and observers are staking their hopes on a kind of second phase of Eastern and detente policies. The achievements of those policies in the 70s and 80s are still remembered fondly in all quarters. They led us out of the Cold War. After Konrad Adenauer's policy of integration into the West had restored trust in Germany among its Western partners, the Eastern and detente policies of Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr did the same with our Eastern neighbors, especially Poland and the Soviet Union. The process of building trust was twofold. The Federal Republic offered binding recognition of the new borders within Europe, and it normalized relations with its eastern neighbors via the Eastern Treaties, including granting legal recognition to the German Democratic Republic. Parallel to those moves, the states of Eastern Europe were brought into the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), a process that ultimately was supposed to lead to binding commitments and the spread of Western values such as peaceful conflict resolution, democracy, and civil rights. The process was completed by the signing of the Helsinki Accords (the Helsinki Final Act) in 1975 and the Charter of Paris in 1990. One side got recognition of postwar realities and an insurance policy against any form of irredentism, while the other side saw in the CSCE codes a normative basis for a European peace system, the rules of which held out the prospect of political stability and civilized political solutions in cases of conflict.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the confrontation between the two military alliances, the European political system continued to evolve on the basis of those policies. Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* policies, Moscow's acquiescence in German reunification, and Boris Yeltsin's reforms all seemed to be preliminary steps toward the continuing development of a sustainable

partnership based on trust between the West and the Russian Federation. Close political, economic, and social ties developed between the EU and Moscow. It was no secret that the presidency of Vladimir Putin imbued the Russian political elite with an increasingly critical view of the West's treatment of Russia. Nevertheless, Russia's blatant violation of the rules in annexing Crimea and its ongoing military support of separatists in eastern Ukraine came as a nasty surprise. What seems especially difficult to explain is the extent of Russia's willingness to take risks, given that its rule violations are likely to have economic and political repercussions. Russia appears even to have taken into account the possibility that its behavior could trigger a military conflict that might not be containable.

Assuming for the sake of argument that Minsk-style crisis management might help defuse the current conflict, could a second detente and Eastern policy accomplish anything in this situation, and if so what might it look like? It is quite obvious that a reappraisal of relations would have to come first, and that would not be easy for either side. Such a reappraisal actually would amount to a therapeutic attempt to make up for the deficit that has emerged in the political discourse between Russia and the West. There has been a lot of talk, but no understanding. Or else the interlocutors understood each other, but nothing came of it.

In Russia, new priorities have been established before our very eyes that have led to a sharp tension between Russian thinking and behavior, on the one side, and the norms of the European peace system, on the other. Russia wants to be recognized as a global power of the same rank as the United States. It is assumed that Russia can lay claim to such a status only if it controls a larger territorial sphere of influence than it does now. From the Western point of view, this kind of thinking in classic geo-



strategic categories is a relic of the past. Or, will we have to come to grips with the Russian perception that sees in NATO's and the EU's eastward expansion and the EU's regional strategy (e.g., the »Eastern Partnership«) nothing more than classical territorial sphere-of-influence politics, i.e., the attempt to expand the Western sphere of influence at the expense of Russia's? Russia's geostrategic approach to foreign policy has also led it complain about double standards. Whenever our Russian discussion partners hear Western lectures about their violations of law and international legal norms in Crimea and Ukraine, they never fail to reply with countercharges about Western behavior that contravenes international law in the cases of Kosovo and Iraq. To them, the sole difference is that, because the United States is a global power, its immunity from sanctions is respected by everyone, whereas the West does not hesitate to impose such sanctions on Russia.

But there is a new element here. We are no longer dealing with an internal discourse carried on within a relatively small Russian *nomenklatura*. No matter how it may have come about – and no one would question the role that carefully controlled and effective propaganda has played – the Russian populace strongly supports Putin's incorporation of Crimea and his confrontational policies toward the West. The former move in fact is characterized officially as »reunification,« while the latter is portrayed as the defiant act of a nation that has »gotten up from its knees.« Russian popular support for Putin's foreign policy is a political fact that the current Russian leadership can count on. A majority of the populace is ready to bear the costs of such a policy of confrontation.

