

TO BE EUROPEAN IN A GLOBAL WORLD

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The Jacques Delors Institute, in partnership with the Gulbenkian Foundation, organises a high level round table in order to better define the European identity in globalisation: how can we strengthen the European construction asserting our common identity?

In the context of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the Jacques Delors Institute, in partnership with the Gulbenkian Foundation, organised a round table on European identity in a globalising world. Taking part in the round table were Pascal Lamy, President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute, Margarida Marques, Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Viriato Soromenho Marques, Professor at Lisbon University, and Aziliz Gouez, Irish President's speechwriter who chaired the discussion. The conclusions were drawn by Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute. While Europeans generally appear to be united by a development model trying to reconcile economic efficiency, social cohesion, and protection of the environment in a democratic framework, some rather highlight their differences and reject the European project. Can we not, on the contrary, consolidate the construction of Europe by reaffirming our common identity?

The challenges raised by the consequences of Brexit and a deep-seated malaise voiced by a part of the electorate regarding the EU's future, make it incumbent upon us to further this debate on the European identity in a globalising world.

1. Malaise in Europe

The question of the European identity is an old snake that still generates a great deal of debate. Oswald Spengler's declinism in the early 1920s, Freud probing the destructive impulses of civilisation in 1930, and Julien Benda's *Discours à la Nation Européenne* which came in their wake, all point to the passions triggered by the subject. The changing global context is breathing even greater life into them today. Already in 2005, the dual vote against the blueprint for a European constitution in France and in The Netherlands marked a sharp contrast with the euphoria of the 1990s and early 2000s, reflecting people's

malaise over the prospect of globalisation. The crisis in the European identity has now raised its head once again, mirroring growing concern over the preservation of national identity. Brexit, the British citizens' choice, experienced as a crisis in the European project itself, is an even more traumatic event. It points to the gap that exists between Europe's establishment and its people, whose enthusiasm the current European Union project no longer manages to stir up. That project can no longer be based either on the rejection of war, the memory of which is fading, or, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, on the rejection of communism. With Russia's intervention in the East and with the refugee crisis in the South, it is inevitably witnessing the return of the border issue.

While the globalisation process is often experienced as a source of anxiety, it tends to be seen as something external, something from which we can shield ourselves. And this, even though national consumption and production trends fall well within the process of global interdependence.

In this context, people find it hard to see Europe as a protective focal point against these challenges and threats (migration, financial capitalism, job relocation and unemployment); in fact they actively associate it with them. They see Europe as globalisation's Trojan Horse, highlighting the gap between Europeanised social and economic practices on the one hand and political affiliation based on Europe's rejection and real or perceived economic decline in contrast to the dynamism of the world's emerging economies on the other. Aziliz Gouez set the terms of the debate thus: are we facing a decisive, historic turning point for Europe, one of ethnologist Arnold van Gennep's liminal moments? Can this dangerous transition phase, undermined by economic and cultural insecurity or by the terrorist threat, not be likened to a rite of passage? Will it end up facilitating

integration or, on the contrary, will it result in the exclusion and sacrifice of a scapegoat?

Echoing the words of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, Margarida Marques highlighted the deep-seated demographic and economic changes that Europe is currently experiencing and that are contributing to the prevailing sense of anxiety on the continent. While it is true that Europe is economically strong thanks to its huge internal market, its economy, though still powerful, is losing steam. In fifteen years' time not a single EU member state will be part of the G-7; while a handful may, perhaps, linger on in the G-20. In demographic terms, Europe accounted for 20% of the world's population in 1900 while today it accounts for only 5% to 6%, and will account for a mere 4% of the 10 billion people it is thought will make up the world's population by the end of the century. The Europeans are very unimpressive in demographic terms. The world is no longer eurocentric and it is going to be even less so in the future. The challenge is structural in nature far more than it is related to current economic circumstances. Therefore the response to that challenge must not give way to resignation, which would lead instead to the destruction of our heritage of peace and human development. The European Union must adapt to this new global reality.

