

The Fall of the Berlin Wall and European Integration

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CRISIS OF TRUST AS CRISIS OF DEEPENING INTEGRATION

Surprisingly, the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, turned out to be the biggest challenge to Europe since the fall of Hitler's Third Reich in the same city on May 8, 1945. Instead of rejoicing about the end of Europe's division in happy anticipation of European unification under the banner of freedom, democracy and market economy, skeptical concern, fear and immobility soon filled the air. With German unification imminent as the immediate consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall, even the very rationale of European integration seemed to have become questionable. Germany might not need European integration any longer, some argued. Other notorious skeptics perceived united Germany as the dominating European power, while some analysts were questioning whether or not Germany would maintain its interest in pursuing European integration at all. Soon, a first set of reassuring answers was given: The government of united Germany under Chancellor Helmut Kohl was reelected twice after the unification of the two German states on October 3, 1990, before he lost his Chancellorship in the 1998 election. At all times during this decade, Kohl's government remained unwavering in its commitment to European integration. German unification and European unity were considered as two intrinsically linked sides of the same coin.¹

Rapid German unification had come about only after formal consent of the four allied powers, who had won World War II against the German Reich. German unification accelerated the

¹ See Szabo, Stephen, *The Diplomacy of German Unification*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992; Zelikow, Philip, and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany United and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995.

path toward the European Monetary Union. It also opened up the possibility of further enlargements to include Central and Eastern European countries: After all, the accession of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany – based on its traditional internal federal structures with five “new Länder” joining the eleven “old Länder” of the Federal Republic – was the first accession of a post-communist transformation society to the European Community, albeit under different conditions. Joy could have been the overall European attitude.

This, however, did not happen because a second set of answers to the questions raised with the end of the artificial division of Europe was much more difficult to obtain. In fact, it even took EU leaders a couple of years to define the right content of questions following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 found a first formal answer in the EU membership of ten post-communist countries in 2004, followed by another two in 2007. Further applicant countries from Southeast Europe reminded the EU that even the enlargement marathon had remained unfinished business. The enlargement of the European Union to include former communist countries had been the only possible and morally right answer to overcome the division of Europe originating in the Cold War. Before joining the EU, the new member states had to go through a tough period of internal transformation in the course of which they had to adopt the EU’s *acquis communautaire*. Through this daunting process, they became formally more Europeanized than most of the “old” EU member states.² None of them would have wished to go through the ordeal

² See Zielonka, Jan (ed.), *Europe Unbound: Enlarging and Reshaping the Boundaries of the European Union*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2002; Dimitrova, Antoaneta C. (ed.), *Driven to Change: The European Union’s Enlargement Viewed from the East*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004; Cameron, Fraser, *The Future of Europe: Integration and Enlargement*, London: Routledge, 2005; Schimmelfennig, Frank, and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Politics of European Enlargement: Theoretical Approaches*, London: Routledge, 2005; Schimmelfennig, Frank, and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005; Brimmer, Esther, and Stefan Fröhlich (eds.), *The Strategic Implications of European Union Enlargement*, Washington D. C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2005; Grabbe, Heather, *The EU’s Transformative Power: Europeanization through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

of a comprehensive review of the EU compatibility of its legal system.

No matter how important the enlargement process was, the other long-term question for the future of the European Union was not raised with the same clarity as the enlargement issue: How to deepen European integration and with which objectives? Eventually, during the 1990's and into the first years of the twenty-first century the idea of what European integration was meant became blurred across most of the EU. Instead of finding joint answers to the question of what European countries and societies could do together, the leadership of many EU member states became obviously more absorbed in preventing the European Union from advancing. They were trying to delineate the limits of European integration. Instead of pro-actively defining and advancing a common European good, they emphasized national interests. The European Union was stumbling from one crisis into the next and from one symbolic exit of a crisis into the next stage of self-doubts. The main question remained unanswered: How could united Europe define common interests and common public goods in order to prevent a permanent stalemate over vested national interests, mutual suspicions and an overall sense of stagnation and loss in the age of globalization? Paradoxically, the potentially positive process of constitution-building that culminated with the signing of the first ever European Constitution in 2004 was more an expression of reciprocal suspicion than of convincing leadership. At its beginning stood the Treaty of Nice, the embodiment of a politics of veto instead of a politics of enabling open doors. Lack of leadership inspired lack of differentiation among Union citizens: The rejection of the European Constitution in referenda in 2005 in two founding states of the EU was primarily a rejection of the incumbent leadership in France and in the Netherlands. The majority of EU citizens were ready for more integration, and also for a European Constitution. But their leaders failed them in convincingly explaining what their actions were meant to initiate. The same disaster happened, not surprisingly, in June 2008 when the Irish people were asked to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon in a referendum: 53.4 percent of the Irish voters said "no" and triggered a new crisis for EU politicians. Eventually, this was not an Irish problem but a problem of political authority and leadership across the European Union.