In keeping with this image, President Putin has been at pains recently to portray Russian policies as responses to external threats and to assure his audience that, by contrast, no one need feel threatened by Moscow. Declarations of this kind fit into

the »fighting back« pattern, but do little to put minds at rest in Ukraine, Poland, or (especially) in the Baltic republics, with their strong Russian minorities. There, the annexation of Crimea really has destroyed every shred of trust in the European peace system. As during the Cold War, people now have confidence in »hardware« alone, and would prefer to have NATO combat troops stationed forward than listen to the most recent batch of reassurances about the reliability of the Western alliance's security guarantees. The reintroduction of military conscription in Lithuania can be taken as a sign of this trend. A person could despair sometimes upon realizing how little sensitivity there is in Moscow about how much the Crimean and Ukrainian policies have ruffled feathers among Russia's immediate neighbors. There, Russian policies have cut a swath of destruction, destroyed trust, and fostered feelings of insecurity.

And those are by no means the only challenges to a renewed detente policy, which will have no chance of succeeding unless it is preceded by a thoroughgoing reappraisal of the entire trajectory of East-West relations since 1991.

Despite the pleasant-sounding title, »Strategic Partnership,« Eastern and Western political thinking in this age have drifted very far apart. It will be a Herculean task to bring them back together, one that calls to mind the historical challenge and accomplishment of the Eastern and detente policy of the 70s and 80s. At that time policymakers managed to question ideological dogmas and certitudes in a cycle of conferences held over the course of several years, and to lay a new normative foundation on which all participants could rely, one that proved to be enforceable.

The experiences of those days constitute a valuable treasure trove that we can still use. It may be that we will have recourse to the method of multi-year nego-

*Detente policy  
requires  
political will*



tiation cycles. But the prospects for success will be influenced by another factor: whether the will exists to overcome the present confrontation via a process of political exchanges and to construct a new relationship of trust. In the West, the prevalent attitude is that Moscow just needs to admit that it has broken the rules, to stop doing so, and to renew its commitment to the norms of the European peace system that it so blatantly violated. Then nothing more would stand in the way of business as usual for both partners.

In Russia, numerous verbal commitments to the package of measures contained in the Minsk agreement suggest that there is an interest in avoiding further political escalation at this time, even though one cannot overlook Russia's failure to implement all of the pledges made in that pact. But there are also open and contentious discussions going on about whether it is necessary – or even makes sense – for Russia to enter into a partnership agreement with the West. The Russian leadership appears to be convinced that it has other options: the Eurasian Economic

Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Expansion of the strategic triangle Russia-China-India, and the upgrading of the G20 and the BRICS.

The point is that a new detente policy can be launched only if solid majorities in both the West and Russia really want it and imagine that they will derive benefits and improvements from such a new process of confidence-building, as compared with the status quo ante. By this time, matters have gone beyond the stage at which damage control alone will work. The issue at stake now is whether it is still possible to prevent the emergence of a new political fault line running right through the Eurasian continent. A new partnership founded on trust will not come into being unless the political processes that have brought both sides into the current confrontation have been painstakingly reappraised.

If we think of such a process in the context of the historic Eastern and detente policies and the decades required to carry them out successfully, then we will have to admit one thing: The scale of the challenge is comparable.



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*Joachim Fritz-Vannahme*

## **The Conservatives Won, but the Ship is Listing**

### **The involuntary Europeanization of David Cameron**

The winning candidate was the least of the evils. This formula sums up the surprising electoral victory of Prime Minister David Cameron in the recent British elections for the House of Commons. At the polls British voters decided against the unpopular

Labour candidate Ed Miliband, against the anti-European Nigel Farage, against the pro-European Liberal Nick Clegg – and for the popular Nicola Sturgeon, the leading candidate of the Scottish National Party (SNP).

Really? It is true that Cameron's Conservatives won an absolute majority of the seats being contested and added 28 Members of Parliament (MPs) to boot. However, they won only a slightly greater share of the total vote (0.8%) than they attracted in 2010. Meanwhile, Labour boosted its share by an additional 1.5%, while Farage's UKIP, with 12.7%, gained 9.6% as compared to its previous total, although it won only one seat in Westminster. By contrast, the Scottish Nationalists, a party that garnered only 4.7% of the vote in the United Kingdom as a whole, took advantage of Scotland's special status, winning 56 of the 59 seats allotted to Scotland, mostly at the expense of the Labour Party.

In short, the Prime Minister's electoral triumph was given a right and proper boost by both the plurality voting system and Scotland's special status. Moreover, this victory conceals a profound transformation. In the early 50s, the two major parties were dominant, winning about 97% of all the votes cast. Today they claim only about two-thirds of the vote tally. Back then there were only two Members of Parliament in the House of Commons who did not belong to one or the other of the major parties; today there are 88. Even now, however, two-thirds of the votes cast account for almost 85% of the 650 seats. Taken together, UKIP, the Liberals, and the SNP share about a quarter of all the votes, yet they have very few places on the opposition benches.

