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The future of the European Union in the 21st century world does not depend on the creation of a unique European identity opposing others, but rather on the relations among EU member states and between the latter and the world. This will allow the European project to contribute effectively to the governance of global issues, and will allow citizens to adhere fully to it. From this point of view, enlargement is not a dilution of the European project, but contributes to its deepening.

In this era of globalization, with interdependencies accelerating and deepening, Europe must affirm a vision and reinforce its coherence, in order to better respond to global challenges, to contribute to the resolution of crises and to benefit from interdependencies. The current global financial crisis is the latest illustration of that. What seemed at the beginning to be a crisis affecting a limited sector of the mortgage market in one country, has since turned into a global financial and economic crisis. At the same time, other problems such as climate change or the conclusion of multilateral trade negotiations remain on the table, and Europe has a real interest in solving them.

The role of the EU is difficult to play because it is caught in a vice-like grip between two forces. On the one hand European citizens wish to be more involved in decisions that affect their daily lives and the aspirations for identitarian or nationalist withdrawal rise among its members when facing difficulties. The feeling of (economic, social, environmental) insecurity caused by greater openness feeds reactions. On the other hand, markets continue to globalize, interdependence deepens, horizons of opportunity are opening up. The risks of climate change, the threats of international terrorism, the instability of financial globalization call for more Europe to meet these global challenges.

In such a context, some of us believe that it is time to pause, that Europe must define its territory, its identity and borders, and that it must have matching institutions. The idea is to cultivate a new form of "European nationalism", to achieve internal unity and to support the creation of a European "super nation-state". In short, to bring Europe into the 21st century with the ideas of the 19th, and to reproduce on a large scale, at the continental level, what operated on a small scale at the domestic level.

What could be the vectors of such a identitarian and territorial congruence? This question, still debated and never resolved, faces the reality of Europe. A Spanish in Barcelona, a Swede of Malmö, a Greek from Crete, or a British man from Manchester probably do not share the same types of allegiance and identity to their nation, their community, and even much less to the EU. Languages, cultures, histories, customs and spirituality are very rich, and this is lucky! Would the nationalist fever, even the European one, be less destructive and deadly than the preceding ones? Who should it be excluded from the project?

Others want Europe to find a unity of faith. For them, Europe and Christian civilization are so closely intertwined with a multiseular history that the crucible of the continent's future is confused with that of this religion. Why call into question the fundamental contribution of the Enlightenment on the separation of church and state? Why also deny the great diversity of relationships to spirituality maintained by European people? Why fuel the risks of a "clash of civilizations" that are already so great?

Today, Europe must think of itself differently. It will not be a traditional great nation-state, or an entity based on denominational unity, but it will be much more than an extensive free-trade zone open to the world. Europe must be a bridge between the necessary answers to democratic aspirations and the concerns of its citizens, and its contribution to the regulation and governance of world affairs, while very often nation-states can no longer act alone. It is only by trying to meet this double challenge and by proposing a model of multi-level governance adapted to the challenges of the 21st century, that Europe will have real popular support and will accomplish its work.



From this point of view, and to use the terms of the Lisbon Treaty, Europe should be united in diversity. The aim could be to reconcile the diversity of its member states and the need for the EU to play a major role in global affairs. To do so, Europe does not need adversaries to build itself. It must rely on the old and numerous relationships that its members have with other parts of the world.

Thus the United Kingdom will work for a closer cooperation with the Anglo-Saxon world, particularly with the United States around an Atlantic cooperation, Spain will provide close links with the emerging Latin American world, and France will allow the UE to maintain a special relationship with the great Francophone world across the globe. Turkey, itself already deeply integrated into Europe through its economy, could help to strengthen the vital links with the Muslim world and Central Asia.

The number of Member States of the Union accounts for less than their respective roles benefiting all of Europe. The more European states, because of their history and characteristics, will have economic, political, social, cultural cooperation with other countries, the more the Union will count in the world. Thus Europe could become an open, central and indispensable player in global governance and could contribute to solving global issues.

It will be necessary therefore to change the governance of the Union and to base it more and more on reinforced targeted cooperation, i.e. on the consolidation of a certain number of states having the will to go forward in certain areas, while remaining within the framework of the great European architecture. The Lisbon Treaty has advanced in this direction. It allows you to consolidate the Union institutions while allowing members who wish, to undertake specific projects. Its current deadlock is not good news, but in no way it can be the pretext for assumed or imagined identitarian withdrawal or for territorial boundaries and final borders.

The challenge for Europe is not to find the Graal of its perfect identity, but to develop a democracy that allows it to play a central role in managing risks and opportunities brought about by globalization, and to meet the expectations and concerns of European citizens. The implementation of the principle of subsidiarity will be decisive. Europe can make progress if and only if it manages to provide concrete answers to European people, for example by helping them build their infrastructure, live fully, share their cultural and social traditions, be able to freely have healthcare in any country, but also combat climate change at a global level, or stem the financial crisis, which no Member State can accomplish alone.

The future of the Union in the 21st century depends less on its ability to pursue a seamless and binding integration than its capacity and that of its members to establish various forms of advanced cooperation in the areas that concretely improve the life of citizens and to be links with various spaces around the world.