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## *A distinct and distant Europe*

### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed once more the challenges facing the European Union (EU) with regard to its cohesion and to its capacity as an international actor.

The aim of the article is twofold. Firstly, to analyse whether the EU meets those European nation-states' attributes associated to a recognisable geography and to a common history that are able to generate strong enough consciousness and allegiance ties among their citizens for them to become an authentic "European people", and secondly, to assess whether the foundational objectives and subsequent efforts of the European institutions would be capable of converging towards a "national" identity pattern that integrates the different national sensibilities, around which to articulate a European political project.

### **Keywords**

Citizenship, consciousness, allegiance, European institutions, convergent efforts

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## A living voice for Europe

Following the failed attempt of the 2004 Treaty of Rome to enact a European Constitution, the Lisbon Treaty sought to advance the goal of giving the EU a single voice that would make it an influential actor in its interaction with international institutions. However, the experience of the decade since the entry into force of the Treaty has not been able to show the desired increase in the influence of European institutions in global governance fora.

Given this widely acknowledged situation of EU weakness in the international framework, one might legitimately wonder whether the EU is not suffering from the lack of some additional instrument that would give meaning, significance, content, firmness and, in short, vitality to this now hollow, languishing and tenuous voice that is failing to make itself heard and respected. In this line of thought, one might wonder whether the call made by its spiritual father, Robert Schuman, back in the 1950s, and which has been revived and brought back to the present day at various historic moments in the process of European integration, as has been done recently by the former President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, is not still fully valid: that Europe needs an extra soul which, we would add, is capable of giving meaning and content to this voice which is not yet unique, nor is it sufficiently firm and resolute.

Since it is their nationhood that provides the vital element and transcendent dimension to the Member States of the Union, a projection of this model to the European level would suggest that what is missing in the project of European construction is a “national” component of the Union capable of breathing that breath of life, that soul that is so longed for but currently absent in the European reality. Following this line of reasoning, the question then arises as to whether Europe has the conditions to be able to equip itself with a common nation, understood and shared as such, which would bring vitality to the European project, what this united Europe would be like in terms of the common denominator of the countries that make it up according to the parameters of the nation-state model, and to what extent is the EU, as a political unit, adopting this model and moving in this direction. These are the reflections we intend to address in this paper.

For our analysis we start from the premise that a single voice is not sufficient in itself to command international recognition and leadership if it is not accompanied by a single European spirit that breathes life into that voice. This vital breath would come from an awareness on the part of citizens of what Europe is and means, from an individual adherence to this idea of the European “nation”, and from a convergent performance on the part of the European institutions aimed at preserving and promoting these vital aspects of European identity<sup>1</sup>. The analysis of a hypothetical

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<sup>1</sup> In this sense, Professor Gómez Castro, when analysing the role of the EU as a global actor, states that “the Union will be able to consolidate its role in the world if it can count on [...] leadership at European level” (GÓMEZ CASTRO, María Elena. “¡A mí La Legión!” *En una sociedad posheroica: la*

behaviour of the EU as a nation and the corresponding behaviour of the “European state” towards that national reality will therefore be done from a domestic perspective, on the basis that:

“The actors’ self-understanding of – identity – serves to formulate the – international – demands for recognition, so that the international identity is constituted [...] complementing [...] the already existing and constituted domestic identity [...] Consequently, the constitutive aspect for external actors becomes only a “confirmation” *ad extram* of an already “constituted” identity *ad intram* that integrates the actors around the same notions of norms, aspirations, distinctive features or worldviews”<sup>2</sup>.

The aim is to approach this analysis by visualising the EU as a supranational entity, and consequently and applying the principle of “fractality”, extrapolating our model of nationhood to the superior entity that is the EU, based on parameters of individual and collective awareness and adherence, in order to draw conclusions on the suitability of the model and on the viability of its application to the European project.

In accordance with this approach, it is important to specify that the actors in this work are not the nation-states or member states – depending on the prism through which they are viewed<sup>3</sup> – and the European institutions, but rather the latter and the citizens, as the real protagonists and constituent subjects of the “European people” that are to be analysed.

## A possible evolution of the concept of nationhood

If in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “the nation believed it could achieve its plenitude with the state” and in the face of the challenges of the third millennium “humanity is confusedly experiencing the need to realise itself in works that are tailored to it”, passing “from the world of cities to the city of the world”<sup>4</sup>, the question to be asked about the progressive process of organisation of human groups that began in the clan and has culminated in the nation-state, is whether a human group with aspirations of plenitude exists or is likely to exist at the European level, and if so, whether Europe has the conditions to aspire to satisfy the need for fulfilment of the human group that would constitute it.

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*transformación del paradigma militar. CESEDEN Monographs 127. Madrid: Ministry of Defence, 2012, p. 131.*

2 BARBÉ (dir.) *et al., Cambio mundial y gobernanza global. La interacción entre la Unión Europea y las instituciones internacionales. Madrid: TECNOS 2012, p. 70.*

3 BICKERTON, Christopher. “De Estados nación a Estados miembros: La integración europea como transformación”, in *La búsqueda de Europa. Visiones en contraste*, 2016, pp. 202-215.

4 GALLOIS, Pierre M. *Geopolítica. Los Caminos Del Poder. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones del EME, 1992, p. 100.*

Following this outline of the organisational process, we could assume that it would be the EU's goal to eventually replace nation-states in the medium to long term. But these do not have to be the EU's objectives. In this respect, Alan S. Milward's thesis is that the EU's regionalist system was not aimed at creating new cross-border organisations, but precisely at retaining the system of nation-states<sup>5</sup>.

Without wishing to enter into this debate, the fact is that the scenario, both in terms of legislation and in terms of the EU's actions in terms of its participation in the international arena, has not been, nor is it, and we understand that it does not intend to be, a substitute for the representation in its own right of the member states in those issues and forums that they consider appropriate, but it is true that the European project wants to move towards achieving a single voice that gives credibility and influence to the institution in international forums and in global governance as a whole.

### A nation for Europe

Understandably, Schuman's main concern in his founding speech was the survival of peace, at a historic moment when Europe was beginning to recover from the devastation wrought by the Second World War. What is most striking is that the founding father did not confine his ideal of preserving peace to the European level, but rather invested his inaugural declaration of principles with an aspiration for world peace, to which he also called on Europe to make a decisive contribution.

Schuman, however, seemed to be aware of what that historical moment demanded, and he sacrificed the ambitious aspiration that could have been the attempt to build, to reconstruct we might say, a European identity that seemed utopian in those circumstances, to opt for the more modest but practical and, above all, achievable option of integration through concrete achievements, which would begin its journey following the logic of rapprochement between the great European secular rivals, France and Germany<sup>6</sup>, by the most expeditious route, that of chaining them to the coal and steel galley, which would henceforth force them to row together in the same direction, thus making warlike confrontation between the two impossible.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> MILWARD, quoted in LAURENT, "Review: The European Rescue of the Nation-State by Alan S. Milward, George Brennan and Federico Romero", *Am. Hist. Rev.*, 2019, vol. 98, no. 4, pp. 1197-1199, p. 1197.

<sup>6</sup> Churchill had already suggested taking the first step in this direction in his speech at the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946 when he said that: "The first step towards the reconstruction of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany" (TRUYOL Y SERRA, Antonio. *La Integración Europea. Análisis Histórico-Institucional Con Textos y Documentos. I Génesis y Desarrollo de La Comunidad Europea (1951-1979)*. EDITORIAL TECNOS, S.A., 1999, p. 165.).

<sup>7</sup> This approach to the process of European integration disappointed the USA, which played such a decisive role in European reconstruction through the Marshall Plan, who advocated the creation of a system "[...] capable of going beyond mere intergovernmental cooperation" although at the same time

However, as we have mentioned, Schuman did not want to renounce in his speech the formulation of a more ambitious integration project, an integration with capital letters, which, going beyond Europe, would lead to the achievement of world peace, which is obviously distant and utopian in nature.

A first approach to the analysis of the possible parallels between Schuman's idea of pan-European integration and what we currently understand as a common nation leads us to appreciate the notable differences between the two approaches.

Indeed, the open, universalist and fusionist approach of the Paris Declaration contrasts sharply with the physiognomy of the Western, and therefore European, nation, characterised by its association with a defined and therefore essentially closed space, and by the crystallisation of a consciousness of a people and a sense of nationhood forged in a defined, common and singular geographical and historical framework, generating blood ties, beliefs, values, customs and ways of being, thinking and acting that are distinctive and differentiated from those of other nations.

Another substantial difference between the two conceptions refers to the question of the continuity of the project, which in the European case is oriented towards the achievement of peace, considered fundamentally as a means to avoid internal conflicts, while in the nation-state it is oriented towards the survival of the state, oriented towards the preservation of territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and which consequently places, or should place, in the first line of state action the promotion of the spirit, or if you like, the conscience, of national defence.

