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European Democracy and European Democracies

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Abstract

European Democracy and European Democracies

Nation state democracy is superior to EU democracy in transparency, accountability, intelligibility of procedures and the role of the voters. The most conspicuous phenomenon in the political life of the European countries in recent decades is the gradual disappearance of the classical division between the Right and the Left. The leftist way of thinking and the language of human rights have become the mainstream in the EU while conservative values and language have lost ground. Trapped in the mainstream logic, the Right is unable to stand firm, probably out of fear to be stigmatized as being anti-democratic and anti-European. The change must start from the national state, not from the EU. The European institutions are by their nature incapable of self-reflection and self-criticism. The sine qua non condition for improvement is the revival of the Right-Left division. In other words, the Right should re-establish its own identity against the Left.

Ryszard Legutko:
European Democracy and European Democracies

I. An often used, but rather euphemistic phrase that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit is both true and false. It is true in so far as the EU political system, claiming to be democratic *par excellence*, strikingly differs from democracy in the standard sense of the word. Let us then distinguish, for the sake of convenience and terminological clarity, two systems: the European democracy and the nation state democracy.

In the nation state democracy the political parties elected to the parliament with the majority of votes form a government which lasts until next elections. In the European democracy the political parties elected to the parliament do not form a government; the government, or rather its equivalent called the European Commission, is a creation of intergovernmental negotiations.

In the nation state democracy there is always a real possibility that with every new elections the ruling parties will be sent packing and a new political orientation will change the course of the policies and, if necessary, set things right. In the EU no such possibility exists. The European Parliament is a remarkably ingenuous institution with miraculous qualities of a political perpetual motion: the same coalition has been controlling it for many years and will continue to do so in many years to come, the past and future elections having no influence whatever on the ever reproducing itself majority of the EPP, Socialists and Liberals.

In the nation state democracy the rules that organize political power are more or less clear and are specified in the Constitution. In the European democracy there is a crucial factor nowhere explicitly considered or constitutionally regulated, namely, an informal role played by the strongest governments, particularly German and French, which make the essential decisions in the time of crises, in strategic matters, and sometimes even in the matters which are relatively unimportant from the EU perspective, but have considerable weight in their own domestic politics. In fact, hardly anything of importance can happen in the EU against the will of the big players. It is therefore not a paradox that when as a result of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union was blessed with its own president and its own foreign minister, the actual

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power of the those officials turned out rather small, while the power of the German Chancellor and the French President rose. Nor is it a paradox that the two new positions in the EU Council diminished the power of the President of the Commission, which, in turn, additionally strengthened the role of the German and French governments.

All in all the superiority of the nation state democracy over the EU democracy is in transparency, accountability, intelligibility of procedures, the role of the voters, and many other respects too numerous to mention. This should lead to a conclusion that from the perspective of democratic standards observed in the nation states the EU fares rather poorly, that it should be radically reformed and that those to whom democracy is the highest value (which probably covers 99 percent of European population, including those under age and mentally handicapped) should categorically object to the undemocratic nature of the EU institutions. The conclusion seems sound, but the facts do not corroborate it. While it is true that many complain about and criticize the democratic deficit, there are no political forces, important movements, or coalitions of governments which would make the democratization of the EU in accordance with the nation state standards an object of serious concern in today's Europe. What worries some politicians is a financial crisis, a failure of the Lisbon strategy, a precarious future of the Euro zone, the growth of EU bureaucracy, but not the democratic deficit. The EU is regarded as an instrument to achieve certain aims – federalist integration being the most important of them – and there are various obstacles to these aims, which the EU politicians try to eliminate; the democratic deficit is certainly not considered to be one of those obstacles.

I venture a thesis that the EU with its democratic deficit is a reflection of the current state of the European spirit, and that the conflict between the nation state democracy and the EU democracy is not as profound as some claim. After all the EU was not conceived outside Europe in a distant exotic land, and neither was it imposed on European societies by a foreign army. It is a legitimate offspring of the European spirit and has been rightly held by those who identify with it as the crowning of its aspirations.