The absence of solid achievements of deeper integration in parallel to the unprecedented enlargement of the EU turned into a crisis of trust in Europe's political leaders. This crisis generated a reflection period which turned, interestingly, into the first reasonable constitutional debate in Europe. The constitution of the European Union, of European identity and of EU policy-making was discussed more than ever before in five decades of EU integration history. In itself, this was a good and reassuring reaction to the crisis in constitution-building. Hopefully, it could mean the beginning of a new contract between Union citizens and EU leadership, the initiation of a new consent about the future of Europe and hence a Second Founding of European integration. It surely meant the breakthrough of the Europeanization of politics in Europe. At last, this combination of crisis, self-doubt, fancy Euroscepticism and even more frustrating disappointment with the short-sightedness (and limited success) of national efforts to go it alone turned European integration eventually into a matter of domestic politics across the EU: 66 percent of EU citizens consider issues related to the European Union to be an element of domestic politics (and not of foreign politics) in their respective countries.³

During five decades of European integration, institutional Europe has been established. But, still, Europeans are rare. The end of communist totalitarianism and the divisions of the Cold War opened enormous prospects and opportunities for many societies in Europe. But, surprisingly, the idea of value added through a united Europe became increasingly obscure. One experience stood above all others during these years of trial for European integration: Europe needs to be a Europe of results if its institutions want to regain legitimacy. "A Europe that works," as political leaders began to formulate this insight, would remain the ultimate bench-mark for judging the readiness of the European Union to take its desired place in the world on the basis of a new internal consent among EU citizens and EU leadership.

The enlargement challenge arising from the secular change encapsulated in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end to communist

³ See *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No. 187, August 14, 2007: 19. With 79 percent, the Portuguese were leading the assumption of this opinion poll, with 46 percent the Belgians were, astonishingly, the people with the lowest support for the thesis of EU affairs being a matter of domestic politics.

totalitarianism was handled reasonably rationally and successfully. With German unification in October 1990, the first EU enlargement to include a post-communist society took place. It should have been obvious that somehow the intra-German adaptations would have to be dealt with on a much larger scale in the face of an EU enlargement with a host of post-communist countries. On a much larger scale, socio-economic, political, constitutional and cultural matters needed to be addressed. The psychological and physical consequences of communist rule, and the implications of deep structural transformations, were unavoidable for the EU as a whole once other countries followed the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in joining the European Union. This was not an all too pleasant and comfortable thought for many political leaders in Western Europe. Politicians therefore tried to downplay its implications and continued to celebrate the unification of Europe in the name of freedom and democracy as a symbolic victory. Eventually, together with Malta and Cyprus ten post-communist countries joined the European Union during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2004, when the first eight of them entered the EU with a total of nearly 73 million inhabitants, they had a combined GDP of 458.4 billion euros. This combined GDP was not larger than that of the Netherlands with 465.3 billion euros and little more than 16 million citizens.

TABLE: MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

EU Member State	Population (in million) ⁴	GDP (in billion euros) ⁵	GDP per capita (EU average: 100) ⁶	Seats in the European Parliament (as of 2009) ⁷	Votes in the Council (as of 2009) ⁸
Austria	8.2	245	122.7	17 (2.32 %)	10 (2.0 %)
Belgium	10.4	298	117.7	22 (3.01 %)	12 (3.48 %)
Bulgaria	7.8	21	32.1	17 (2.32 %)	10 (2.90 %)
Cyprus	0.7	13	83.5	6 (0.82 %)	4 (1.16 %)
Czech Republic	10.2	98	73.0	22 (3.01%)	12 (3.48 %)
Denmark	5.4	208	124.2	13 (1.78 %)	7 (2.03 %)
Estonia	1.3	11	57.4	6 (0.82 %)	4 (1.16 %)
France	60.6	1710	109.0	72 (9.84 %)	29 (8.41 %)
Finland	5.2	155	112.1	13 (1.78%)	7 (2.03 %)
Germany	82.5	2258	109.8	99 (13.52 %)	29 (8.41 %)
Greece	11.1	181	82.2	22 (3.01%)	12 (3.48 %)
Hungary	10.1	88	60.9	22 (3.01 %)	12 (3.48%)