### *A land for Europe*

In every nation there is an awareness of the land on which it stands and a perception of that land as its own. Ideally, this land becomes, with varying degrees of coincidence, the territory of the state. This is not to say that the nation must necessarily precede the state, and there are many cases in European history where this has not been the case, but it does mean that there must be a convergence between the land of the nation and the territory of the state that allows us to speak of nation-states.

If the EU were to be likened to a nation-state, we could determine exactly what the territory of the European nation-state would be today: the 4.5 million km<sup>2</sup> that make up the territories of the 27 countries that make up the EU. The question then arises as to whether this EU area corresponds to a territorial awareness and feeling of Europeaness. This question should be asked again with each new entry or exit during the process of European integration.

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with “a no less firm conviction that this (integration) could not be imposed” (BECERRIL ATIENZA, Belén. “La apuesta de los Estados Unidos por la unidad europea en el marco del Plan Marshall. El apoyo norteamericano y la obstrucción británica en el umbral de la integración europea (1947-1951),” *Rev. Derecho Comunitario Eur.*, 2017, no. 56, pp. 159–198, p. 195.

It is well known that myths are not the best endorsement of science. In the European case, however, some argue, and we agree with this assessment, that “myths [...] are teaching aids because they help us to understand how the boundaries of Europe have gradually been determined”<sup>8</sup>. According to this assessment, the most precise boundary of Europe would probably be that defined geographically to the south by the Mediterranean Sea. Continuing with strictly geographical criteria, the other two European borders that could be considered precise would be the western one, defined by the Atlantic Ocean, and the northern one, delimited by the Arctic Ocean. The northern and eastern boundaries would no longer be so much the northern and eastern ones, although there does seem to be agreement that in no case would these boundaries go beyond the Urals and the Caspian and Black Seas respectively, with the Caucasus as the connecting element between the latter two. We would therefore be talking about an area of 10 million km<sup>2</sup>, of which less than half would correspond to the current EU.



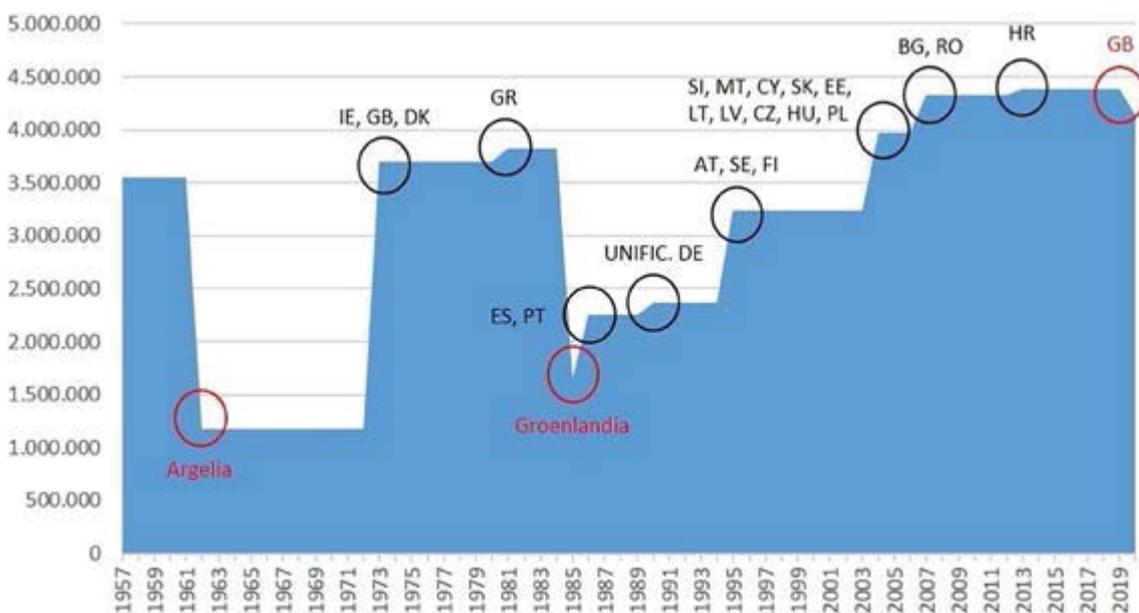
Illustration 15. Physical Map of Europe

This observation about the geographical limits of Europe may seem somewhat rhetorical, but it is nevertheless of capital importance, because it allows us to establish a first frame of reference when trying to determine whether there is a European aware-

<sup>8</sup> J. CARPENTIER, Jean; LEBRUN, François. *Breve Historia de Europa*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995, p. 14.

ness and feeling of European identity in the sense that, if European identity were associated with a geographical delimitation recognisable by European society, to the extent that the European institutions were to dismiss this aspect, they would also be blurring this European identity, which is ultimately an essential factor of strength to give vitality to this voice that wants to make itself heard forcefully in the international sphere.

Another aspect of the territorial aspect that we would like to highlight is that of its life cycle, i.e. the evolution of the size of the EU, so that its “age”, and therefore its vitality and strength, can be determined in terms of its geographical development. In this respect, it can be seen that, with the exception of some historical peculiarities such as the departure of Algeria and Greenland, which in any case cannot be considered as strictly European, the EU has followed a process of constant territorial growth since it took its first steps with the creation of the European Union.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 16. Evolution of the EU in Km<sup>2</sup> (with Algeria and Greenland)

The ECSC until the present day, which has been suddenly interrupted by the UK's exit from the EU, popularly known as Brexit. In terms of surface area, this contraction has meant a reduction of around 6% of the Union's total surface area, which, although sufficiently relevant, is not as significant as the fact of its shrinking size, which, likening it to a life cycle, would mean the end of a long period of growth and the consequent loss, at least momentary, of territorial “vitality”.

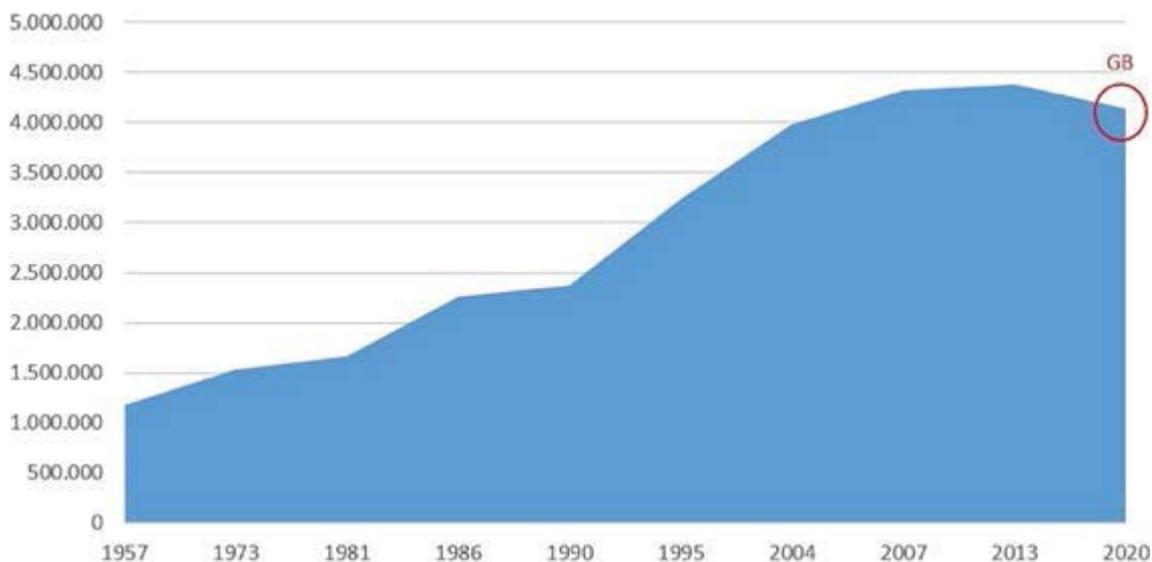
A more realistic graphic representation, without Algeria and Greenland, shows more clearly the continuous growth of the Union's surface area since its creation, which is accentuated in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the accession of large countries such as Sweden and Finland, and in the first decade of our century with the simultaneous incorporation of ten countries, eight of them from Central and Eastern Europe, to end up marking its first territorial turning point and the first setback in the process of European territorial expansion with the exit of the United Kingdom in 2020, as we have already mentioned.

In the same vein, perhaps the most revealing aspect of the EU's territorial evolution is precisely the absence of any reference to any limit or objective of maximum territorial extension, based on geographical or other considerations, that could be recognised as defining what is characteristically European.

The absence of declared territorial boundaries begs the question of what criteria should guide the EU's territorial expansion. Should the EU aspire to reach the confines of European geography with its traditional boundaries as we have defined them? Or would it perhaps be wiser to lower these expectations and confine the geographical framework of the Union to a reality more in keeping with the spirit of internal reconciliation that inspired its founding, and thus facilitate the cohesion of the main peoples concerned by this issue?