II. A single most conspicuous phenomenon in political life in European countries during recent decades is the gradual disappearance of the classical division between Right and Left. The distance between the two opposite orientations has been shortened, and, occasionally in some important areas, e.g., in morality, even ceased to exist. To be sure, a democratic competition and a democratic discourse require that there are those who are perceived as representing the political Right, and those who are believed to be on the Left, but

in practical and in doctrinal terms these labels, although still used, have been losing their original function and meaning. This blurring of the classical division is of a particular kind: the Right lost more of its identity than the Left. In fact what we have been observing in Europe is the gradual capturing of the politics by the Left.

The process began – like many other bad things – with the revolution of the sixties when Europe experienced a radical shift to the Left, following the upheavals which shook the foundations of social life. Because the revolution was mostly social – or “cultural”, or rather, to be precise, “counter-cultural” – its victory undermined the traditional basis of conservatism which had always been rooted in the social or cultural foundations of institutions. Having acquiesced in the fruits of the revolution the political Right also had to accept its basic premise that those social foundations were irreconcilable with modern imperatives, and, furthermore, that it was the role of the government to use the political means to replace those foundations with new ones. By this concession the political Right disarmed itself of what had always been its strongest weapon, and retreated from their traditional territory, i.e., family, community, religion, moral virtues, classical education, nobility of art as pursuit of beauty. All these were rejected, being replaced by the lingua franca of human rights. This explains why in Europe we do not have anything even remotely resembling American culture wars: “culture” has been for a long time in the hands of the Left while the Right capitulated early on and laid down their arms unconditionally. The Right sometimes succeeds in blocking a leftist revolutionary impetus, but having abandoned any form of social normativism does not have its own cultural program. The dominating stereotypes about education, culture, art, social institutions come from the Left.

The radicalism of the sixties soon gained its political respectability as it transformed itself and came to be expressed in the language of liberalism: human rights, homosexual rights, equality, antidiscrimination. The overall effect of this change was not much different from that intended by the revolutionaries: social fabric became dramatically restructured and institutions such as family, church and schools suffered heavy blows, this time not from teenage rebels, but from legislators and courts. All this resulted in a fundamental redefinition of the aims and means of politics where the Left acquired ideological and political influence unheard of in the history of western societies, and many of the leftist ideas wrapped up in a liberal rhetoric penetrated deeply into the ideologies of the conservatives.

The Right – either defeated or fooled by what they considered to be the inexorable current of social change – tried to preserve its identity by claiming that what it accepted was not the content, but the form, not substance, but procedure. The liberal language of rights,

toleration, diversity, antidiscrimination, equality, etc., was said to provide only formal instruments necessary for the functioning of a pluralist society, which – as it was hoped – once secured could be used to promote substantive goals, including conservative ones, freely chosen by individuals and groups. To put it differently: the conservatives, liberals, and socialists agreed on the framework, but had divergent opinions on the matter that was put in this framework. The conservatives apparently believed they could play the game of the pluralist society to their advantage, and that a pluralist formula was to their benefit more than to the benefit of the Left. They hoped that accepting the language of rights they could promote those rights that served their cause, and neutralize other rights which were upheld by the Left; that aligning with others in the never-ending campaign against the discrimination, they would outsmart their socialist and liberal colleagues in their irresponsible policies of antidiscrimination and defend traditional communities against the emancipatory animus of the socialists and liberals; that defending egalitarianism they would acquire the means to block some excessive egalitarian measures which – they quite correctly maintained – were bound, in the end, to distort the value of equality.