Since the Victorian age, the golden rule of Britain's plurality voting system has been »first past the post.« The winner-takes-all rule secured a clear majority for the strongest party, whether Labour or the Tories, while depriving smaller parties of any opportunity to participate in government. For about 130 years this system proved to be stable, unfair, and efficient, but those days are over. Or perhaps they really aren't, as Cameron's victory on a listing ship demonstrates.

The voters made liars out of all the opinion polls, which up until the last minute had predicted a neck-and-neck race and a hung parliament, i.e. a paralyzed House of Commons. Was it instinct that led the British to seek refuge in a grudging vote for the unpopular David Cameron, perhaps because they sensed that their party system was getting increasingly fragmented? Or was it simply distaste for the even more unpopular Labour leader Ed Miliband that came to the surface, intensified by fear of the unpredictable consequences that might ensue if, as expected, the Scottish Nationalists acquiesced in a Labour-led government? The pollsters, who just embarrassed themselves with their inaccurate predictions, will try to explain it to us in the weeks to come.

So what does the Tories' absolute majority portend for Great Britain – and for Europe? Both answers can be summarized in a six-letter word: Brexit. Spelled out, it means a British exit from the European Union. Cameron has promised that his fellow citizens will have a chance to vote on that question, by 2017 at the latest. Until the referendum is held, he would also campaign for a treaty revision to return to the British what they have »lost« to the EU. The Prime Minister hinted that he himself is not even really against the EU or in favor of an exit, but he felt that he had to take into account the widespread skepticism about the EU among his fellow citizens.

Cameron's promise is thus intended for two audiences – the domestic public and Britain's European neighbors – and it is virtually the only concrete project he wanted to be elected for. Not only the roughly three million UKIP voters, but also many voters and MPs among the Tories would prefer to see a European Union without the United Kingdom. At least 60, and possibly as many as 90, of the 330

*A vacuum  
of legitimacy  
is emerging*

Conservative Members of Parliament in the newly elected House of Commons are thought to be Euro-skeptical or even anti-European. In other words, Cameron's triumphal majority is not really all that stable. Thus, a pattern is being reproduced that the *Financial Times* described during the election campaign under the rubric of »The Great Fragmentation«. The *Times* believes that a vacuum of legitimacy is emerging, one that will »be filled by the antis: the anti-elite, the anti-European, the anti-immigrant and the anti-capitalist.«

Sensitive to this mood, Cameron refused to take a clear position on many issues during the campaign. Even today it is not clear which matters he wants to renegotiate with his EU partners and how he could expect revisions to be ratified by 28 countries within a year and a half, at the outside. More generally, during the elections the hot button issue of EU reform was strikingly absent. The most prominent topic of debate was immigration, not so much by refugees crossing the Mediterranean – of whom the British take fewer than almost any other country – but migration within the EU internal market.

This highly-charged issue was addressed under the heading of »social tourism,« an alleged ill that Cameron had already attacked as early as 2014. Note that the mobility of labor counts among those fundamental liberties inscribed in European treaties since the EU's inception. Certainly, a British government can regulate the level of social benefits for immigrants from other EU countries according to national laws, but it must respect this fundamental liberty and the equality of all EU citizens. The EU member-states east of the Elbe and the Danube emphatically warned the newly-elected Prime Minister that he should not meddle with these »sacrosanct rules.«

David Cameron enjoyed creating the impression that he would be able to engineer a »yes« vote in the referendum more

easily if only his European partners would make some concessions to him. He has vested his fondest hopes in Angela Merkel, since she once did speak of the need for treaty revision.

What London overlooks is the fact that Merkel is currently engaged in a project to revise the rules of the game in the euro-zone. And in this context, it is indeed true that participants are discussing whether existing treaties might have to be revised in order to create a banking or fiscal union. But Cameron does not need a reform of the euro-zone, since Britain is not even a member of it. Instead, he wants a treaty revision of the entire European Union. He will not get it before the referendum is held, and that fact marks the beginning of his troubles.

The new government does not merely want to change the rules of the European Union; it also wishes to alter those of the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg. With Michael Gove, Cameron nominated a high-profile critic of the Strasbourg court to be his Minister of Justice. The Tories want to revise the terms of Britain's membership in the Council of Europe, and, in so doing, place themselves outside the jurisdiction of the European Court for Human Rights. But that policy conflicts with the Belfast Agreement of 1998. To prevent a continuation of the bloody civil war between Unionists and Nationalists, the inhabitants of Northern Ireland then were promised additional rights, above and beyond those they enjoyed under the European Convention on Human Rights. Thus, the Conservatives would be driving a wedge both between citizens of the United Kingdom and between Great Britain and the Europe of the Council of Europe.