The lack of knowledge of the EU's geographical limit thus reveals a lack of definition in the project of European construction and raises the question of whether or not the EU is considering the advisability of establishing a limit to its process of territorial expansion.

On the basis of Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which lays down the conditions for accession<sup>9</sup>, there do not seem to be any a priori conditionality.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 17. Evolution of the EU in Km<sup>2</sup> (without Algeria and Greenland)

The enlargement of the Union could therefore be extended *ad infinitum* as far as the territorial issue is concerned, if we were to adhere strictly to the letter of the Treaty. However, this universalist aspiration of the European institutions is clashing in its expansive vocation with forces that oppose this ideal, even at the European regional level. Suffice it to mention the failed attempt to incorporate Ukraine into the European integration process, the consequences of which are still present today in terms of tension and instability in the region.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/enlargement/>.

No major surprises are to be expected in terms of the scope for EU enlargement beyond what is currently envisaged, but the recent experience of Ukraine creates uncertainty as to whether the EU might in the future consider a similar approach towards any other country, for example one of those included like Ukraine in the European Neighbourhood Policy<sup>10</sup>, which prevents the EU's territorial extension from being considered closed, even formally, as far as the accession chapter is concerned for the time being.

### *A people for Europe*

Returning to the analysis of the characteristics that European society should have in order to be comparable to a true European “people”, it would be necessary to start from the traditional factors of awareness and adherence that have shaped the solidity of the European nation-states throughout their history, in order to try to find, through these features, elements that could constitute factors of cohesion of the population that are relevant to the European project.

In a similar way to the fall from grace for a time of the science of geopolitics due to the disastrous consequences of its application by Nazi Germany, the unfortunate legacy of this recent European past in its paroxysmal exaltation of the purity of race has also compressibly condemned to ostracism any subsequent consideration of studying the positive aspects that shared blood – a notion different and even opposed to that of purity of blood – could contribute to the cohesion of the community, in this case the European community, and this has probably also contributed to the emergence of a certain cult of diversity as a counterpoint to the above. Be that as it may, the fact that blood ties exist is an undeniable reality and we therefore consider that they should be taken into account, even as one more indicator, when assessing the potential for social cohesion of a community or group of communities. This approach to the analysis of blood affinity as a factor of social cohesion automatically directs the object of our study towards the majorities. It should not be forgotten that in the end it is the majorities that decide the future of the people in general terms.

The eminent historian Domínguez Ortiz pointed out, referring to Spain that its personality derives from the heritage of Rome and the coexistence of its peoples in a well-defined geographical space. But what is relevant from a European point of view in Domínguez Ortiz's thinking is his assertion that “its case – that of Spain – is analogous to that of France, Italy and Germany, whose pieces have also been broken down and recomposed over centuries and millennia without prejudice to their

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<sup>10</sup> The European Neighbourhood Policy applies to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Moldova, Syria, Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Ukraine.

fundamental unity”<sup>11</sup>. We therefore find here a common pattern of formation of the European peoples that has crystallised in the constitution of the current states, from which we propose to analyse the main features of affinity or community of blood that have been formed among the European peoples as a consequence of the millenary superimposition of the successive arrivals of civilisations in the different regions of the old continent.

In the formation of the peoples of Europe, we can distinguish a first stage marked by Greco-Roman civilisation, which spread mainly throughout the Mediterranean basin, and a second stage characterised by the arrival of the “barbarian” peoples, i.e. foreigners, among whom we will highlight two large families: the Germanic peoples, which mainly comprised the Angles, Saxons and Franks, and the Slavs. These peoples will end up shaping the European states, and will give rise to a new physiognomy of the continent in which “the traditional opposition between a southern Europe – Mediterranean and of Greco-Roman civilisation – and a northern Europe, given over to the “barbarians”, is slowly being replaced by the opposition between a western Europe of Latin culture and strong Germanic presence and an eastern Europe of Greek culture and strong Slavic presence”<sup>12</sup>. Among these great European families, the importance of the Frankish people must be highlighted, as they represent the common thread of what could be understood today as a blood brotherhood between present-day France and Germany through the inheritance received by these two countries after the decomposition first of the Frankish empire of the Carolingians, and later of the Holy Roman Empire. The Charlemagne Prize awarded by the German city of Aachen seems to be a response to this recognition of the Carolingian as a connecting link in Western Europe, which is even more important now that the other great family originating in Western Europe, that of the Anglo-Saxons, has just broken away from the common European destiny after Brexit.

However, this new East-West configuration will not spread evenly across Europe. In this respect, it is worth noting the uniqueness of the western Mediterranean, where the penetration of the Franks and Slavs was only partial, and which marked a clear southern limit to the new East-West European territorial physiognomy. Within this singularity, we must also highlight the particularity of Spain and Portugal, due to the presence of the Visigoth kingdoms for three centuries in our peninsula, and the long Muslim domination that lasted for the following eight centuries. Europe was also the scene in the first millennium of the passage and even the establishment of other peoples who were not to prevail in the end: Ostrogoths, Lombards, Vandals, Huns, Avars, etc.

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<sup>11</sup> ARIAS, Jesús; GARCÍA, Alejandro V. (22 January 2003) “Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, el gran historiador de la España moderna, muere a los 93 años”. *EL PAÍS*. Available on the website: [https://elpais.com/diario/2003/01/22/cultura/1043190007\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2003/01/22/cultura/1043190007_850215.html).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141.



Source: Prepared internally

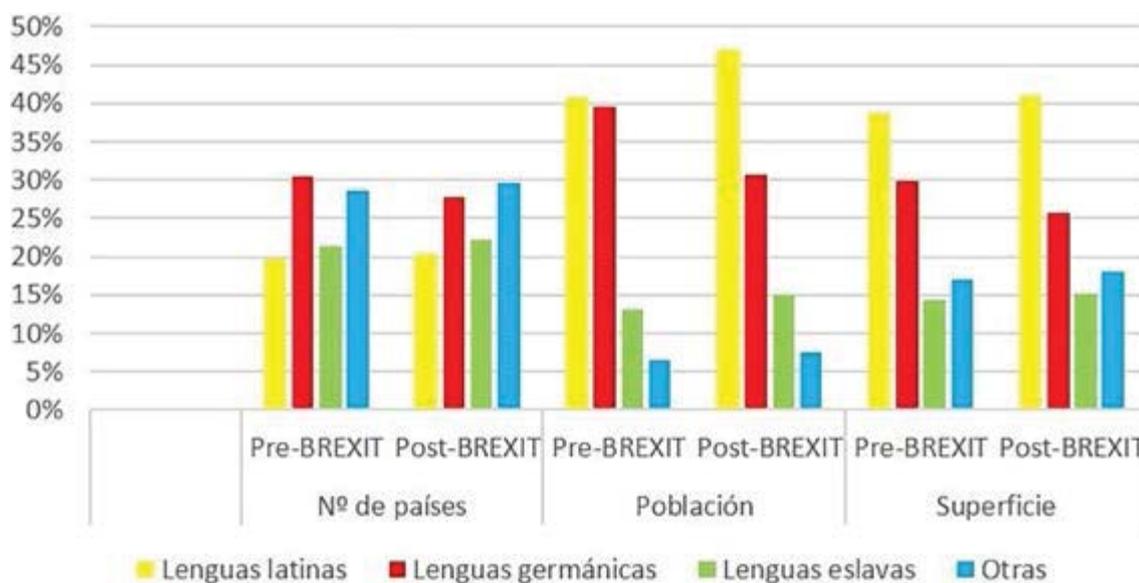
Illustration 18. European families, 1st-10th centuries

Another factor of cohesion of the population, also closely linked to coexistence as well as blood twinning, is the language community, which, like blood, is a tool for spatial delimitation and temporal continuity of peoples, and therefore one of the main factors of cohesion.

European history and current affairs do not yield satisfactory results from the language point of view that would encourage proposing a particular language as “the language of Europe”. If historically, as was to be expected, there is a general correspondence between the great European families to which we have attributed the formation of the European states, i.e. the Germanic and Slavic peoples, and the evolution of languages in Europe, to which should be added, in addition to the Germanic and Slavic languages, those derived from the legacies of Greco-Roman culture, i.e. Latin and Greek, to which should be added, in addition to the Germanic and Slavic languages, those derived from the legacies of Greco-Roman culture, i.e. Latin and Greek, it is not possible to speak of a predominance of one of them over the others, firstly because none of them reached a level of expansion that could be classified as hegemonic in the geographical framework we have defined for Europe, and secondly because of the diversity of the languages spoken in Europe, and secondly, because of the diversity of languages already existing at the end of the first millennium AD, either because of the splitting of the parent languages, particularly Latin after the fall of the Roman Empire, or because of the pre-existence and expansion of a considerable number of them

at the time of the great migrations of the Germanic peoples, who even at the time of the Roman Empire and the hegemony of Latin in their area of influence already had eight distinct languages from the three great families of Germanic languages: West, Norse and South Germanic<sup>13</sup>. The development of Slavic languages on our continent during the time of the great migrations followed a similar pattern.