In the view of Pascal Lamy, there is an emotional runout that proceeds from the breakdown in results and sense of belonging, which was triggered by the failure to keep the promise of prosperity, security and mobility. The breakdown in results has often been highlighted, yet we would be wrong to blame it on that cause alone. The feeling of defiance towards Europe does not follow its sole economic performances and counter-performances. A crucial ingredient in any political construction has been missing hitherto, and that is the imaginative, symbolic and cultural dimension, which forges and firms up people's sense of belonging. The emotional deficit is spawned by a narrative deficit. It is the tragedy of what Elie Barnavi called "frigid Europe".

According to Professor Soromenho Marques, the financial crisis with its meager and divergent national responses rather than a coordinated strategic European one has done a great deal of harm. It points up the weakness of incomplete institutions incapable of withstanding crises. It is coupled at the same time with a hierarchy problem on the legal front. Adding to the widespread confusion and anxiety, the Lisbon Treaty now takes second place to the new intergovernmental treaties signed in the grip of the crisis. The absence of a genuine, federal European democracy has dug a ditch between

democracy, which is confined to the national level, and the real power held by the Community institutions. Democracy lacks real power; and real power is shorn of direct democratic support. Ideological blindness prevails over the search for the truth. Sovereign debts are a result of the crisis, not its cause. We have moved beyond the economic and political framework and entered the framework of moral evil. Building public policies on that lie only increases people's mistrust.

In his conclusion to the debate, Enrico Letta returned to dwell on the feeling of anxiety that rears its head also in our daily lives. The acceleration globalisation triggered by the speed of technological progress also has an impact on our daily lifestyle. The speed at which the consumer goods and habits that define our social status—the way a car might once have done and a smartphone does today—are changing is far too fast for us ever to be able to grasp them in full. This frenzied enthusiasm is part and parcel of the anxiety attendant upon occasionally dizzying globalisation and technological progress.

2. The north face of the European project; "if it were to do over again, I would start with culture"

These apocryphal words attributed to Jean Monnet have truly come into their own today. Cultural diversity is one of the Union's assets and we need to steer clear of forging a European identity designed to take its place. The European identity is an additional layer that binds the Union together. As Margarida Marques pointed out, it consists in the values of Classical antiquity, of the Judeo-Christian tradition and major contributions from Islam (Toledo), preserved and handed down from the Middle Ages. It is based on rationalism and humanism, which despite slavery, colonisation and totalitarianism, have lived on. There is also a demand for an inclusive, environmentally friendly, and sustainable development to civilise capitalism, in order to counter the deterministic rationale of the marketplace. The Union must maintain its share of utopianism and its messianic calling so that the ranks of the underprivileged cease to grow.

In describing the outline of the European identity, Pascal Lamy recalled the words of Sartre, who said that identity is when two gazes cross—our own gaze on ourselves and the gaze of "the Other".

Seen from the outside by non-Europeans, Europe is perceived as a place of democracy, public freedoms, and demanding social systems with a deep-rooted

environmental sensitivity. A place with access to culture for larger numbers and with a more or less liberal market economy. All in all, it is seen as a great place to live.

From the inside, however, the Europeans do not see themselves in the same way. In their own gaze at themselves, there is no symbolic root. The Europeans look at themselves through their differences rather than through their shared features. They have been educated and trained in this environment of national rivalry. The memory of the war and its atrocities was mobilised to federate, but defining an identity through the evils that we need to avoid is not a particularly stirring narrative. What we need to do today is to transcend the barrier created by mental spaces.

Europe's founding fathers placed too much hope in the alchemy that was supposed to turn the lead of economic integration, the lead of readily-grasped interests, into the gold of political union, the gold of a European demos. The crucial ingredient in any political construction, namely collective imaginary, has been missing. There is a dearth of emotion whose origin lies in the dearth of narrative. It is important to crystallise symbolic elements. The original mistake lay in seeking to replace the national narrative with a European narrative. We should, on the contrary, rummage around in existing national symbolism to find elements of European scope and importance. To do this, we need to set up European anthropology chairs capable of analysing our differences in order to discover our similarities and our resemblance, seeking to overcome differences by recognising "the Other". This is the north face of the European construction that is crucial in the humanist and rationalist approach underpinning it. We need to remain loyal to our identity towards others, in other words towards a civilised vision of globalisation.