The growing strength of Scottish nationalism suggests how closely intertwined British domestic and foreign policy are.

## *The impending ordeal*

Since its defeat in the referendum of 2014, the Scottish Nationalist Party has quadrupled its membership from 25,000 to over 100,000. The Nationalists have left no doubt about their intention to put Scottish independence to a vote once again in the event that Britain says no to the EU. Thus, Labour lost Scotland, but so too did David Cameron. A no vote on continued membership in the European Union would, in all probability, lead Scotland to say no to the United Kingdom, thus ending a Union that has endured for over 300 years.

Recently, the self-confidence of the Scots has also bolstered that of the Welsh and Northern Irish. Their assertiveness has also given fresh impetus to the discussion about »Englishness.« »Englishness« is not only a matter of identity; it also involves the question of what system of representation is appropriate for the United Kingdom. One hears Conservatives and, even more pointedly, representatives of the UKIP asking why Scottish MPs should be permitted to vote on bills in Westminster that actually concern mainly the English, whereas no English person is now allowed to vote on Scottish bills, which are to be debated in Edinburgh alone.

The Scottish question is thus both a European and an English matter. Of the 650 MPs in the House of Commons, 533 represent constituencies in England, where

85 % of all British citizens live. Yet, unlike the Welsh, the Scots, and the Northern Irish, the English do not have a parliament of their own. The logical solution would be to create one. But if there were such a thing, it would represent 85 % of the population in a federal system, a phenomenon that would be unique in the world.

In sum, it is not only the European future of Great Britain that is uncertain, but the future of the United Kingdom itself, which is fragmenting along party and regional lines, as well as economically and socially. Although it may sound paradoxical, on most major issues domestic policy in Great Britain is indissolubly linked to its European policy. The UK is internally disunited and economically dependent on the City of London, the world's financial capital. Furthermore, British society, like so many others, is marked by burgeoning inequality. In the EU as well as on the global stage, it finds itself consigned to a marginal role, more by choice than by external pressure. Great Britain may evolve into Little England. At any rate, in this country there is a widening gap between reality and aspiration. A no to the European Union would widen the chasm still more. Even if the answer were yes, a perceptibly more riven Great Britain would be a difficult partner in the EU. The election is over, but we still await the final verdict on Britain's future.



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## Right-wing Populism and the Challenge to Social Democracy

### The case of Scandinavia

»If you come to Denmark, you are expected to work.« This was a slogan adopted by the Danish Social Democrats during their political campaign leading up to the elections on June 18. The campaign strategy focused on making more stringent rules for the granting of asylum, limiting the number of family members entitled to join asylum seekers, and setting stricter requirements for immigrants. The climate in Denmark's immigration and asylum politics had already been rather hot; attacks on a cultural center and a synagogue in Copenhagen inflamed it even more. Many political pundits interpret the electoral campaign in Denmark as a contest to see who has the toughest critique of immigration. The chief beneficiary of this new course has been the right-wing populist Danish People's Party, the big winner in the elections after having garnered 21% of the vote for the Folketing (the Danish Parliament).

During the last few years in Denmark, social and welfare policies have not been the dominant policy issues; rather, migration and integration policies have been the primary focus, as evidenced by the debates about forced marriage, Islam, and the controversy over caricatures.

*Anti-immigration, anti-asylum discourse* In a guest editorial for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the Danish author Carsten Jensen expressed his worry that, in the wake of the attacks in Copenhagen, the voice of tolerant Denmark would be silenced once and for all. If that were to happen, wrote Jensen, the blame could not be laid entirely at the doorstep of the Danish People's Party, one of the strongest right-wing populist

parties in Europe. Instead, he continued, most of the parties in the Danish Parliament shared similar sentiments concerning integration policies, including the Social Democrats.

Not long ago, the great hope of the social democratic Labour Party in neighboring Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre, had occasion to learn how compelling the anti-immigration, anti-asylum discourse in that country had become. Just a reminder: Since 2013, Norway has been ruled by a center-right minority government, in which – for the first time ever – the anti-Islam Progress Party is a junior partner. At a party congress of Norwegian Social Democrats in mid-April, a confident Jonas Gahr Støre demanded that the country accepts 10,000 refugees from Syria over the next two years. The answer came promptly. His party had been polling over 40% support for several months, but now it quickly sank to 35% in opinion surveys, while one-third of party members expressed opposition to taking in the refugees. In short, asylum and refugee policy is evidently a difficult and polarizing field in Scandinavia, especially for Social Democrats.