This historical distribution of European languages among its three major language groups is reflected today in the balanced distribution that can be observed among EU countries on the basis of this ranking.



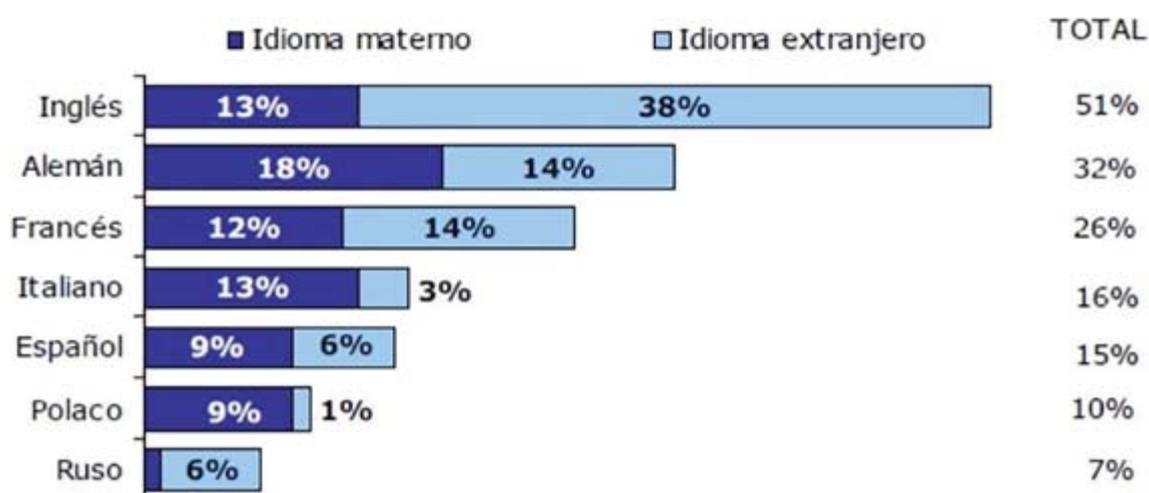
Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 19. Distribution of languages in the EU

However, in terms of population, it can be seen that since Brexit the balance between the Latin and German-speaking countries has shifted to the benefit of the former, and there has been a corresponding increase in the difference in surface area between the two. The eventual inclusion of the three candidate countries listed as belonging to the Slavic language group, i.e. Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Serbia, would in this respect represent an advance in the representation of this language group in all aspects of this distribution. Turkey, another of the five candidate countries, along with Albania and the three Slavic countries mentioned above, deserves a special mention. Turkey, with its 83 million inhabitants, would become the most populous country in the EU along with Germany, and with its 783,562 km<sup>2</sup>, the largest. Turkey would also have the peculiarity, which could be described as an anomaly, of being the only EU country with part of its territory, 97 per cent in fact, i.e. practically all of it including the capital, outside the geographical limits we have defined for Europe.

<sup>13</sup> These languages are East Germanic Gothic, Vandal and Burgundian (extinct); Old High German, Saxon, Frisian, English, and Old Frankish, belonging to West Germanic; and Old West and East Norse, belonging to Nordic Germanic.

There are currently 24 official languages in the EU. The latest EU studies<sup>14</sup> show that, if a candidate language were to be nominated as a common European language, it would be English, which before BREXIT was the most widely spoken language in the Union with 51 per cent of the population. Taking into account the small variation in the evolution of language use in Europe over the last decades, and disregarding those that could be represented by the countries that joined after the latest statistics were compiled, namely Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, an extrapolation of the data for the new post-BREXIT European reality would imply a significant decrease in the use of English as a mother tongue, from 13 to 2 per cent, and a small decrease in the use of English as a foreign language, from 38 to 35 per cent. Even so, English would still be the most widely used language in the Union, with a narrow lead over German, but more importantly, it would still double the next most shared languages, German and French.



Source: Special Eurobarometer 243  
Illustration 20.- Most used languages in the EU

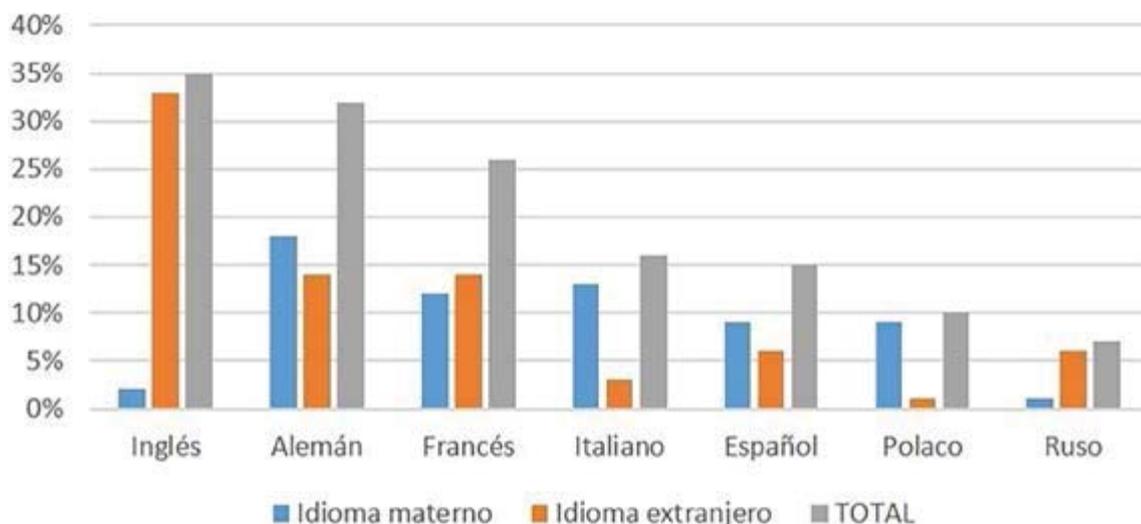
Ironically, the United Kingdom, the State that has contributed most to providing the EU with such a powerful tool for cohesion as the common language, in this case the English language, has been the first to abandon it, leaving the hegemonic language of the Union orphaned, and thereby generating the dysfunction that in our opinion is caused by the majority use in the EU of a language that is alien to the new political reality that has emerged after the BREXIT. It is to be expected that this now atypical circumstance will come to be seen over time as the legacy – probably just one of them – of the UK's passage from the EU.

To the above must be added other realities such as the Spanish language, and to a lesser extent the Portuguese language, which escape the physical geography of Europe due to their strong presence in the Ibero-American world and which, due to their weight in terms of the number of speakers and the geographical extension they cover,

<sup>14</sup> The EU has produced three special Eurobarometers on Europeans and their languages in recent years: 237 in 2005, 243 in 2006 and 386 in 2012.

are difficult for Europe to accept simply as another European language, generating a distortion in terms of their exclusively European nature. The same reasoning could have been applied to the English language, given the sheer scale of its geographical extension in English-speaking North America and the Commonwealth countries in general.

Given the difficulty of establishing and, more importantly, adopting a common language, due to the complex scenario existing in this field, it is not surprising that the EU has chosen to make a virtue out of necessity by promoting the learning of at least two languages other than the mother tongue among its citizens, and by enshrining the use of twenty-four official languages as we have pointed out. While this performance is understandable from an institutional point of view, but not from the point of view of cohesion. In this sense, the initiative to introduce a new, and therefore neutral, language, Esperanto, as a working language of the Union, could move in this direction, especially in view of its European origin and the fact that it integrates European languages by being structured on the basis of the languages of Western Europe and the Slavic languages.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 21. Most used languages in the EU (extrapolation post-BREXIT)