Whether this was a deliberate strategy of political leaders of the Right, we do not know. If it was, they made a fatal mistake. There is no procedure or general framework, particularly in politics and in social life, which is free from substantive presuppositions and implications. A pluralist society according to conservatives is different from a pluralist society championed by socialists and liberals, and the difference is both in the nature of procedures and the social effects they generate. In short, for the conservatives pluralism is essentially social in nature, and illustrates the manifold character of social traditions, mores and manners. For the socialists and liberals pluralism is an ideological and political orthodoxy imposed on society by a government equipped with powerful instruments of pressure and coercion which ultimately aim to generate ideological and political homogeneity.

The difference lies also in the type of discourse. Unfortunately in the past decades the conservatives failed to describe and propagate their model in their own language, but took over the language of rights that has monopolized the public discourse in the entire Western world. A rights-based ideology is essentially anti-conservative, as it necessarily undermines the status of family, of marriage as a union between man and woman, and of other important human communities and moral obligations, which should be dear to every conservative. When viewed from the perspective of rights, the society as well as all communities which constitute it present themselves as networks of power relations; the primary goal of the government, the institutions of law and of each and every citizen should be a fair distribution

of power so that the claims of various groups and individuals – called rights – are satisfied. When we look at social relations from that angle, we will soon discover that there are everywhere glaring inequalities in the distribution of power: fathers have too much of it vis-à-vis sons, husbands vis-à-vis wives, teachers vis-à-vis students. In time we will be compelled to admit that whereas some people, namely those of different sexes, have a right to form a marriage and establish a family, there are certain groups – such as homosexuals – to whom these rights are denied. Once we establish this, it will not take long to conclude that such forms of discrimination, blatantly contradicting the standards of liberal democracy, cannot be tolerated, and that it is the role of the government as well as the courts to make necessary corrections.

The language of rights reverses the classical approach. This classical approach started from the questions about family, school, church, nation and other basic communities and institutions, and inquired into their nature as revealed through experience and reflection. Then it was asked what aspects of human existence they satisfy, why and to what extent they should be protected as constituents of social and individual life. Finally there came a question how they should be intertwined with other communities and institutions, and coordinated with human freedoms and social contingencies. The new approach starts with the assumption that groups and individuals have rights, which – subsequently – entails a conclusion that the communities and institutions must be changed in such a way that those rights be guaranteed. On this view the family is not important as such, but must be subservient to the rightful claims of individuals that compose it, as well as of other ideological and political considerations, even at the expense of radical restructuring. The same goes for churches, schools, etc.

The rights are never disputed, nor are their practical effects. What can be debated – whether by a public, by a legislature, or by a judiciary – is the hierarchy of rights, their interpretation, and their coordination. Obviously such this restrictive theoretical position makes it impossible to raise serious moral or political problems, as virtually all such problems must go beyond the language of rights. The thinkers and politicians who ignore this restriction are therefore not welcome. The man formed by the rights-based ideology has two possible reactions when confronted with similar transgressions: indifference or hostility. He is indifferent as long as he considers the problems superfluous and impractical. But his indifference changes into hostility when it occurs to him that the theorizing may eventually lead to the subversion of the primacy of rights. And this he cannot allow. Thus he tolerates a philosophical debate about family and human nature as long as he sees in it an intellectual exercise of no reference to reality. But the moment he begins to see that the intellectual

vagaries of mind may lead to undermining the rights of homosexuals, he not only condemns such inquiries, but wants them removed, first, from the realm of public respectability, and then from what is legally acceptable.

The linguistic capitulation of the Right is not a trifle matter. Having accepted the language of their erstwhile antagonists the conservatives became trapped in a losing position: they are left with fewer and fewer ideas to assert their distinctness. Nowhere is this self-annihilation more visible than in the European Union.