In the view of Viriato Soromenho-Marquès, while the world may no longer be eurocentric, eurocentrism itself is not on its deathbed by any means. The absence of any debate in our countries on the irresponsible use of diplomatic, economic and military force in the EU's neighbourhood, which triggered a boomerang effect in the longer term (Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine) proves it. Regarding the Europeans, he would like to be able to say what Denis de Rougemont said about the Swiss, namely that they "get on with each other because they do not understand one another". Thus the Europeans should come up with a Kantian response to the question of the European identity and "[call] a country European when it is governed only [by] constraint in accordance with the law, in other words when restriction of freedom is based on a universally valid

rule." Yet as Pascal Lamy pointed out, we should note that Switzerland is still bursting with the ideology of belonging, based on a broadly built Swiss memory. We must not leave the monopoly on emotion to the identitarian closure of the narratives. Although this, Aziliz Gouez added, only on condition of remember that identity as a construction is not artificial. According to Levi-Strauss, it is "a virtual home". Identity is not built, it is revealed. In that connection, Enrico Letta insisted that this European identity cannot be based solely on history. Napoleon, for instance, is seen in a positive or negative light depending on which side of the Alps you were brought up. In that sense, European identity must be based also, indeed above all, on life and on experience.

3. What common European journey?

The question of the future is a logical extension of this identity under construction and in motion. This is Nietzsche's "*wohin*" when he says "*wohin man reisen muss?*".

As Jacques Delors pointed out in 2005, "the European project builds its identity not only internally but also by the responses that it brings to global challenges". Those challenges are of several kinds:

- environmental: through the development of a new ethic towards the planet and towards future generations based on the principle of responsibility.
- developmental: particularly with regard to Africa.
- migratory: in accordance with Europe's age-old tradition of hospitality and reciprocity as formulated by Grotius and Lévinas.
- democratic: in view of the rise of illiberal tendencies to the east of Europe and on the other side of the Atlantic (Jacques Rupnik)

Achieving this demands the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union, which requires greater flexibility. It is necessary to create a social pillar, to safeguard the rule-of-law state and to guarantee that environmental goals are met. In this connection, Margarida Marques quoted Jean-Claude Juncker who said that "Europe is not a foregone conclusion, it is a choice" demanding perseverance.

In the view of Viriato Soromenho Marques, Europe needs a thunderbolt to mobilise people. We are playing by the wrong rules. Instead of building a positive sum game, we are in danger of losing all the crucial elements due to the illusion of playing a zero sum game. Europe has to answer these challenges:

- its internecine violence and the EU's external threats;

- the destruction of its natural capital as part of the environmental and energy-related challenge;
- finding new modes of production and consumption capable of sustaining employment and social peace;
- the challenges in the realms of security and defence.

The EU must be an added value that supplements the national level, not that supplants it. It must meet people's needs. Targets are decided in common and governments must have the room for manoeuvre that they need in order to then achieve those targets. However, as Margarida Marques reminded us, we must not forget that governments have a tendency to nationalise success and to Europeanise failure.

There is a problem with the gap between public opinion and the European project which is not due solely to current economic circumstances. People actually prefer "local", hence the importance of the principle of subsidiarity cherished by Jacques Delors. Where economic issues are concerned, Pascal Lamy added, we have a monetary union but we do not have much of an economic union. You can limp with one leg bigger than the other, but if you need to run, you are going to fall over.

Winding up, Enrico Letta stressed that the EU does not currently offer everyone equal opportunities. Access to the European experience is not the same for everyone. The Erasmus scheme should not be restricted to university students, it could start at school so that the population as a whole could benefit from it. Other speakers suggested teaching a mother tongue, a *lingua franca* (English) and a language of the heart. At the same time, it is also important to "de-Brusselise" Europe. Territorialising Europe in this way alienates people from it. We must remember that the European project rests on a balance—we are all equal—but that balance no longer exists. Germany is the leading player in this imbalance, whether it likes it or not. That is why, after Brexit, the French presidential election is of such importance. It is going to have a crucial impact on the European project's future. The EU can cope with Hungary under Orbán, but it would be incapable of dealing with France under Marine Le Pen. Identity cannot be unveiled without "an Other". The American presidential election offers us this opportunity. We need to clearly underscore our differences with Donald Trump's United States, with Putin's Russia, and with an autocratic China. We owe it to ourselves to be proud of our European identity.

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