Ireland	4.1	160	137.1	12 (1.64 %)	7 (2.03%)
Italy	58.5	1417	102.8	72 (9.84 %)	29 (8.41%)
Latvia	2.3	13	47.1	8 (1.09 %)	4 (1.16 %)
Lithuania	3.4	21	52.1	12 (1.64 %)	7 (2.03 %)
Luxembourg	0.5	29	247.8	6 (0.82 %)	4(1.16%)
Malta	0.4	4	69.3	5 (0.68 %)	3 (0.87 %)
Netherlands	16.3	502	123.5	25 (3.42 %)	13 (3.77 %)
Poland	38.2	243	49.9	50 (6.83 %)	27 (7.83 %)
Portugal	10.5	147	71.4	22 (3.01 %)	12 (3.48 %)
Romania	21.7	79	34.8	33 (4.51 %)	14 (4.06 %)
Slovakia	5.4	38	55.1	13 (1.78 %)	7 (2.03 %)
Slovenia	2.0	27	80.0	7 (0.96 %)	4 (1.16 %)
Spain	43.0	904	98.7	50 (6.83 %)	27 (7.83 %)
Sweden	9.0	288	114.7	18 (2.46 %)	10 (2.90 %)
United Kingdom	60.0	1791	116.8	72 (9.84 %)	29 (8.41 %)

⁴ European Union, European Commission, *Europe In Figures. Eurostat Yearbook 2006–07*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 2007, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CD-06-001/DE/KS-CD-06-001-DE.PDF.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ European Union, European Commission, Treaty of Nice: A Comprehensive Guide, http://europa.eu/scadplus/nice_treaty/bodies_en.htm#PARLIAMENT.

⁸ European Union, European Commission, Treaty of Nice: A Comprehensive Guide, http://europa.eu/scadplus/nice_treaty/council_en.htm#VOTES.

At the end of 2007, the Schengen Area was enlarged to most new EU member states in Central Europe. Eight Central European countries (all new member states except Romania and Bulgaria) and Malta introduced control-free border crossing, the most prominent symbol of shared freedom of citizens across Europe. On January 1, 2008, the Single European Payments Area (SEPA) was inaugurated, providing for cost-free cashless financial transactions across the European Union. Estimates assume that customers will gain 35–70 billion euros annually. Simultaneously, Malta and Cyprus introduced the euro as their legal tender, bringing the member states of the eurozone to fifteen, covering 319 million EU citizens. In 2009, Slovenia became the sixteenth EU member state adopting the euro. The euro gained 13 percent against the US dollar within one year and its share of world currency reserves has reached 30 percent.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CONSOLIDATED CONSTITUTIONALISM

The need to deepen European integration during the 1990's and the first decade of the twenty-first century was a response to a threefold challenge posed to Europe: The European Union had to consolidate its economic structures in order to maintain stability for its emerging currency. It had to prepare the EU for dealing with the consequences of enlargement toward post-communist Europe and, in a related matter, for a recalibration of transatlantic relations, neighborhood relations in Southern and Eastern directions, and Europe's role in future global management. Finally, it had to find satisfying responses to the ever-increasing claims that the EC was suffering a "democratic deficit" and was lacking legitimacy, while its Byzantine institutional structures, not transparent and full of inconsistencies, impeded the efficient outcome of EU operations.

The decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall began with the ambitious effort to simultaneously realize the European Monetary Union and a European Political Union. During the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on December 8 and 9, 1989 – under the deep impression of the historical developments in Central and Eastern Europe⁹ – the establishment of an intergovernmental conference on European Monetary Union was decided upon. In light of possible resentment in Germany about the loss of the Deutschmark to a common European currency – and certainly in East Germany, where the Deutschmark had only recently been introduced in replacement of the weak Eastern Mark – German Chancellor Kohl pleaded for tactical postponement of the announcement of the date of the Intergovernmental Conference; he had to win the first national elections in a united Germany on December 2, 1990. Finally, the European Council in Dublin on June 25 and 26, 1990, decided to begin the work of an Intergovernmental Conference in mid-December 1990 under the Italian Presidency. The same European Council also agreed on a joint initiative by

⁹ See Helmut Kohl's account of the frosty atmosphere at this meeting, where he was not only welcomed with joy about the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also with concern about the future prospects of a stronger Germany: Kohl, Helmut, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1996: 194–201.

French President Mitterrand and German Chancellor Kohl to launch a second Intergovernmental Conference on political union, likewise starting its work before the end of the year.

Both intergovernmental conferences conducted their work throughout 1991, finishing complex and sometimes highly controversial negotiations at the European Council in Maastricht on December 9 and 10, 1991.¹⁰ At this meeting, the main parameters of the Treaty of Maastricht were agreed upon. Its most important decision was the finalization of the beginning of the third stage for European Monetary Union on January 1, 1999. But other aspects of the Treaty of Maastricht regarding the future structure of the European integration process were not less important, including its rather incomplete decisions on political union. The Treaty of Maastricht was the most thorough treaty revision since 1957. It was also the beginning of a series of further revisions that were to continue during the next two decades.

EMERGING EUROPEAN INTERESTS AS MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL DISPUTES

The period of European integration that started with the Treaty of Maastricht and the effect of the breakdown of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe ended with the implementation of the institutional reforms of the Treaty of Lisbon and the breakthrough of the politicization and Europeanization of politics in the European Union. During this period of European integration, the EU was able to broaden the basis of consent concerning European interests, which, by now, would include the following components:

The primacy of community law was consolidated in spite of strong irritations, at times, about the meaning and substance of a “European spirit,” leadership deficits and structural problems in upholding and deepening the treaty-based *acquis communautaire*.¹¹

¹⁰ See Dyson, Kenneth, and Kevin Featherstone, *The Road to Maastricht: Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Mazzucelli, Colette, *France and Germany at Maastricht: Politics and Negotiations to Create the European Union*, New York: Garland, 1997.

¹¹ See Craig, Paul, and Gráinne de Búrca (eds.), *The Evolution of EU Law*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Budgetary matters have become an intrinsic element of a community of destiny, bound by the will to maintain the strength of the common currency in a common market; however, no sustainable solution has yet been found to install solid economic governance and fiscal federalism.

The impact of European integration on domestic structures in all member states has given a new and larger meaning to the notion of Europeanization; the process of politicizing European integration has increased the need to adapt national traditions, legislature, governance processes and economic structures, which did not remain without critical reactions from the side of EU member states.

The right to speak “in the name of Europe” is not the privilege of any institution or member state, and certainly not the privilege of the bigger member states alone, France and Germany in particular; in order to achieve a Single Foreign, Security and Defense Policy it will be necessary for the European Union not to define herself as counter-power to the United States.

EFFECTS OF “ENLARGEMENT FEAR:” NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR DEEPENING

During the 1990’s, the joy over the end of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe gave way to realism, concern and also resentment in Western Europe. While the post-communist countries were seriously and adamantly struggling to incorporate the EU’s *acquis communautaire* into their domestic agenda of transformation, the 15 old EU member states were trying to prevent the transformation also impacting their ways. Speculation about the costs of integrating and reforming Central and Eastern European countries reached by the wildest projections concerning possible flows of migration. A certain increase of illegal migration and organized crime related to the new openness of borders were undeniable, but it seemed as if this was the inevitable prize of freedom. At the same time, the larger markets in Central and Eastern Europe were a golden opportunity for many businesses and companies across Western Europe. More trade with the new participants of the European market substituted for exhausted consumerism and recession in Western Europe. Fear of uncontrolled migration was another dubious prejudice that all of a sudden obsessed Western Europe. A more sober and differentiated analysis about migratory patterns into the EU had to consider two kinds of labor movements originating in the post-communist

societies: complementary movement and competitive movement.¹² While the first type was needed in several sectors of the Western European economy that are in need of seasonal manual workers or of cheap temporary workers (i.e. harvesting, construction business), the second one simply required stronger efforts by the economies of “old Europe” to proceed with the evolution of new levels of a modernized division of labor. Some countries of Western Europe were faster than others in recognizing the need for enhanced reforms of their labor markets and welfare systems, their education structures and curricula from kindergarten to university. Others were resorting to protectionist instincts as if new walls would have ever helped anybody in Europe.

