Europe in a Changing World

European Concerns, Reflections, and Perspectives

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Abstract: *This article describes a Europe at the crossroads. The challenges facing the project of European integration are both internal and external. The various crises that Europe faces are symptoms of a broader and systemic crisis. The author argues that Europe's ability to respond to global challenges depends on its ability to adopt an open-ended vision and forward-looking story line. The author identifies a number of tasks that need to be attended to on an ongoing basis so that Europe can progress as a "multipurpose community."*

I am pleased and honored to be present at the inauguration of the Centre of Research and Training and Sophia Global Studies, as I am to have been invited to be a member of its Scientific Committee. I feel fortunate and privileged to give my contribution to Sophia Global Studies. Also, I give my very best wishes for the tenth anniversary of the Sophia University Institute. My contribution follows up on Olivier Roy's keynote speech this morning and is much linked to the interventions of the previous speakers. It takes a turn toward voluntarism, though it starts with recognizing the current complex and confusing international reality and Europe's position in it.

Europe is at a crossroads, a turning point of the process of integration, a process shaped by past, present, and future developments. Its historical development shows a dynamic and evolving reality with many faces, multiple identities, and diversified forms of cooperation. What are the main (internal and external) challenges Europe is facing today? In brief, they are the challenge of increasing global exposure, the challenge of economic and social cohesion, the challenge of increasing diversity, the challenge of growing complexity, the challenge of the widening political agenda, and the challenge of legitimacy and trust-building.

Europe is in crisis: the refugee crisis, the Brexit debate, the Catalan question. These are symptoms of more systemic challenges. In an interview last year, Edgar Morin, the French sociologist and philosopher, spoke of a "planetary crisis" and the need "to change civilization" to respond to the complexity of today's world. This reality certainly implies rethinking and actualizing the diverse European narrative and recognizing the new and radically changing context. "Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic

government, nor even the market economy will function properly" (Václav Havel, former Czech president, 1936–2011).[1]

Our democracy is in crisis. EU citizens are losing faith in democracy because political leaders cannot deliver the promises on a national level. The state is no longer the exclusive actor in the globalizing system, and power has been globalized, despite attempts to return to national solutions as the current migration crisis illustrates. In short, Europe today is in the midst of complex and interconnected transformational processes at all levels. We are looking for the proper European setting, role, and responsibility in the global world. I briefly refer to two seemingly contradictory realities.

The Weakened Position of the EU as a Global Actor

The EU plays a global role, mainly in domains such as trade, development, the environment, and social issues and more recently in its security strategy and architecture. With the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU has made an important step toward strengthening its global aspirations. We call this the process of Europeanization, as a response to the globalization process. Today, the international system is more complex, more interdependent, and more fragmented, with diverse actors involved.

Although the EU is still the world's leading exporter of goods, the largest trader of services, the biggest provider of development and humanitarian aid, the second largest foreign investor, and a main destination for migrants, chaos, fear, and uncertainty reign throughout the world. Some speak of a European malaise,

a decline of its economic and political power, even of a systemic crisis.

This weakening is related to a combination of various factors: external factors, like increasing competition at the global level and the management of complexity, and internal factors, like demographic developments, migration issues, secularization, democratic deficits, and populist movements. Still, the EU is slowly taking measures for better and more efficient governance, amid many doubts and diversities.

The EU as an International Reference or a "Model of Society"

Two essential and distinctive dimensions of the EU's contribution to global issues can be distinguished: the EU's internal/external influence as a model of national and supranational democracy, and its impact on international democratization. Since its creation in the 1950s, the European Community (and now the EU) has played a key role in step-by-step strengthening democratic processes throughout its several enlargements, from the Mediterranean to the Central and Eastern enlargements. It is also slowly applying democratic practices at a regional level through its regional institutions and policies.

However, we should not forget that for centuries the global implications of the European contribution to peacebuilding have been addressed by political thinkers, from Immanuel Kant to Jürgen Habermas, Ulrich Beck to Zygmunt Bauman. European Studies has become a specialization in international studies, and the EU is perceived as a unique sui generis model of integration, a work in progress that is used as reference for other regional organizations in the world.

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1. Don E. Eberly, ed., *The Essential Civil Society Reader* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 401.

In a rapidly changing world, political courage, leadership, inspiration, and human-centric practices are needed to shape and strengthen the values associated with "Europe" as a never-ending story. This task contains internal and external aspects, also in places of learning such as Sophia Global Studies. We see testimony every day that the various economic, political, social, and cultural challenges in the era of globalization have a dramatic and diverse impact on societies, states, peoples, communities, and persons across Europe. Acknowledging this growing complexity and interconnection among and within societies in the global world should be an important point of departure for Sophia Global Studies.