But even where right-wing populists have so far not joined government coalitions, they still can profoundly alter the climate of opinion; indeed, they can even trigger a parliamentary crisis. This is exactly what happened in Sweden after the 2014 election. The newly elected red-green minority government fell when it could not get its budget proposals through parliament. The reason for this debacle was the behavior of the Sweden Democrats, a far-right party buoyed by its strong showing in the recent election, in which it ex-

panded its share of the vote to 13 %. Rather than abstaining on the budget bill, which is the usual (albeit informal) procedure, the Sweden Democrats voted for the joint budget proposal of the four middle-class opposition parties. In late December, following an agreement between Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and those four opposition parties, new elections that had been announced were canceled. Still, the red-green government in Sweden continues to be fragile. It remains to be seen how far the Social Democratic leader, Löfven, can go in enacting the party's own policy schemes in view of the unfavorable balance of power in parliament. Here, too, the right-wing populists have altered the arithmetic of political power in fundamental ways.

By this time, right-wing populism is well entrenched in all of the Scandinavian countries – even though of course there are differences in nuance on account of each country's peculiar circumstances – and it poses daunting challenges to other parties, not least to the Social Democrats. This comes out most clearly in Denmark. As the Social Democrats began to abandon classically leftist positions, by the late 90s the center-right parties – notably the right-wing liberal Venstre and the Danish People's Party – started appealing to cultural issues, with growing success. Upon the traditional fault line between labor and capital was superimposed a new one focused on ethnically-tinted debates about crime, the role of Islam, and abuse of social services.

The outcome: The Social Democrats in Denmark lost not only the 2001 election, but also the next two elections to the Folketing. Moreover, they lost the allegiance of scores of voters from working class backgrounds who generally held leftist attitudes on economic issues, but tended to be conservative on cultural questions. In addition, debates about immigration and integration policies gave rise to internal conflicts among Danish Social

Democrats about how they should respond to the restrictive immigration course taken by the center-right parties. Should they draw a clear line in the sand or adapt to the anti-immigrant trend? This same controversy pervaded and still pervades the party's constituents, now split into two camps. The polarization of traditional social democratic voters has forced the party into a dilemma concerning the tactics it should adopt to win elections. If concessions are made to the conservative segments of the working class voter base, which seems to be the idea behind the new immigration campaign, that could alienate more liberal and highly-educated voters who tend to support multiculturalism and international solidarity.

On the whole, by the end of the twentieth century the Social Democratic parties of Scandinavia were in retreat on several fronts: interpretive sovereignty, linguistic differentiation, and the ability to describe their own reality. By contrast, nationalist and ethnic interpretations have gained ground and partially filled the vacuum of ideas left by the Social Democrats as they embraced the modernization and globalization rhetoric of the 90s, evocative of old-fashioned faith in progress. So it is not just a coincidence that right-wing populists found especially fertile soil for their political ideas in peripheral rural areas and former working-class neighborhoods in which the slogans of globalization and Europeanization evoked more anxiety than hope.

The Swedish journalist Ulrika Knutson pointed out in the journal *Fokus* that we ought to ask why the Sweden Democrats, of all parties, should have chalked up such landslide victories in the 2014 elections in infrastructure-deficient areas having few immigrants. She argued that defunct bus lines, shuttered banks, and closed post offices were issues that had more than just

*Internal conflicts  
among  
Social Democrats*



symbolic meaning for voters. To seize the political space abandoned by the Social Democrats and other parties, populists need to exploit such social and economic dislocations, since they underscore the perceived or actual gap that has opened up between individuals and their representation at the level of the state.

Another problem afflicting Scandinavian Social Democrats is that the right-wing populist parties have narrowed the range of options available to other parties to form alliances and exercise power. At times they can even play the role of king-

*Play the role of  
kingmaker*

maker, occupying a crucial niche between the major party alliances. In Norway and Finland, right-wing populists already have been invited to participate directly in center-right governments. The gains made by the Danish People's Party, which became the country's second largest after winning 21% of the vote for the Folketing, offset the electoral collapse suffered by the right-wing liberal Venstre – really the main rival of the Social Democrats. Although the Danish Social Democrats again became the strongest party with 26% of the vote, the middle-class »blue bloc« captured a majority of the vote thanks to the right-wing populists. The big loser was the chairman of the right-liberal Venstre Party, Lars Løkke Rasmussen. But – as paradoxical as it may sound – he may very well become the next head of government. Thus, the Social Democratic minority government under Helle Thorning-Schmidt was voted out after four years in office, although its defeat was partly due to the heavy losses suffered by its former coalition partners in the center-left camp.