Five million people had migrated to Germany alone between 1989 and 1996. Most of them did not come from the EU applicant countries, but from the former Soviet Union. Across the EU, the total number of 850,000 residents originating from another EU member state constituted only 0.2 percent of the population in the old EU. This number was in reverse proportion to the degree of polemic against migration from Europe’s center and east. It also has to be mentioned that 600,000 Poles returned home once the communist regime had disappeared in their homeland. As contradictory as the concerns and fears related to migration from Central and Eastern Europe were across the EU, the 1990’s saw an increasing debate in the old EU about the need to balance eastward enlargement with new initiatives toward the Southern littoral of the Mediterranean. Should the European Union’s stability be projected and exported in order to impact its neighboring regions, the orientation toward the Southern Mediterranean region was compulsory. The mix of arguments, however, for building up a coherent European approach was not consistent at all. Simultaneously, fear and hope were invoked, development intentions and strategies for increased economic interdependencies were presented, security concerns and visions of a cultural dialogue were expressed, ideas of how to deter migrants and how to better involve the economies of North Africa into the Single Market process were aired. The net result was not clear and

¹² See Kühnhardt, Ludger, *Die Europäische Union – Fragen zur Erweiterung*, Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt/Europäische Kommission, 2003 (3rd ed.): 35–37.

the strategy resulting from this first initiative of the European Union to look to its immediate South was accordingly incoherent. Yet, the inevitable eastward enlargement also enlarged and widened the perspective of the whole European Union toward its Southern neighbors.

The Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue of the European Union was initiated during the early 1990's. As far as the intention of the EU Commission – and especially of Spain and France – was concerned, it was a response to the eastward orientation that dominated after the end of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe. France and other Southern EU member states anticipated that the eastward orientation of the EU would largely be to the economic advantage of Germany and other countries in Northern Europe. Along with Germany Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden expressed special interest in bringing their post-communist neighbors as soon as possible into the status of full EU membership. Italy found itself in an ambivalent situation. As much as Austria, Italy benefited economically from the newly emerging markets in Central Europe, but was at the same time hesitant to enlarge the EU to the east if it meant a loss of its own influence. Understandably so, the Southern members of the EU wanted to balance the prospect of a new and broader Europe to the East with a strengthened emphasis on partnership with the Southern littoral countries around the Mediterranean. This policy became known as the Barcelona Process, bringing together all EU member states and most Southern Mediterranean countries for the first time on November 27 and 28, 1995, in Barcelona. The simultaneous presence of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority was spectacular. The absence of Libya was noticeable, at that time still scorned as a terrorist state. By the end of 2004, the European Union had not only engaged Libya in the Barcelona Process, it had even lifted its ban on arms sales to Tripoli.

The Southern orientation of the European Union never gained the degree of emotional reaction as the prospect of eastward enlargement did. It was clear that Egypt, no matter what, would never become a European Union member state. Poland was about to join the EU in 2004. The only Southern country provoking a strong degree of emotions inside the “old” and also inside the enlarged European Union was Turkey. Amidst controversial disputes of Turkey's European character and vocation, the EU eventually opened full membership negotiations on October 3,

2005. The subsequent process was to become more twisted than all previous experiences with Central and South Eastern Europe.

The enlargement process of the European Union that took place during the 1990's finally buried all ideas to design Europe as a free trade zone only. If EFTA had not already been actually dead with the accession of Great Britain to the EC in 1973, the accession of Sweden, Austria and Finland in 1995 limited even the potential of its heir, the European Economic Space. The EU had negotiated this European Economic Space in 1992. It guaranteed that the remaining members of former EFTA accepted the legal provisions of the Common Market without becoming a member of it. In July 2009, Iceland applied for EU membership.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development forecasts annual growth rates in the new EU member states of around 4 to 7 percent over a consistent period of time. This would certainly require steady growth in the eurozone member states of the EU, high levels of investments and rapid productivity growth. To "catch up" with the economic standards of Western Europe will take quite a long time anyway. Since the "old EU" will also continue to grow and international investments have already begun to react critically to wage increases in Central Europe, World Bank estimates show that for the most advanced countries of the group, it would take 20 years for Slovenia, and for Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic 40 years to only reach the EU average incomes of the year 2004. For Romania, the estimate is 80 years.¹³