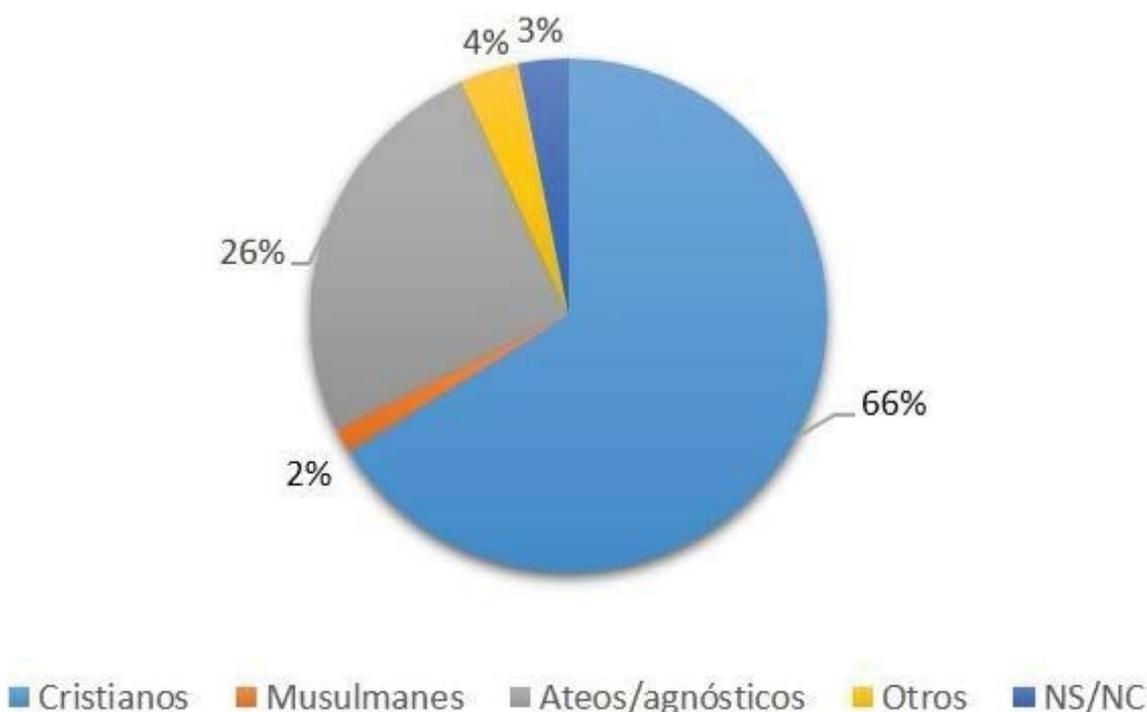
The history of Europe is fundamentally the history of Christianity. It is not in vain that Christianity, Catholicism in the strict sense of the word, has been the only unifying element capable of crossing European geographical, blood and language barriers since its establishment by the Roman Empire at the dawn of our era<sup>15</sup> until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, exercising its *auctoritas* for more than a millennium without interruption over three successive empires: the Roman, the Carolingian and the Holy Roman-Germanic Empires, and, from the Protestant movements to the present day, constituting the main spiritual substratum of the European peoples from different creeds.

<sup>15</sup> After the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312, Christianity was legalised in the Roman Empire with the Edict of Milan in 313, and became the exclusive religion of the Roman Empire by a decree of Emperor Theodosius on 27 February 380.

Christianity has also played a leading role in major European historical events, both those that made it possible to preserve the Christian character of our continent in the confrontations between Catholicism and Islam, and those that led to the definitive break-up of papal authority under the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* after the internecine wars between Catholics and Protestants, which opened the door to the new political configuration of modern Europe.

However, beyond and in spite of the episodes of confrontation, it is necessary to insist on the common thread that from Charlemagne until well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christianity has meant for the construction of Europe, which it endowed with a historical consciousness that “depended essentially on its religious sense”, which conceived progress as the ascent from original sin to the ultimate goal of becoming a child of God, and in which therefore “baptism was indispensable for citizenship”<sup>16</sup>, to the point that Europe, before becoming so, at least in its modern stage, was known as “Christendom”. Today, 66% of the population of the member states still claim to belong to one of the branches of Christianity<sup>17</sup>, and it can therefore be said that this would be a factor of cohesion that should be preserved as a sign of European identity.

In this respect it is interesting to note that if the majority of the population of the EU as a whole declares itself to be Christian, this also applies to the population of the 27 individual EU countries.



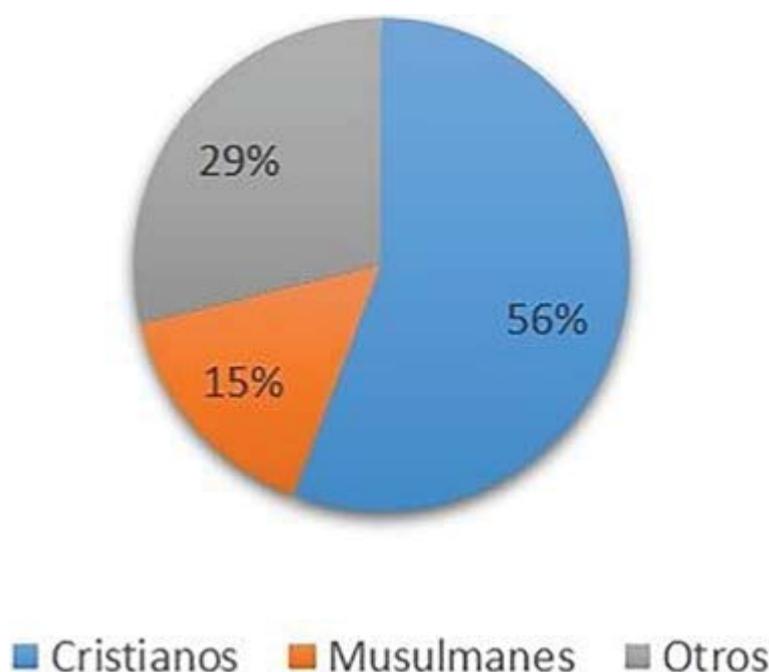
Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 22. Religious denominations EU population 2019 (extrapolation post-BREXIT)

<sup>16</sup> SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ, Luis. *Crisis y restauración en Europa*. Madrid: Homo Legens 2009, pp. 26-28.

<sup>17</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2251>, Report, SD3, T11

Once again, by carrying out a prospective exercise such as the one we have already carried out to analyse the linguistic aspects of the EU from the point of view of its enlargement process, in the case of faith it is noted that the accession to the EU of two of the five candidate countries, Albania and Turkey, both of which are Muslim-majority, in the case of Albania with 63 per cent of the population, and in the case of Turkey with 90 per cent of the population<sup>18</sup>, would mean a break in the continuity of this pattern of Christian tradition shared by the countries of the Union, as well as a notable and sudden increase in the Muslim population, which in the new configuration would increase from 7 to 81 million inhabitants and from 2 to 15 per cent of the total population of the EU, and would be accompanied by a corresponding proportional decrease in the population with Christian roots, which would go from 66 to 56 per cent of the total.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 23. Religious denominations population EU-27 + Turkey

Given that Christianity is thus the only historical European reality that has manifested itself throughout its geography, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, that has permeated the lives of all European peoples and that has been practised in all the languages of our continent, the EU, which is committed to overcoming barriers and to breaking down the barriers of religion, has nevertheless chosen to ignore its Christian roots as a sign of European identity<sup>19</sup>, much less to consider this aspect as a possible criterion for membership,

<sup>18</sup> These ages are estimates because results differ between surveys.

<sup>19</sup> During the drafting of the EU Constitutional Treaty signed in Rome in 2004 and finally not ratified, it was decided after intense debate not to include in its preamble any reference to Europe's Christian roots. Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta,

which in our opinion represents a disaffection towards its historical conscience in the area of faith and another element of weakness in terms of renouncing the recognition and affirmation of this common heritage and source of European principles and values<sup>20</sup>.

A measure of the cohesion of peoples is deduced from the shared experiences and the bonds of solidarity and trust built up around them and which have shaped the national character throughout the course of history. Of varying nature, these experiences, some adverse, others favourable, share the common denominator of awakening intense feelings capable of consolidating the vital development of peoples. Numerous examples can be found at the state level, from heroic responses to external threats, to periods of territorial expansion or periods of cultural, technological or other flourishing that have contributed to the emergence of feelings of national pride<sup>21</sup>.

However, if we extrapolate the analysis of this factor of national cohesion represented by common traditions of solidarity to the supranational European level, we can see that European forces have rarely united in the face of an external aggressor throughout European history, and when they have done so, it has been in the context of defending Christianity against Islam.

Indeed, if anything has characterised the history of Europe from the *Pax Romana* to the first half of the second millennium, it has been punctuated almost uninterruptedly by an endless string of internal conflicts, to the extent that this constant warfare has come to be regarded in some quarters as the main hallmark of European identity, which has been defined as *biocenosis*, a form of society common in nature “made up of organisms of different species [...] in such a degree of mutual interaction and interdependence that one can speak of a super-organic, habitat-based, ‘self-sustaining’ unity” so that “the harmony that enables a given biocenosis to be self-sustaining is not so much the harmony of love and peace [...] as the harmony of the struggle for life among its members”<sup>22</sup>.

In this sense, the absence of conflict in the heart of Europe since the end of the Second World War is certainly a remarkable achievement, and there is no reason to

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the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and Poland; and against Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom. PETSCHEN, Santiago “La religión en la Unión Europea”, *UNISCI Discuss. Pap.*, 2008, no. 16, pp. 49–60, pp. 50–51.).

20 In this regard, John Paul II, in his 2008 Charlemagne Prize speech, noted that his predecessor, Pius XII, “expressed the Church’s keen interest in explicitly supporting the idea of the formation of a “European union”, leaving no doubt that for a valid and lasting affirmation of such a union it is necessary to refer to Christianity as a factor that creates identity and unity” (cf. Speech to the Union of European Federalists in Rome, 11 November 1948).