IV. The prevailing ideology has it that for several decades all decent Europeans have been involved in the process of integration, that the European Union is its current embodiment, and that the process is not yet finished, with further integration to come. Groups, parties, governments in the EU do not compete – as do the parties in national politics – but they work together in solidarity (or so it is claimed) for a better, ever more integrated union. There are no alternative scenarios, no alternative political programs, from which the majority of European citizens select what they seem more appropriate. What the voters and the majority of politicians are presented with is a common position, negotiated behind closed doors and according to rules which are not altogether clear; the common position can be only slightly modified in the subsequent stages of the so-called democratic process, for instance, in the European Parliament. What has been decided, must be adopted. When the unthinkable happens, as it did when the EU Constitutional Treaty was rejected in some national referenda, the leaders of the EU come up with a solution that will ultimately lead to the adoption, even if it should come about in a scandalously devious way. The Lisbon Treaty was one such solution, the repeating of the Irish referendum – another. Had the Lisbon Treaty fallen for the second time, the EU would have found something else – for example a third referendum, and then a fourth, etc.

The ideological division within the EU is thus not that between socialists and Christian democrats, liberals and conservatives, or the Left and the Right. The division is between those who support the European Union, its official ideology, and its further integration, and those who do not. But the conflicting sides are not of equal value, and the opposition between them cannot be compared to, say, that between Labour and Tory in British politics. The supporters of the EU are not only a majority, but the only legitimate political group having the only legitimate views. The Eurosceptics are not only a minority, but an illegitimate minority with illegitimate views. Their presence in some European institutions, such as the Parliament or the

Council, is considered a nuisance, they themselves being perceived as an alien body from outside the system.

In the EU language it has become customary to speak of the “political mainstream”, to which belong all major political parties, groups, organizations, and governments. The ideological assumption of the political mainstream rhetoric is that there are no “side-streams”. Whoever is not “for more Europe” cannot be treated seriously, and his views soon become an object of derision, ridicule or condemnation. Those from outside the mainstream are to be laughed at or feared, depending on whether they are described as clowns or crypto-fascists. Since the mainstream reproduces itself with every elections, and the tides of the voters’ sympathies do not affect it, its monopolistic power will remain unshaken in the foreseeable future. The newcomers to European politics are therefore well aware that their chances depend on their ability to accommodate themselves to the mainstream as its loyal members. Contrary to a traditional democratic practice, where the chance of the newcomers has usually been in being different from others and in dissociating themselves from those in power, the EU mechanism favours humility and has no heart for disobedience.

The EU mainstream is of course not a European peculiarity, but a consequence of the changes in the nation states, in particular, a consequence of the weakening of the classical division between the Right and the Left. Whereas in national politics this division retains some function (albeit a significantly reduced one), mainly – as I said – because of the still existing burden of traditional political practices, in the EU which is a new construction with no tradition of old institutions and habits, no basic division is felt necessary. Once the Right has agreed to an amputation of a major chunk of their political agenda, and decided to enter into a partnership with the Left in order to construct the European Union, its politicians thereby admitted that this large coalition practically exhausts the entire political spectrum. With Socialists and Greens on the left, Liberals in the middle, and the EPP parties on the right, there is no more room and no conceivable role for any other orientation. It is only natural that all the members of this informal coalition, as well as the representatives of the government in the Council, gradually have come to believe that the negotiations which they conduct among themselves are equivalent to a democratic process, and even superior to it.

A thought that this way of steering the EU may be a departure from a standard democratic practice is being dismissed as absurd. To justify their position they would perhaps argue along the following lines: “we have the best democratic credentials because despite differences we are united in the cause of democracy in this great enterprise of building a democratic system on a continental scale, the enterprise that has no parallel in the entire

human history”. In other words, they would say: “we are impeccably democratic because we construct European democracy”. All this amounts to a rather strange claim that in the EU a democrat is somebody who is in favour of the theory and practice of the European democracy even if this democracy is not quite democratic, while an anti-democrat is he who stands apart or criticizes the EU for betraying democratic standards.