Even in Sweden, where a Social Democrat has governed since September of 2014, the majority is located mathematically right of center. Until now, however, the four middle-class »alliance parties,« led by the liberal-conservative Moderates, have

ruled out categorically any sort of cooperation with the Sweden Democrats. It is likely that their anti-Sweden Democrat stance also has to do with the fact that the latter party originated in the neo-fascist milieu, and that they (still) favor a liberal asylum and immigration policy that transcends partisan alignments. Nevertheless, the voter bases of virtually all the Swedish parties have become more critical of the country's immigration policy, and this includes the clientele of the Social Democrats.

Another ticklish problem for the Scandinavian Social Democrats is the fact that right-wing populists have portrayed themselves rhetorically as defenders of the social welfare state. They have adopted the clever strategy of painting an idealized picture of the welfare state's past for voters, while making the narrow-minded claim that all recent undesirable trends should be blamed on Europe or immigration. The sociologist Karin Priester is quite justified in saying that right-wing populism displays two of its chief characteristics in robust welfare states, surprising though it may seem. First, the right-wing populists attack what they consider an »insular« elite that they blame, among other things, for selling out the social welfare state. Second, their anti-elitism is accompanied by an »ethno-cultural politics of identity.« That is, social services are to be granted according to ethnic criteria rather than being made available universally. They thus embrace the motto: first our own people, then the others, wherever one decides to draw ethnic boundaries.

The Finns Party thus does not even campaign directly against foreigners; instead, it stumps for a welfare state that would serve primarily Finnish families and the socially disadvantaged rural populace. Likewise, the Danish People's Party, the Norwegian Progress Party, and the Sweden Democrats, despite their divergent economic policies, target the worries about



the social welfare state typical of older people, so that they can play off immigration and asylum policies against welfare state policy. Prior to the 2015 elections, the Danish People's Party positioned itself to the left of even the Social Democrats on some social policy issues, a move that evidently appealed to the voters. In the Scandinavian welfare culture, social security is part of a basic normative consensus. But when a person's own social status seems materially jeopardized, that consensus can morph into its opposite: denigration of the »other« on both economic and ethnic grounds. That is one reason why right-wing populism in Scandinavia has found fertile ground not only among marginalized strata of the population, but actually extends far into the middle class, where fears of status loss and downward mobility are especially pronounced.

Thus, one thing that ought to happen is for Social Democrats to continue their close cooperation with labor unions, in order to bring alarm signals and anxieties to the attention of the parties at an early stage, because the middle levels of the Social Democratic party are no longer as closely attuned as they once were to the life-world of the voting populace. For that reason it is not surprising that the right-wing populists have scored their greatest triumphs precisely in those locales where spaces and communities imbued with social morality

have eroded, and where labor unions and Social Democracy have forfeited some of their organizational capabilities.

The rise of right-wing populism in recent years is, among other things, an expression of the need for security felt by frightened groups in times of inscrutable social and economic change. The progressive brands of social democracy in Scandinavia – which, as in Sweden, gave themselves the additive »the party of the future« – apparently are no longer able to provide a plausible outlet for this need for security. This is the case partly because the lower social strata gradually have lost their attachment to social democracy, in respect to the structures and habits of mind that once bound those classes to »their« party. A deeper reason for the deracination of social democracy is that the Europe issue in Scandinavia has led to dramatic ruptures between the pro-European, pro-globalization party elites and the skeptical electoral base.

Among other things, populism is always a seismograph indicating that something is going wrong in a society. It is an alarm bell alerting us to the fact that the bond between citizens and the establishment has weakened or been torn asunder. Probably the greatest challenge for Social Democratic parties in Scandinavia and elsewhere is to repair or renew that bond.

*Close cooperation  
with labor unions*



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## **Is Morality in Foreign Policy an Illusion?**

### **Deep embarrassment for the EU on the refugee issue**

As more people die a miserable death by drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, the pressure is mounting to formulate a European refugee policy at long last. A cynical correlation? Of course. But a genuine problem of acceptance has emerged. The »see no evil« strategy, which was in its own right an expression of sheer helplessness coupled with various kinds of political parochialism, has come to an end. Where its demise will lead is still anybody's guess. What it should lead to, ultimately, is greater awareness of international issues.