The real challenge was yet to come, the evolution of a common image of Europe, of a commonly shared vision for Europe. It was easy to invoke Europe as incarnation of freedom and unity. To make use of Europe as the framework for reciprocal forms of solidarity became much more difficult. Nobody was really to blame. After decades of living under communist totalitarianism, the new EU member states from Central and South Eastern Europe went through substantial transformations of their political culture. This was a matter of ideas, but also a matter of generations. It took time to get used to the mechanisms, the symbolism and the emotions of European integration. This new reality in the public life of Europe was also a growing challenge in the traditional EU member states

¹³ See Grabbe, Heather, *The Constellations of Europe*, op.cit.: 6–13.

of Western Europe. They experienced the effects of European integration and were going through a genuine period of leadership crisis. Citizens across the EU were skeptical about the ability and seriousness of their political leaders. It was time for a new compact between the citizens of Europe and their political leaders. How to reach it, was not clear.

Political loyalties and party structures changed faster and more often than in decades. The overall sense of dissolution, transformation and realignment had reached the EU as a whole. When the constitution-building process took shape in the early twenty-first century, the political landscape of Europe had become grey and vague. In Central and South Eastern Europe, hardly any political party is still present in the circles of power that had overturned communist totalitarianism in 1989. In Western Europe, the dissolution of traditional sociological and hence political loyalties had spread all over. Uncertainty and political skepticism were dominating. The initial idea of a European Constitution that could serve as a political safety belt around the two parts of Europe that were growing together failed. It was overly optimistic, maybe even romantic. Europe was growing together, from bottom to top, and it had to grow together in reality, through a change of generations and through the realities of daily life, before a new European compact and one between Europeans and their European leaders could follow. In light of this frustrating reality, the 2007 Reform Treaty will be judged much more generously.

The roots of this necessary yet difficult realignment of ideas are to be found in the transformation processes of post-communist and post-Cold War societies both in East and West Europe. The consequences were felt in the European Parliament after new representatives from Central and Eastern Europe joined. They were also felt in the deliberations of the European Council, most notably after the constitution-building process was started again in 2007. It was all too simple to blame just one or the other country for the daunting process that was lying behind the EU. For decades, two different parts of Europe had grown into two separate directions. To bring them formally together after the end of communist dominance was a technical process, including EU enlargement. To reach the hearts and souls of Europeans and to bring them into the stream of a common search for joint and mutually reinforcing perspectives for the continent as a whole was to take much longer.

Only to those who had never thought about the parallelism of the unparallel did this experience come as a total surprise. The others had to accept the consequences. It would take several more years to define common European objectives. The controversies about the primacy of national interests would prevail. The idea that “European spirit” simply meant to define what could better be done together had to take roots before its fruits could be harvested. Yet, eventually there was no alternative to the return of a “European spirit.” In political terms it meant that there was no alternative to deeper integration aiming at the full realization of a political Union. The true enlargement fear was the fear to fail the challenge of deeper integration.

EU enlargements were always matters of a particular fascination and broader public attention. They have a dimension of geographical and cultural curiosity. They prove a sense of identity that immediately vanishes when the debate shifts to matters of political cooperation and integration. The fascination of EU enlargement is the fascination with the cultural unity and diverse history of Europe. The breakdown of communist rule over Central and Eastern Europe was of secular significance. It meant the end of the Cold War and the artificial partition of the European continent. Eastward enlargement of the European Union was highly complex due to the scope of the task and due to the fundamental structural and mental, socio-economic and political differences that had become cemented in those countries for decades and generations. Most impressive was the fact that finally the Central and Eastern European countries had liberated themselves. The charisma of Lech Wałęsa, the electrician from Gdansk, and Pope John Paul II, the priest from Cracow, are legend. These two exceptional Polish personalities are symbolic icons of one of the most impressive European narratives of modern times. Their unforgettable contribution to the European journey of freedom, the rule of law and human rights has been of exceptional importance. Yet, following the end of the division of Europe as symbolized in the Fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, a consistent “deepening” of the integration process has become essential and existential for the future of the united continent.

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