As we can see, in European politics the mainstream identifies itself in opposition not to those who are their rivals in a competition for the institutional power – as do the parties in the nation states, if only for defeating their opponents in the elections – but to Eurosceptics, nationalists, xenophobes and other enemies of European democracy, all of whom, with few negligible exceptions, are even outside European politics. No wonder that quite often the European democrats find themselves in a fierce battle with phantoms, non-existent political specters, and totally fictitious enemies which they themselves have constructed in their own minds. As all those enemies are said to pose a mortal danger to the noble process of integration, the members of the mainstream must be therefore federalist, or, at least, emphatically anti-anti-federalist.

For the political Right such an identity is suicidal. “European democracy” is today not only a construction essentially defined by the Left, but is a package which contains the ideas that the Right should find abhorrent. They should, but do not. Trapped in the mainstream logic, the Right is unwilling, or, perhaps, unable to stand firm, probably out of fear to be stigmatized as being anti-democratic and anti-European. The so-called conservatives thus feel fewer and fewer pangs of conscience when they cooperate with the Left to pursue the socialist and liberal moral agenda. There is practically no EU document which does not have anti-discrimination clauses about women’s rights, homosexual rights, reproductive rights, progressive social engineering, anti-Christian innuendoes, ideologizing of history, all of which give the European bureaucracy a leverage to drastically intervene in moral foundations of society.

The mainstream mindset made the conservatives accommodate to the view that whereas the wildest demands and postulates of the Left are in perfect accordance with “European democratic values” (a sacred phrase, or, rather, a sacred chant in Eurospeak), the traditionally conservative demands and postulates are not. Thus arguing for a connection between a climate change, previously called “global warming”, and the discrimination of women is both “European” and “democratic”. So are giving the homosexuals a right to get married, and the women a right to abortion. On the other hand, saying that a stable family and a demographic crisis are causally linked is neither obviously “European”, nor obviously

“democratic”. Definitely “undemocratic” and “un-European” is to fight abortion, to define marriage is a union of man and woman, and to defend Christianity against the onslaught of modern militant secularism. When faced with a dilemma whether to support the leftist ideas of reproductive rights or a conservative idea of a family, the Right (except individual acts of dissent of individual politicians) never risk a head-on collision with socialists and liberals.

This gradual domination of “European democracy” and “European democratic values” is not only an EU phenomenon. Most European societies also seem to approve of them. Those societies apparently assume that the mainstream politics deserves the respectability it acquired and cannot be seriously challenged. It is true that in some European societies the Constitutional Treaty pushing the EU towards a federalist state was rejected in referenda; but when in the next stage the politicians decided to go ahead with the Lisbon Treaty, not much different from the Constitutional Treaty, this time without consulting societies through referenda, the people accepted this trick, clearly dishonest, and never protested. When the Irish said No to the Lisbon Treaty, and were forced to repeat the referendum – an equally dishonest trick – there were no protests either. This shows that “European democracy” and “mainstream politics” are not arbitrary instruments of domination in the hands of some supranational institutions, but accurately reflect the ideological horizons of the majority of Europeans, both from the Left and from the Right.

The evidence for this claim is not difficult to find. The legislation in most European countries – also those from “the New Europe” – does not much differ from what passes at the EU level. Some of the legislation in the nation states – for instance, in Spain under Zapatero – was outrageous, and, one would think, utterly unacceptable to any politician of the Right. And yet the Right, either in the nation state, or in the EU, did not challenge the Spanish government by exposing its policies as being inimical to “European values”. On the contrary, whatever the critical opinions were directed at Spain, they never referred to Zapatero’s moral revolution. On the other hand, a modest shift to the right in Victor Orban’s Hungary provoked furious protests both on the national and the European level. As Orban’s Fidesz party is a member of the EPP, the European Right provided his government with some shield, but rather small and inefficient, and never openly opposed the hysterical crusade that was launched by the EU and by the political establishment in Europe. When Poland was ruled by the Law and Justice Party in 2005-2007 (the party not being a member of the EPP), there were no mitigating factors, and the attack was almost unanimous, more orchestrated, and more violent.