Because it lacked an internal consensus, the European Union deliberately left Italy to grapple with the problem all alone. Certainly, that was a lethal logic, but an effective one from the selfish viewpoint of this or that European capital. It worked only until the point was reached where it was impossible to look away any longer – hardly an unusual sequence of events. And now statistics are coming to light in the media that clearly reveal which EU countries continue to plead ignorance whenever their responsibility to take in refugees is broached.

Some people were not happy to see those statistics shouted from the rooftops. Comparative data have a way of provoking tit for tat responses and counter-demands. For example, experts have long known that Poland, Spain, Great Britain and half of Eastern Europe are not pulling their weight when it comes to showing solidarity and taking in refugees. But diplomats have assured everyone that a loud public outcry (especially from Germany) would make it all the more difficult to find a solution. Unfortunately, one would have to admit that this rule of thumb has stood the test. The minimal consensus that the EU has

managed to achieve so far is pathetically inadequate compared to the scale of the challenge.

This is exactly the way in which many foreign policy matters are handled, time after time – with chronic pretentiousness and soft-pedaling. But stupidity and weakness are not the culprits here; in fact, such policies are intended to be prudent or at least reasonable from the point of view of the foreign-policy establishment. The world of diplomatic relations is like this everywhere around the world. Interests are defined and acted upon after due deliberation. This is the case whether one is dealing with Russia, China, Israel, or the United States and its spy agencies. Plain language is almost entirely ruled out.

But who defines the interests, why and how? Here, things start to get more complicated than they were in times when clear criteria existed for identifying friends and foes. When human lives are at stake, can we still accept this sort of calculating and weighing of interests as the guiding principle of policymaking? And what if the interest in question is really all about not getting drawn into a conflict? Moreover, what if pollsters have confirmed that a majority of the population approves of this interest, regardless of humanitarian concerns? What then?

These questions are not entirely new. But given the refugee drama going on in the Mediterranean, they are questions that are suddenly on the minds of many people, even in the tiniest church congregations. We should interpret this as an opportunity and not as an additional threat coming from within, so to speak.

As our times have become both more bellicose and more opaque, a professional

outlook – or better the avoidance of an outlook – has emerged more and more frequently in the world of diplomacy. Yet this attitude has evoked sheer incomprehension and moral outrage on the part of the public, whenever that the public shines a light on such issues even briefly. How can anyone not address human rights, not rescue refugees, not speak of genocide when that is the right word, and not compensate Greece for Nazi terror. Furthermore, how can one send weapons to the Middle East or give data to US intelligence agencies?

The diagnosis is clear: The two spheres, diplomacy and public sentiment, are diverging. One or another professional

*The disconcertingly  
minimal influence  
of values*

diplomat will say: realistic interest-based policies are increasingly hard to communicate, so it is better not even to try. The public, irritated by this attitude, asks just the opposite question: how can it be that domestic political values have such a disconcertingly minimal influence on the way that the state's business is actually carried out, especially when it comes to diplomatic maneuvering that goes on below the symbolic threshold that captures the media's attention (e.g., state visits and summit meetings)?

There is nothing simple about this issue. The dilemma has become palpable on account of the international wave of refugees. What good will it do in the future to destroy boats, if need be even those directly on the Libyan coast? Perhaps doing so will prevent drowning deaths, but it will just displace the problem a few kilometers southward. How much is that worth from the point of view of realpolitik and/or moral considerations? What will happen to the hundreds of thousands of young, vigorous human beings in Africa who have already begun the journey north and from whom Libyan smugglers will no longer be able to earn any money? Which is the lesser and which the greater humanitarian catastrophe?

For some time now, the availability and control of TV images or Internet videos has become incredibly important in determining the nature and scope of foreign policymaking. The modern liberal societies of Europe have proven to be susceptible to outside influences via the language of images, emotion, and moral suasion. Of course people hoping to migrate make use of those forms of influence in their own interest, on the principle: what other choice do you have but to take us in? And what will happen if gangs of every kind, up to and including ISIS, use those media influences even more systematically in the future to benefit their own causes? Competition to influence the major visual media is among the more crucial factors determining which perceptions prevail. They also help determine how foreign policy alternatives will be weighted in democratic societies, since a democratic polity cannot risk triggering long-term legitimization problems in the domestic arena.