If Europe wants to respond adequately to today's global challenges and to the newly emerging world order, it needs a strengthened, open-ended vision and a new forward-looking story line. One can think of two (interrelated) tracks that could strengthen Europe's position in the multipolar world of tomorrow: (1) pursuing differentiating and deepening integration and (2) acting as an agent of change within the multilateral system. Of course, both approaches require commitment, courage, and determination to maximize Europe's role in the world.

As size matters, for both economic and political power, being divided into a multiplicity of small actors does not help. Increased European integration in certain specific policy areas (such as trade, competition, development cooperation, economic, monetary and financial issues, and "human" security) seems to be the only way forward. Only then will the national interest of member states become part of the overall European interest: unity in diversity within a well-defined international and legal order. In other words, we need a multilevel and multi-actor approach to deal with and manage various challenges and issues while respecting diversity.

In the emerging new international world order, states, international and regional organizations, transnational policy networks, and nongovernmental actors are the building blocks of the multilateral system. In other words, states are merely players among other players. Furthermore, interactions among all these actors are not organized in a hierarchical way but as a network. This network structure suggests that there is no single center of power and blurs the center-periphery perspective. Instead, there is a fluid web of relations, alliances, and partnerships among different types of actors at different levels of governance, from the neighborhood level to the city, region, state, European, and international levels. The new Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe,"[2] proposed by Federica Mogherini, high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vice president of the European Commission, in 2016, is certainly a step forward.

Reality today suggests that Europe has an appointment with destiny. Its model of society, based on fundamental rights, on culture as vehicle of emancipation, on sustainable development and socioeconomic cohesion, and on a multilateral vision of the world order, is under pressure. In other words, we are experiencing a confrontation between the confusing political, economic, cultural, and institutional European reality and the responsibility of Europe as a global actor in a context of ever-increasing globalization.

The ongoing and radical transformation of European societies needs to be properly contextualized within globalizing, Europeanizing, regionalizing, and localizing dynamics. Questions about

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2. https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

identity, citizenship, governance, borders, democracy, and dialogue require proper answers. On March 1, 2017, the European Commission presented a white paper as a contribution to the sixtieth anniversary summit of the Treaty of Rome.[3] It contained five possible future paths for the EU: Carrying On (the EU27 focuses on delivering its positive reform agenda); Nothing but the Single Market (the EU27 is gradually re-centered on the single market); Those Who Want More Do More (the EU27 allows willing member states to do more together in specific areas); Doing Less More Efficiently (the EU27 focuses on delivering more faster in selected policy areas while doing less elsewhere); Doing Much More Together (member states decide to do much more together across policy areas).

It is obvious that the European Union cannot be summed up in a single sentence. It is a peculiar political structure and presents a unique process of integration. It is still in the making, and today it urgently needs a new inspiring and mobilizing story. This requires a continuous search for a dynamic vision for the future that captures a sense of belonging and offers true added value to EU citizens, even in times of transformation and confusion. A clear vision for the future based on a value-driven community is needed. Europe is a multifaceted and multidimensional space that exhibits multiple characteristics. These characteristics must be understood, contextualized, and translated to a diversified citizenry within a context that often produces radically changing and paradoxical realities. These realities affect current European identity, citizenship, and solidarity. They also shape the framework for internal

and external dialogues between and within countries, regions, communities, and citizens.

We need to convey a positive and forward-looking message. Our vision must be embedded in a community of shared values, support the strength of a diversified European integration process, and recognize both the positive heritage and the complexity of a multifaceted Europe as added values to the European project. The quality of immaterial well-being should not to be subordinated to the quantity of material welfare.

I believe that Europe has a mission and a responsibility in the globalizing world. In the fast-changing global landscape, Europe is confronted with the preoccupation as well as with the moral responsibility to maintain its model of integration and diversity within a radically changing world system. We must ask whether Europe, within a further unifying European economic space, can guarantee both internal solidarity, allowing states, regions, communities, and persons to live their diversity, as well as external solidarity, as expressed in its international relations and activities. The challenge is to establish a new equilibrium between diversity and unity in a globalizing world that accounts for the economic, historic, social, and political changes at the international level even as it remains faithful to its principles of internal and external solidarity, as expressed in international and European law.

In Europe, as elsewhere, we recognize a radical increase in the level of complexity within our societies, the development of a multiple citizenship within multiple identities, and the development of multilevel and multi-actor practices. This requires the participation and involvement of all stakeholders in society-building. Despite all the dramatic changes, Europe remains a civilization project, characterized by a rich intellectual (material and immaterial) cultural

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3. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe-reflections-and-scenarios-eu27_en.

heritage and a community of common values. Therefore, it is important to affirm clearly Europe's community values when dealing with the welfare and well-being of its current and future citizens while acknowledging negative reactions to and criticisms of the non-application and non-implementation of the existing legal framework. Europe is a multipurpose community that requires continuous updating of multiple tasks.