Whoever thinks that some time soon the Right will come up with a counter-offensive in order to regain lost territories does not have much evidence to base his hopes on. The roll-

back strategy seems, so far, unlikely and has never been seriously contemplated as a coordinated plan of action. Occasionally when the Left loses the elections and the Right wins, as it recently happened in Spain, the tacit assumption was that the Left, bad as it might be, made a movement forward, from which there is no legitimate – socially, politically and even morally – way back. No one dared to organize a counter-revolution which would sweep away the Zapatero reforms. One may of course argue that the Spanish people immediately found themselves in a state of a deep financial crisis which seemed to make the problem of the roll-back strategy less acute. This does not change the fact that everywhere in Europe this strategy is considered politically explosive, and no important political force is willing to take the risk.

The Hungarians – let it be noted – decided to take this step, although in their situation this was not exactly a question of rolling back. Until the spectacular victory of Orban and his party the Hungarian people had still lived in the post-communist system. After ousting the Left government they decided to do what many hoped most former communist countries should have done once they got rid of communists in 1989: create a constitutional order congruent with basic conservative standards. But this decision of the Hungarians provoked an outburst of fury with all too predictable charges of nationalism, xenophobia and imposition of a “restrictive definition of marriage”.

V. There are several reasons accounting for the obliteration of the Right-Left division and for the emergence of a mainstream zealously dedicated to European democracy. One of the major reasons was already mentioned: the mental and social revolution that occurred in Europe in the late sixties. Until that time the European integration project had been in the hands of the generations that had a direct experience of the War, and this experience had heavily influenced their thinking about integration. The idea behind the project was simple: the Europeans who survived the War have to organize the cooperation of European countries in such a way as to liquidate the causes of all future wars and to secure a permanent peace. This was certainly not a new idea. As we know, for several centuries philosophers and politicians in Europe had been inquiring into the nature of war – which, as we nowadays often forget, was an ever present phenomenon in people’s lives from time immemorial – and tried to identify the conditions of permanent peace.

The mind-boggling effects of the Second World War which ravaged the continent twenty years after another terrible war that people had believed to be the ultimate expression of human folly and the last of the great wars, made it a matter of supreme urgency to create a stable framework of economic and political cooperation, free from the drawbacks of earlier

similar undertakings, which would for ever unite nations and states. Whatever musings about the future of Europe the founding fathers of integration indulged in occasionally, their principal motivations were the fear of a new European mass self-destruction and the determination to prevent it from happening. These were also men profoundly rooted in Christianity, well educated in classical Western tradition, having wide horizons and firm moral convictions.

The new generations of the EU leaders are different. The formative experience for them was not the war, which they only new from books and films, but, on the one hand, prosperity and political stability of the post-war Europe, and on the other – paradoxically, as it were – the spirit of revolution of the sixties with its egalitarian radicalism. To be a radical in a world of unprecedented security was thus their natural environment within which they grew up. They are also the products of a new education, with no particular allegiance to the classical European tradition, most of them not only secular, but clearly hostile to religion, and to Christianity in particular. The difference in an attitude to religion is especially telling. When one remembers that two of the founding fathers of European integration, Robert Schumann and Alcide de Gasperi, are now candidates for beatification by the Catholic Church, one must admit that we now live in a different world. Anyone looking for a European politician of today as a potential candidate for sainthood would be quite rightly regarded as a person of dubious mental qualities.

Unlike their predecessors who were both forward and backward looking, the present generations of European politicians are solely forward looking. Rather than drawing practical conclusions from the past they seem to be infatuated with the elevating possibilities of the future. Their object of aspiration which they want to have materialized in the European Union is a utopia. I use the word “utopia” in the accurate sense, denoting an ultimate blueprint for a political order that would solve all important problems that men have been trying to solve since the dawn of humanity. For centuries writers, visionaries and politicians have been looking for a system of laws and institutions which would be, so to speak, a political masterpiece, something that one cannot supersede because it has succeeded in providing the instruments to organize everything in the best way possible. Socialism was to be such a system. Liberal democracy is believed to be another. “European democracy” based on “European democratic values” – is yet another. It is meant to be applicable to the entire human and social existence with the intention to reorganize it according to those values which have no alternative either in history or in space. Such a project is believed to be the supreme achievement of the human genius, from which no one can deviate and which no one can

doubt. Either one is in it body and soul, or one is outside, and then one does an unpardonable disservice to humanity.