21 MUIR, Richard. *Geografía política moderna*. Madrid: Army Staff Publication Service, 1982, p. 179.

22 BUENO, Gustavo. *España frente a Europa*. Barcelona: Alba, 1999, pp. 405-406.

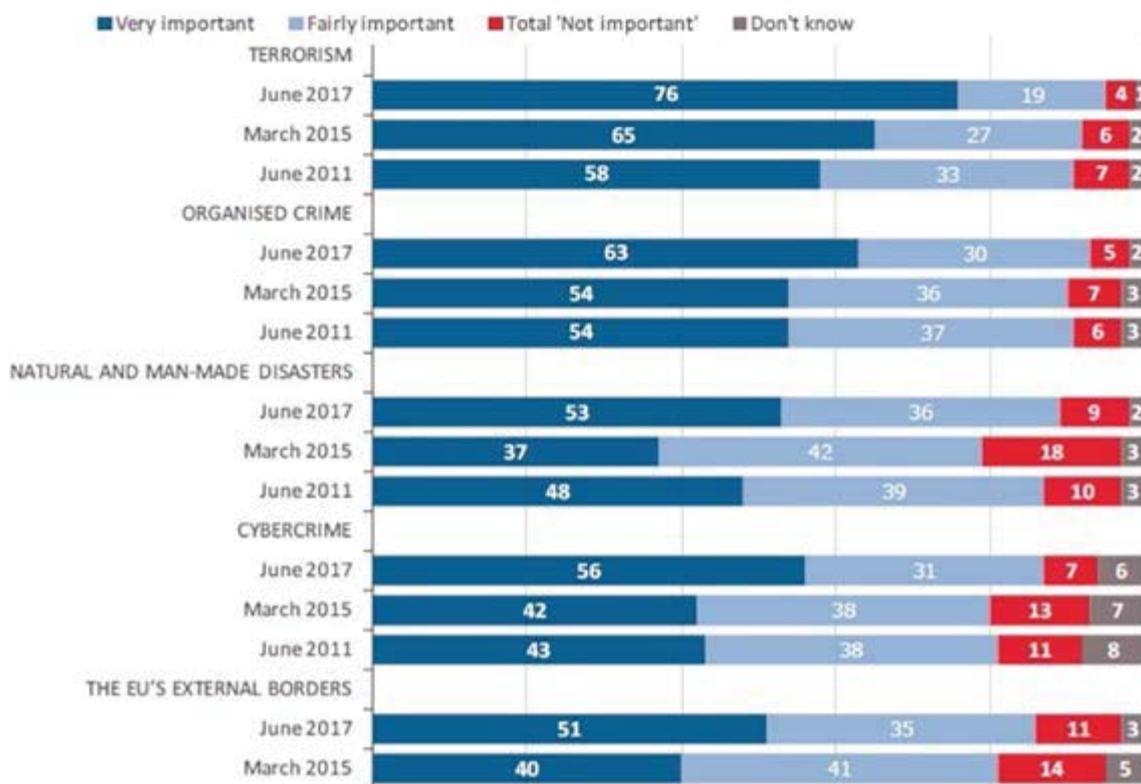
deny the process of European construction that began in 1950<sup>23</sup> any credit that may be due to it.

This journey, which is now sixty-five years since the beginning of the *Pax Europaea* we are enjoying, is perhaps not yet long enough to have allowed the emergence of those great events capable of testing the determination and capacity of peoples to overcome formidable adversities, or of stimulating them to undertake extraordinary undertakings, those which mark a before and after in the historical consciousness of nations.

If one phenomenon of external aggression towards today's Europe as a whole were to be singled out, it would be Islamist terrorism, which has caused more than 600 deaths on EU territory so far this century<sup>24</sup>, to which should be added those Europeans killed outside the Union, and which is in fact perceived year after year and with an upward trend as the main current threat to the security of European citizens.

It should be noted, however, that the target of Islamist terrorism is not confined to Europe or the West as a whole, but is not confined to the European area or the West as a whole.

**QB2** In your opinion, how important are the following challenges to the internal security of the EU? (% - EU)



Source: Special Eurobarometer 464b

Illustration 24. Attitude of European citizens towards security

<sup>23</sup> We take the date of Schuman's famous speech to pool the coal and steel resources of France and the Federal Republic of Germany as a reference, as the EU itself regards it as the birth of the integration process.

<sup>24</sup> According to own calculations, 653 fatalities have been counted from 1 January 2000 up to and including 2 November 2020, the date of the attack in Vienna that killed 3 people and wounded 15.

It has not yet made itself felt in all EU countries, not even in most of them, and could therefore be considered an “incomplete” threat to the EU, if we may say so, given its non-exclusive character, i.e. not directed exclusively at EU countries; partial, i.e. not focused on all EU countries but mainly on those that could be included in the framework of Western Europe; and limited, i.e. not aiming – at least for the time being and not by these methods<sup>25</sup> – at sovereignty in the territories under attack.

While the longed-for moment of affirmation of the new European people arrives, as the Spanish Second of May was in its day, or of exaltation of its pride at the culmination of great deeds such as those of the Twelfth of October or the first round-the-world trip, in its brief half-century of existence the EU has already had the opportunity to put its aspirations for solidarity to the test in the face of situations that could be classified as exceptional, as we understand the massive irregular migratory flows and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have not only exposed the different sensibilities of its peoples, with questionable results for the time being for the intended progress along the path of cohesion, but have also been able to fuel, as in the case of the aforementioned immigration, the emergence of centrifugal currents capable of provoking adverse outcomes such as Brexit. This leads us to wonder to what extent it is possible that the citizens of a given European country will be able to feel that a problem that is manifesting itself in other countries of the Union is their own, and whether it can be expected that at some point an unequivocal feeling of solidarity between the citizens of the different European countries will emerge. We believe that this is the direction in which the European institutions should in any case be heading.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 25. EU countries that have suffered Islamist attacks 2000-2019

<sup>25</sup> In the context of fourth generation warfare, the preferred method for Islam’s hegemonic purposes would be immigration invasion (Lind, William S. “Understanding Fourth Generation War”. *Military Review*, 2004, vol. 84, no. 5, pp. 12-19, p. 13).

## The performance of the European institutions

Following the paradigm of awareness of and adherence to the nation and convergent performance of the state, which according to our model defines the degree of strength of the nation-state, and once the aspects of the first two have been extrapolated to the supranational European sphere, that is, national awareness and adherence, and the relevant actions that the peoples that have inhabited the European geography throughout its history have developed to these effects have been analysed, it is then necessary to analyse the degree of convergence in the performance of the EU, that is, to determine to what extent the current project of the Union is taking into account our postulates of convergence and to what extent it would be possible to base European construction on the assumptions of Europe as a nation-state. To this end, we will apply to the EU an analysis of the aspects of institutional performance that we have considered most relevant for the achievement of the convergence criterion: territoriality, representation, and the symbols of the Union.

### *Territoriality*

Externally, the notion of territoriality, that is, the awareness and meaning of territory, is inextricably linked to that of preserving the habitat of a given community and therefore to the very concept of security and defence against an external threat, and internally it constitutes an essential territorial reference to provide certainty about the definition of the human group that allows the necessary trust to be generated as a prelude to solidarity among its members.