There are simple truths. One of them is that we must resolve the refugee question at its root. Poverty and violence must be confronted in the refugees' home countries. There will be no problem passing a U.N. resolution to that effect as long as it is abstract. But the really serious problem arises when one seeks ways to move forward once the declarations have been approved. It is more likely that the opposite will happen; after all, that is the reason why there are refugee waves in the first place. Here, we should not allow ourselves to be fooled by positive media coverage devoted to well-intentioned individual projects.

Now what? The Western moral reflex is: then we will just have to take them in. One hopes that this principle will indeed be put into practice, without further ado and if possible everywhere in Europe. But it is not sufficient when viewed as a strategy toward the rest of the world. Emergency assistance alone is not a responsible future

strategy. Migration of the (frequently) brightest young people from their countries of origin does nothing to help the latter. Nor has anything resembling a plan emerged on the European side.

And so it is time to think in more principled ways about foreign policy. One reason for this is the evident tendency of diplomatic corps to acquire an independent status vis-à-vis the societies they supposedly represent. At the international level, economic interests and the logic of power prevail in the myriad contact groups, forums, and committees. It is rare to find a populace that has formed its own opinions by independent channels, and when that does happen, it is usually after the fact. TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) is a striking example of this phenomenon, but there are countless other ones. Of course, diplomats will observe comity on issue A because concessions have been made on issue B. That is the whole point of international politics. But to say that out loud? Diplomats might reply that nothing would ever get done in that case.

However, one should not imagine that foreign policy elites conceal interests because they harbor evil intentions. On the contrary, things are much simpler than that: The interest is plain to see. But the public responds most readily to emotions stirred up by the day's news and does not see the broader context that could clarify and illuminate many issues at once. The specialists keep on negotiating. At some point the public reacts with astonishment and counters with its own priorities, demands, clichés or even anxieties. Its reactions are engaged, one-sided, and often radical.

Worlds – of thought, perception, and jurisdiction – separate committed refugee aides from EU-level experts on the right of asylum, who are attempting to harmonize different legal systems and levels of involvement. What the latter perceive as naive

seems to the former a self-evident moral obligation. What strikes the former as inhuman-technocratic appears to the latter as dogged detail work.

In principle there is no way to bridge this gulf. Up to a point it is even necessary in an open, democratic setting. But by now it is obvious that the gap has become too wide. More than ever foreign policy is under an obligation to explain what it does to a domestic audience, and to interrogate and seize upon new ideas from the grass roots of society earlier. But the foreign policy establishment is not really prepared to do this. Then game-changing experiences such as the refugee crisis come along that disgrace Europe, both administratively and morally, down to its very core. Europe embarrasses itself as the whole world watches.

Of course, it sometimes helps to become more aware of a dilemma. Foreign policy, widely-ramified and fixated on interests, often lacks any sense of the feelings of those who are looking at it from the outside. Meanwhile, on the domestic scene the short attention span – usually media-generated – devoted to international affairs is too moralistic. Under those circumstances, no one needs to worry about the difficult business of weighing and balancing advantages and disadvantages. Today one can be for taking in refugees and tomorrow against arms deliveries, the day after tomorrow against G7 meetings and accords with authoritarian leaders generally. It can be soothing to wield this kind of moral club, at least for those who swing it. But what else is gained?

For historical reasons, if for no other ones, Germany is a country that does not enjoy debating its international roles and interests. On this score, while some of its neighbors have distinct, historically ambivalent traditions, they ultimately are more closely attuned to the rest of the world

*A soothing moral club*

than Germany is. For that reason it would be a good idea to broaden the German public's powerful fixation on domestic political perceptions by continually highlighting the European or global dimensions of specific issues.

Geostrategic interests? By German standards that is a downright diabolical expression. Still, they do exist and include energy and raw material supplies, not to mention climate change and disarmament. One should not think of them in isolation from political values, and certainly not in isolation from EU-European solidarity. But if one accepts the idea that geostrategic interests exist, that should not be taken to signal the end of morality in foreign policy.

In light of the refugee waves, it is hard to imagine a coherent foreign policy strategy that would refuse to assume responsibilities outside of the country's borders.

But then anyone who accepts that premise can no longer advocate a strict non-interference principle. Yes, Europe has to interfere, and everyone needs to think through the implications of that insight. It embraces not only implications of a material nature, but also those involving cultural openness and monitoring in matters touching on security policy.

Last but not least: The hundreds of thousands of people who manage to cross the Mediterranean every year bring a message with them for Europe; indeed, they embody that message. For the most part, the suffering and poverty of this world are still geographically remote from us, but they can no longer be kept separate from the world we experience in everyday life. To be honest, many of us try to keep that suffering at arm's length, but it is becoming more and more difficult to do so.



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