There is one more difference between those two generations of politicians. The founding fathers remembered well a derailment of the European tradition caused by misbegotten ideological enthusiasms incited by the prophets of a better world. They also had a profound understanding of the value of a rational debate and a rational disagreement, both of which were one of the first victims of the totalitarian regimes. The present generation of politicians are themselves the products of ideological enthusiasm which they had succumbed to in their youth and which they still remember with nostalgia and profound indebtedness. Most of them believe that what happened then was not a derailment of European culture, but an admirable emanation of this culture, worthy of continuation in more mature and organized forms. When they were young, they were a part of a large movement exceeding the boundaries of states and continents; the movement was superior to a system because it was not diluted by any moderating factors, but directly sanctioned by a noble cause. The revolutionaries therefore treated all outside the movement as enemies or scum, and did not bother with rules, principles, compromises and imponderables. Their method of action was predominantly *l'action directe*. That spirit of movement and of *l'action directe* is still with the politicians who now reached the age of sixty or seventy, but despite the passing of time retain their enthusiasm and vigour to pursue a noble cause, this time European democracy. This spirit has been passed on to newer generations. As in the past they despise enemies, whom they call fools and fascists, and believe that having captured the movement of the mainstream, they need not stoop to be respectful of their antagonists.

In order to build a truly European democracy, the EU architects and their followers could not therefore be satisfied with the initial program of peace and cooperation. They must create a truly democratic European federalist state, which in turn presupposes the creation of a truly European demos. But as such a demos does not exist and will not come into being spontaneously, they must create a new European man. And this in fact is what they have been doing for some time: making a perfect European, a new man fully compatible with “European democratic values”, a dedicated EU patriot, totally politicized, praising diversity as the highest form of ideological homogeneity (or homogeneity as the highest form of diversity), mistrustful of contingencies and peculiarities, a tireless regulator of all aspects of human and social life as well as a humble subject of his own regulations, deeply convinced that history teaches only one lesson which is the superiority of the EU, educationally unprepared to accept a possibility that there are higher standards than “European democratic values”.

By renouncing its traditional social normativism the Right has become an accomplice of this project – not always wholeheartedly, let us grant it – and lost ideological grounds to extricate themselves from the mainstream. The attachment to the project, of course, varies. Sometimes the governments distance themselves from the federalist program, but accept, in the internal politics, the moral credo of progressivism (reproductive rights, homosexual rights, etc.), which the case of the Great Britain or the Czech Republic; sometimes they embrace both (as in the Netherlands); sometimes they try to mitigate the moral revolution while supporting the federalist project (as in Germany). In each case however, the mainstream remains intact, both at home and in the EU. One can imagine the Great Britain under the Tories drifting away from the EU and having some successes in blocking federalist initiatives within the EU, but one may wonder to what extent this would save the British from the domination of the “mainstream culture” and the human rights ideology. Except for Hungary under the Fidesz government and Poland under the Law and Justice government 2005-2007 there have been no countries in which the major ruling parties opposed both the federalist project and the moral agenda. This shows that the power of the mainstream has no strong rival and that the EU is not an aberration of nation state democracies, but its legitimate continuation.