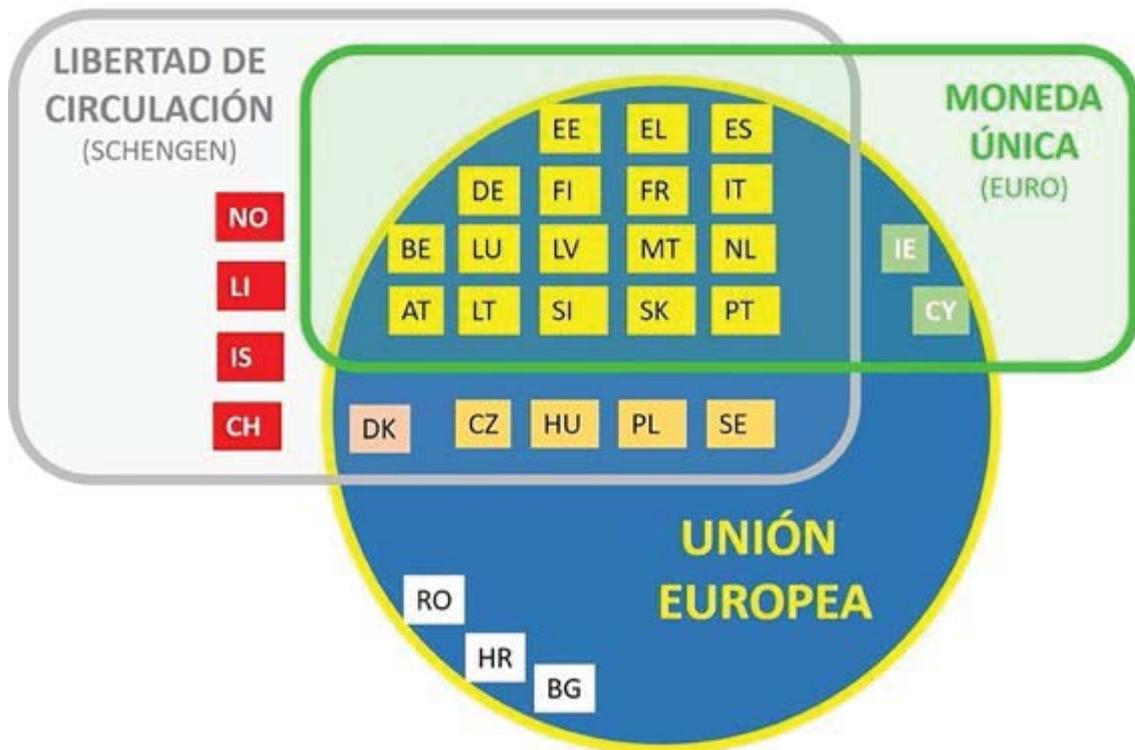
Borders are a characteristic element of territoriality. From the thesis of trans-territorialisation and cross-borderisation, it could be argued that the disappearance of borders would inexorably lead to the disappearance of intrusion.

However, we must understand borders not as the cause, but as the consequence of differences between spaces of coexistence. Reciprocally, an appropriate delineation of borders would be one that would allow for the proper delimitation of those frameworks of coexistence with their own identity around which to preserve and foster bonds of understanding, trust and solidarity. In a traditional state, this would mean that the state should strive to ensure that its territory, as a constituent factor of an emotional dimension and a catalyst for a people's sense of identity<sup>26</sup>, responds as closely as possible to what is expected of it from that perspective. If the EU is to aspire to the soul it has longed for, this should be one of its vectors of action.

The creation of areas of coexistence that make it possible to break down the borders separating EU countries is one of the strategies for the construction of the

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26 PAASI, Anssi. "The resurgence of the 'Region' and 'Regional Identity': theoretical perspectives and empirical observations on regional dynamics in Europe" *Rev. Int. Stud.*, 2009, vol. 35, no. 51, pp. 121-146, p. 124.



Source: Prepared internally  
Illustration 26. EU Coexistence Spaces

European project and can be considered in general terms as a positive factor of territoriality. The Schengen area, the single currency and the European area of justice are representative examples. However, issues such as the discrepancies regarding the principles and conditions that should inspire their creation, the discretionary nature of the scope of action of some areas with respect to others, or the disputed application in some cases of the rules that regulate them<sup>27</sup>, have produced results that are far removed from and sometimes even contrary to those sought, and have only led to an undesired heterogeneity of communities and a resentment of trust between member countries that undoubtedly constitute an obstacle to the consolidation of areas of coexistence. Illustrative of this is the division of the EU countries into five distinct groups, based solely on the different conditions of accession to two of the areas mentioned above: the Schengen area of free movement<sup>28</sup> and the single currency area<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> With regard to the European Arrest Warrant, the refusals of the German and Belgian judiciaries to grant the extradition of the former president of the Generalitat of Catalonia Puigdemont for the crime of rebellion illustrate the shortcomings of this system as an instrument of mutual trust between states on which the European area of justice is based.

<sup>28</sup> Five EU countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Ireland and Romania do not belong to the Schengen area, and there are four countries that do not belong to the EU but belong to the Schengen area: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>29</sup> The Eurozone is made up of the 27 EU countries, 19 of which have already adopted the Euro as their official currency. Denmark has an opt-out clause allowing it to keep its own currency.

Externally, the lack of definition that the European enlargement project itself implies from the point of view of citizens' perception of territoriality generates uncertainty that leads to distrust of the project, and represents an added factor of territorial weakness<sup>30</sup>. In this sense, cultural or any other type of event labelled as "European" but open to the participation of countries outside the European institutional and geographical reality<sup>31</sup>, can also contribute, even subliminally, to this perception of territorial indefiniteness.

### *Representation*

If we start from the premise that "citizens are (or should be) at the centre of the political system"<sup>32</sup>, then the performance of political power should be oriented towards achieving this centrality of citizen representation as a condition for guaranteeing the good health of the system.

The most ambitious attempt to date to raise citizen participation to the highest levels of representation in the European project probably took place on the occasion of the referendum ratification process of the 2004 Treaty of Rome, the "*non nata* European Constitution"<sup>33</sup>, which famously failed due to the rejection of the Treaty by France and the Netherlands.

The failed attempt to enact the Treaty of Rome highlighted the gap that existed at that time between the nature of a European construction project that had been designed from a supranational conception, and a citizenry that lacked the elements of judgement to assess, much less accept, the scope of that supranationality.

Far from understanding the message and addressing the problem that this deficit of citizen representation posed for progress in European construction, or perhaps pressured by the imperious need to continue advancing the project, the European insti-

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30 The Copenhagen accession criteria do not establish any condition of "Europeanness", and only Article 49 of the Maastricht Treaty establishes such a requirement, although it does not explain what is to be understood by a European state, and ultimately whether preconditions of eligibility based on geographical considerations exist and should be established, thus also contributing to the ambiguity in this regard.

31 As an example, the Eurovision Song Contest is open to all active member countries of the European Broadcasting Union, including countries bordering Europe, such as the Mediterranean basin of the Middle East and Africa (Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt), and the Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan).

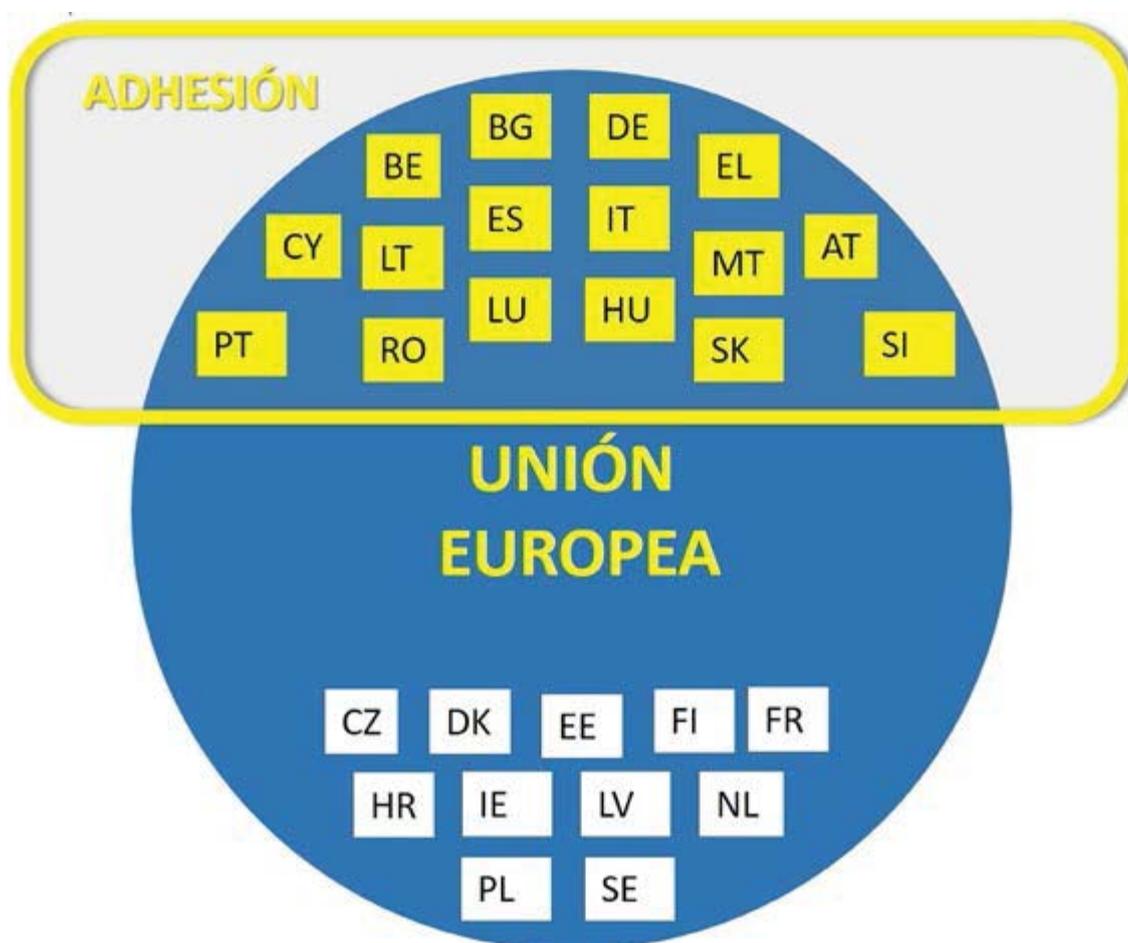
32 FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ, José Julio. "La hiperglobalización y su impacto" in *Gobernanza futura: hiperglobalización, mundo multipolar y Estados emergentes*, Madrid: Ministry of Defence 2018, pp. 83-118, p. 98.