Europe As Community: Reality and Challenges

1. Europe as a *community of destiny* is a unique peace project. However, the concrete realities of everyday life, certainly in light of today's migration and refugee crisis and terrorist attacks, illustrate a growing tension, differentiation, and frustration about the role of Europe in the world.

2. Europe is a *community of values*. It refers to human dignity, rule of law, tolerance, humanity, dialogues, fraternity, and hospitality. However, in today's Europe, these values seem to be questioned by nationalist and populist reactions.

3. Europe is a *community of life*. It is composed of citizens, with citizens, and for citizens: It is a citizens' Europe. To that end, citizens should be given the opportunity to participate more fully in the European process through various kinds of dialogues and encounters. More democratic structures are needed to build up a real European public space. I refer to the report by Luc Van den Brande, special adviser to the president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker in October 2017 "Reaching out to EU Citizens: A New Opportunity about Us, with Us, for Us."[4] Its concrete policy

proposals very much focus on vertical and horizontal policy dialogue, Europe's youth, intergenerational solidarity, and education.

4. Europe is an *economic and social community*. Although from its beginning in 1957, the European integration has been very much economically driven. The current crisis has made it clear that economic integration is an insufficient basis for further developments. Only a socioeconomic community that is also culturally inspired may lead to sustainable and cohesive European societies.

5. Europe is a *community of purpose and responsibility*. The European continent has close economic, political, and cultural ties with many regions of the world, ties that are often formalized in cooperation agreements. Only through cooperation and internal and external solidarity can Europe effectively respond to the global and European challenges. Such responsibility should be expressed in a common foreign and security policy ("Global Strategy 2016," by Federica Mogherini) and in neighborhood and development policy, particularly in the politically sensitive area of migration.

6. Europe is a *community and meeting place of multiple identities*. Freedom, peace, human dignity, equality, and social justice are Europe's greatest common goods. However, reality shows how individuals are still very much bound to the territorial dimension of their identity-building within their living environment, and they become afraid of the "other" and make Europe less hospitable.

7. Europe is a *community of multicultural learning*. In this context, cities and multicultural learning spaces are very important for living conviviality. Therefore, we affirm the crucial role of education in all its forms and dimensions.

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4. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reaching-out-to-citizens -report_en.pdf.

Still, this rhetoric must be translated into a workable and forward-looking reality amid a radically changing world. The role of education is fundamental. The learning environment has drastically changed; it is more competitive, complex, and fragmented and includes a wide diversity of learning sources. It should prepare young people to live together by acting together to tackle complex issues and to deal with diversity. This requires a variety of life competencies, which take the form of values, attitudes, skills, and behaviors. These competencies can only be achieved through integral human development in education and training and through learning processes via the frameworks of various dialogues and prioritized areas of applied research. New forms of and locations for dialogue, learning, and study, as well as a variety of new and old actors, should be considered in response to these challenges.

Such human-centric education has an impact on research. Teaching and research should therefore be mutually supportive. An environment favorable to applied research is needed for studying and analyzing societal problems under inadequate institutional and educational global arrangements. That is why the nature of global studies is being questioned today, presenting a challenge to Sophia Global Studies and its program of research activities that address Europe in a changing world. In short, I am convinced that, despite failures and imperfections, the Europe project remains a valid place for defining the European common good and for developing a unique institutional and operational framework in the changing world. I distinguish four fundamental tasks

Four Fundamental Tasks

First, Europe has the moral responsibility to build a best practice of cooperation, internally and externally. The individual and collective well-being depends increasingly on our capacity to read the signs of the time and act accordingly in pursuit of economic and social welfare within a world of global competition. We need a radical change in vision and method if European civilization is to survive.

Second, Europeans have the moral responsibility to show that people can live together in the world, despite differences in language, culture, religion, origin, and so on. In practice, EU citizens still need to show that they can form an international public space where a cultural diaspora can exist in mutual respect, tolerance, and dialogue.

Third, European countries and regions must work continuously toward making their social and economic systems more efficient so that the weaknesses of the one can be compensated by the strength of others. We must encourage individual initiative, aiming for a broad and just distribution of the benefits of economic welfare and a renewed sense of responsibility in a value-driven education with a European dimension.

Finally, Europeans should play a more courageous and dynamic role on the international political scene by defending our model of peace and transnational cooperation and strengthening our method of collaboration with other macro regions. Europe should work for a transition away from the traditional management of geopolitical and global economic conflicts and toward a new transversal policy of the global political and economic landscape.

Sophia Global Studies offers Europe a specific place in its new focus on training and research activities within global relations and processes. I am convinced that Sophia Global Studies can offer an innovative and interdisciplinary perspective and an inspiring transdisciplinary learning space for responding to

today's challenges and opportunities. I fully endorse the context, the specific mission, the content, the inter-transdisciplinary, and intercultural approach of the project, which proposes an organic and coherent program with theory and practice in training and research.

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