In some countries the tendency to enhance the federalist strategy is closely interconnected with the national interests, and does not result from a sentimental longing for the European superstate. France and Germany – to give an example – have been clearly pushing forward federalism, but at the same time are notorious for pursuing, rather ruthlessly, their national self-interests. In both cases the explanation is simple: since Germany and France have a dominating position in the EU (in fact, European integration was their darling child), and since they feel responsible politically and financially for the EU, more power to the Union means more power for Germany and France. This satisfies the latent imperialist ambitions (soft imperialism of a new type, not the old one) that both countries have. Thus the slogan “more power to the EU”, or – as Chancellor Merkel recently put it – “more oversight possibilities” to the EU, or – in an idiotic formula of Poland’s prime minister Donald Tusk – “more Europe in Europe”, has a double meaning. For Chancellor Merkel it means more control of the EU by the German government; for Poland (Hungary, Czech Republic, etc.) it means fewer means with which to oppose the policies of Brussels, also those that may harm the Polish (Hungarian, Czech, etc.) national interests. The Great Britain, on the other hand, criticizes the federalist project for the same reason that Germany and France support them: the British attached do their sovereignty do not want to be a part of the system in which they would have to be a mere addition to the Franco-German enterprise.

This policies of French and German soft imperialism through the EU and the policies of Britain's national ambitions might suggest that striving for more national sovereignty would thwart the EU project. This need not be the case, however. If the mainstream politics, both at home and in the EU, is – strategically and ideologically – the main cause of the diseases that tend to debilitate the EU, the quest for sovereignty by big players will have little effect on it. The French with their republicanism and *laïcité* will be quite happy continuing to boost the mainstream as long as their French role in the EU is warranted. The Germans might preserve some constitutional and moral autonomy at home, but will do not do anything to instigate the culture war or any ideological conflict in Europe (despite Merkel's open criticism of multiculturalism), which might jeopardize their political position. The British may manage to preserve more autonomy than other countries, but neither the European mainstream will risk going to war with the world's major country, nor the British establishment, ideologically more radical than, say, its German counterpart, will engage in a conflict with the EU leading political forces, which from the perspective of British sovereignty would seem absurd.

The change in European politics is, for the time being, extremely difficult to envisage. We are in the midst of a deep financial crisis, and anything can happen, including attempts to undermine the German hegemony or even a collapse of the entire political construction. But as yet no signals of the weakening of will to continue the EU project are in sight. Some politicians and commentators may have second thoughts about the euro, but very few question the “European democracy”, or “European democratic values”. There is no doubt that if this support for “European democracy” continues, the power of the mainstream will grow, the democratic deficit will increase, and the Right will become more indistinguishable from the Left.

The change must start from the national state, not from the EU. The European institutions are organically incapable of self-reflection and self-criticism. The *sine qua non* condition for improvement is the revival of the Right-Left division. In other words, the Right should re-establish its own identity against the Left, not against anti-federalists, nationalists, etc. If the so-called conservative parties continue to support the federalist project, even with a lukewarm attitude to the leftist views on family and morality, it will strengthen the EU power in economic and political matters which – in the current situation – must also mean the strengthening of its power to legislate morality. The plan to soften the EU legislative moral ambitions by the Right's participation in the mainstream and by influencing the direction of the EU policies from within (if ever such a plan was conceived) failed, and it is unlikely it will bring better results in the future. On the other hand, if the EU power diminishes, and the

federalist project is halted, the mainstream politics will probably be continued in many nation states, which will not improve the situation. The only chance is some kind of a culture war in Europe, both in the European institution and in the nation states.

One may of course argue that such a development is highly improbable and that the Fidesz government in Hungary and the Law and Justice Government 2005-2007 in Poland are isolated cases not to be repeated in other countries. The culture war in Europe will not break out (so far nothing indicates it will), and the mainstream will not lose its grip on European and national politics. This seems, indeed, a far more plausible scenario than the one I put forward as desirable. But such a scenario means the continuation of the status quo. Then those who seek refuge from the EU's unquenchable ambitions in the nation state will be disappointed, regardless of whether the EU will survive in full force or in some shadowy symbolic existence.