33 MOLINA HERRERA, Jerónimo (dir.) et al. *Europa en la encrucijada*. El Ejido: FUNDACIÓN Cajamar 2007, p. 12.

tutions opted in any case to take a headlong rush forward by enacting a new Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, a successor to the previous one, only three years later, but with the substantial difference that it avoided the thorny pitfall of the referendum in the ratification procedure, thus deepening the inability of the European institutions to carry out a convergent performance of citizen adhesion to the idea of Europe.

Perhaps it was this reflection of the distancing of citizens from the rejection of the Treaty of Rome that led the Lisbon Treaty to incorporate the, in our opinion, successful European Citizens' Initiative<sup>34</sup> (ECI), not only to stimulate citizen participation in the European project, but also to gauge the reality of the citizenship in this respect.

The ECI is a tool that allows citizens to participate in shaping the EU by asking the European Commission to propose new laws.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 27. Accession to the symbols of the EU after the Lisbon Treaty

When an initiative reaches one million signatures, the Commission decides what action to take.

<sup>34</sup> [https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/home\\_es](https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/home_es).

Within the ECI we would like to highlight the initiative “VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS”<sup>35</sup>, which calls for the right of Europeans to vote where they live. This initiative, like all those promoted by citizens, maintains a bottom-up approach to the construction of the commons from below, which is characteristic of nation-building processes, and should therefore be interpreted as an indicator of a growing awareness of Europe as a nation. This and other initiatives of a similar nature are intended to give European citizens a greater degree of representation, and will undoubtedly also be an indicator of the degree of commitment that citizens are prepared to make to the process of European integration<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, a good reception of this initiative could reasonably be interpreted as a demonstration of citizens’ commitment to integration, while a poor reception would denote suspicion of it, and would be a sign of mistrust or disapproval of the European integration process.

### *The symbols*

“[...] symbols are important because they contribute to the mental construction of a community. They are not a question of sovereignty, but of identification”. It might seem that the person who expresses himself in this way is a recognised Eurosceptic representative and a staunch defender of the misnamed “nationalist countries”, those that are still anchored in concepts that are supposedly outdated and far removed from the benefits of diversity, such as the importance of identity for the construction of a strong community. However, the author of this statement is none other than the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Common Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Spain’s José Borrell. Identity is thus revealed, by someone not at all suspected of being anti-European, as a fundamental element in the construction of Europe as a community, in which symbols play a prominent role, to the extent that, also according to Borrell himself, “[...] the “de-symbolisation” of Europe, the refusal to symbolise it explicitly, reflects the weakness of its political dimension”.

The Spanish politician thus regretted the setback implied by the withdrawal in the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>37</sup> of any allusion to European symbols<sup>38</sup> in order to strip it of any sovereigntist connotation, and pointed out the following, referring to the said Treaty:

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35 <https://voterswithoutborders.eu/>.

36 The voting period for the “VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS” initiative opened on 1 September 2020 and will end on 11 September 2021.

37 <https://www.boe.es/doue/2007/306/Z00001-00271.pdf>, C 306/267, Declaration 52.

38 Article 1-8 of the ill-fated Treaty of Rome was devoted to the symbols of the Union, and expressly designated as such the flag, the anthem, the motto or motto, the currency and Europe Day. However,

“[...] what is said or not said, or where and how it is said matters. As do the symbols, almost all of which disappear to appease those who fear that the EU resembles a state. There will be no reference to the flag, the anthem or Europe Day. Flag and anthem will continue to fly and be played, but without formal recognition. Thus, everyone will be able to give them the value they want, which today is very different from country to country. In some countries, the star-spangled blue flag is banned, in others it systematically accompanies the national flag or leads major military parades”<sup>39</sup>.

Paradoxically, the very symbols that should unite the different sensibilities around them are thus becoming yet another source of controversy within the Union, perhaps in logical coherence with its role of representation and synthesis of a European reality plagued by discrepancies and contradictions.

## Conclusions

If we were to identify original factors of European awareness and adherence that could be assimilated to those of a national nature, we would have to allude to a recognisable traditional geography and to the unquestionable factor of cohesion that Christianity represented for a millennium as a spiritual reference and a channel for the cultural structuring of the European peoples. Action by the European institutions aimed at emulating the solidity that characterises nation-states in order to give them an equal voice, not only unique but also firm, in the international concert, should converge towards preserving and stimulating these two original factors of cohesion that we have pointed out and that have been and continue to be present in Europe's spatial and temporal reality.

In the territorial sphere, the initial construction of the new European reality around the countries that in our opinion constitute the hard core of the project, France and Germany, together with the subsequent incorporation of areas of coexistence such as the Schengen area and the Eurozone, and the forecasts for the gradual incorporation of countries through the EU's enlargement policy, constitute valid approximations for a recomposition of the European geographical frame of reference.

The imperfect application of these European policies of geographical integration nevertheless causes undesired effects of fragmentation of the European community into different groups of member countries – and in the case of the Schengen area also of some non-member countries – depending on their belonging to one or another area

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after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the symbols of the EU ceased to be legally binding for the member states. Only in one annex (p. C 306/267, Declaration 52) the Conference noted the recognition of the European symbols by 16 of the then 28 member countries, which significantly did not include France and the Netherlands, two of the founding countries.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

of coexistence, a fragmentation that is all the greater the greater the number of areas of coexistence considered.

For its part, the accession policy in turn casts shadows of ambiguity due to its lack of definition in the establishment of the necessary geographical limits that are inherent to any political entity, with debilitating effects on the necessary territorial cohesion, which is all the more diminished the greater the increase in territorial extension. We are by no means trying to equate the strength of the ties of European nations with that of a so-called European national bond, but we do want to draw attention to the fact that extension generally works against cohesion, and in this sense an approach of unlimited enlargement of the EU in terms of territorial extension, or simply an absence of any approach to this question, is in our opinion an obstacle to the objective of having not just a strong voice, but even a single voice, within the Union.

It is true that the EU sets as one of the conditions for accession the European membership of the candidate countries, which would give the Union a definitively closed character. However, as long as the European institutions persist in wanting to emphasise an open and universalist character, which clearly contradicts the reality of their own conditions for enlargement, they will be contributing to spreading a sense of lack of definition as to its definitive scope, which is undoubtedly one of the main obstacles today to the emergence of a spirit of compromise and to the achievement of the necessary cohesion that the European project demands.

The lack of definition that afflicts the performance of the European institutions is not limited exclusively to the territorial, or if you like, geographical sphere, but also extends to the other major factor of cohesion that we have pointed out, that of the cultural heritage that Christianity has meant for Europe. Much emphasis has been placed on the importance of Europe recognising its Christian roots if it is to remain Europe; as much as there have been and continue to be silences on the European project in general, and on the issue of recognising its Christian roots in particular, as was certainly the case with the failed attempt at a Constitutional Treaty, in which, as we have already mentioned, no mention was made of this issue.

In this as in other matters, the intermediation of the member states in European achievements thus provokes a barrier effect that results in a deficit of citizen representation and in the design of a Europe that is different from what its historical and current cultural reality indicates, and too distant to stimulate bonds of awareness and support among its citizens.

The founding fathers set themselves an immediate goal, the avoidance of wars on European soil, and an ultimate goal, the achievement of world peace, perhaps too ambitious and therefore also far removed from citizenship. Since then, European institutions have struggled to move along the winding path that leads along the broad spectrum of varying degrees of strength that mark these extremes.

No one can doubt the great achievements in overcoming the model of coexistence based on competition and conflict that has characterised European life in recent

centuries, and those who think that, after the success of achieving its founding goal, Europe's capacity to promote and legitimise further progress towards ever closer political union has been exhausted, and even that the EU is increasingly moving along the intergovernmental path, are possibly right.

Whatever path it decides to take in the future, the fact is that the current EU seems to be far from the supranational path we have tried to explore in this article, which would indicate a limitation in the convergent performance that could be demanded of it in order to advance towards achieving the single, strong voice it so desperately needs in the international arena.

Given the identity weakness of a disbelieving and reformulated Europe, and the possibility of referring a hypothetical idea of a European "nation" to its community of origin, it seems necessary to turn to other ways of identity. One of these could be based on the perception of Europe as a unit from the outside. Applying this criterion would, for example, allow the European institutions to build a recognisable identity around a "community of destiny", a sort of "brand Europe", which would encourage the dissemination abroad of those outstanding aspects of the Europe à la carte that European institutional actors would be willing to promote.

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