

EUROPE – THE GEOPOLITICS OF DISUNION

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Abstract

There are forces which, by acting over a long time frame and by remaining almost unaltered, leave traces in societies and nations that make them more or less prone to certain behaviours. These marks include physical geography, which is like the stage of history and exerts a profound influence on it. Europeans today face challenges that result from their own perceptions and different cultural habits forged by centuries or even thousands of years of conflicts brought about by religion, tribal views or linguistic barriers, reinforced by the compartmentalized division of the territory, by the existence, or lack of it, of large waterways, and by the mildness or rigour of the climate.

In fact, the union of Europe, which was often attempted by force, found a new impetus with the end of World War 2, leading to a peaceful construct unprecedented in history. However, as this union expanded and deepened, the aggregating cement that held Europe together has degraded, appearing not to withstand the winds of the crises well. We will only be able to strengthen what unites us when we gain awareness of what divides us.

Portugal, a country which is almost one thousand years old and which has validated itself outside Europe from an early age, is facing yet another crisis for survival. Understanding the possible ways-out beyond the "mist of the days" and the politically correct has now become an exercise of citizenship.

Keywords

Deep forces; geography and politics; the various "Europes"; wealth and poverty of nations

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To many off guard observers, including senior politicians, it seemed that the EU enlargement to the East made possible by the implosion of the Soviet bloc represented the reunion of Geopolitics with the History of Europe. Almost 20 years later, what we see is a multifaceted reality, largely selfish and nationalistic, anchored in ancient roots which, by contrast, seem to be anxious to demonstrate, again, that in the European continent, the encounter of Geopolitics with History does not usually have a happy ending.

In fact, nowadays the future of the European Union seems much darker than it was then. One only needs to read the papers or hear the news to understand that the financial crisis has prompted a resurgence of old selfishness and that the faith of many Europeans in the future of the Union has been shaken,¹ even more so after the “cold shower” that, not so long ago, the rejection by the French and Dutch of an important step towards European integration represented. Nowadays, we also have important fringes of population from some nations in the North and the South questioning the benefits of remaining part of a union that brings, to some, such high costs, and, to others, hard sacrifices. However, there is little to be surprised about.

Indeed, societies are a complex product. If, on the one hand, the causal links are difficult to establish, on the other the wide margin of uncertainty that characterizes all human action can lead in different directions. It seems indisputable that there is a set of circumstances which, acting in the long term, shape them with particular features that without determining their course, make them more or less prone to particular behaviours. They are the *deep forces*, according to the extremely appropriate definition of Pierre Renouvin.² Besides those, but not all, considered by Renouvin,³ other forces he did not take into account are included here, as the author of this paper believes them to be essential in the framework of this analysis⁴:

They are: History (with its myths, its solidarities, its self-image and its hostilities), “Temperament” (cultural habits, the level of rigidity of society, the attitude to power and adversity), Language (a true oral genome which, like some people argue, helps to structure thinking), Religion (with its codes of conduct, favouring certain behaviours and values, while disfavouring others), infra-national social forms, such as the Clan,

¹ Among others, there are the many comments made by Ambassador Cutileiro in *Expresso*, particularly in the 14 May 2011 edition, where a vast number of writers give rein to their pessimism; there is also the declarations made by former Chancellor Kohl when he received the Henry Kissinger prize from the American Academy in Berlin (May 2011), or what José Ignacio Torreblanca, Director of the Madrid Office of the European Council on Foreign Relations wrote in May (in 25-05-11).

² Pierre Renouvin (1991). «Les Forces Profondes» in *Introduction à L'Histoire des Relations Internationales*, Paris: Armand Colin, 4th Ed.

³ Renouvin considered as Deep Forces the geographical factors, demographic conditions, economic and financial forces, the national sentiment, nationalisms, and the pacifist sentiment.

⁴ Nogueira, José Manuel Freire (2011). *O Método Geopolítico Alargado – Persistências e Contingências em Portugal e no Mundo*, Lisbon: IESM.



The Tribe and Ethnicity (where societies, even those supposedly more advanced, regress to at times of crisis), to which it seems advantageous to add, besides the relevant data on Human Geography and the key aspects of the situation, the almost unchanged scenario where the lives of societies unfold, that is, Physical Geography, the basis of the geopolitical analysis method.⁵

Europe constitutes an excellent case study.

Having been inhabited for thousands of years by relatively stable peoples whose history is quite well known, it is obvious that its political geography lies in factors that make it different from other regions in the world but which also translate into profound internal differences. .

In effect, the History of Europe is quite turbulent as it is made of regionalisms that consistently resist the imperial dreams which, with some regularity, reappear on its stage. With the exception of the Roman Empire (which just dominated the Mediterranean basin and the temperate parts of Western Europe) or that of the Habsburgs, who exercised a relatively weak power over Central Europe, none of them stayed beyond the ephemeral.

Charlemagne, Charles V, France in the 17th and 18th centuries, Napoleon, Hitler, all of them leaders of continental empires, stumbled at the thirst for national or even regional autonomy that seems to characterize Europeans and that even finds an explanation, among many others, in the thesis of the French Castex on the "Continental disturber I",⁶ which foresaw the defeat of the continental hegemonic impulses.

Indeed, it was not in vain that feudalism could persist in Europe for almost one thousand years, or that Germany was divided into more than three hundred political units until its unification in the nineteenth century, and that Italy has only united and consolidated itself as a country in recent times, or that, even now, Europe is the continent with the second largest number of states, despite its small size. It is not in vain also that the modern nation-state was invented by the Europeans, and that this invention was subsequently exported to the rest of the world, as disunity and cantonalism seem to be the historical matrix of the Europeans, with war being one of their most enduring institutions. National (and even regional) hatreds and self-interest resurface when they seemed appeased. This deep force is one that is dangerous to ignore.

This is because Europeans are profoundly different from each other. Their cultural matrix was formed over a long process that emphasized their differences. In the South, the mercy of nature enabled the early flowering of a civilization. In a clear demonstration of the theory of "challenge and response" advanced by Toynbee,⁷ Southern Europeans did not have to face wild beasts or the hardships of nature, for which reason the pressure to act as a group was much less than that exerted on

⁵ This has little, if anything, to do with the common meaning of the word Geopolitics, a term that was misappropriated by Henry Kissinger in the seventies – and which he never defined – and which has become a sort of synonymous with the use of power in international relations, creating a terminological confusion that only promotes ignorance. For this, the word strategy, or even its extreme, geostrategy, already existed and still does.

⁶ Castex, Raoul (1935). *Théories Stratégiques*, V, Paris.

⁷ Toynbee, Arnold (1934.1961). *A Study of History*, 12 volumes, Oxford University Press.



Europeans from the North, where individual survival depended on the strength of the group. Even today, selfish individualism and disorganization are trademarks of the south, whereas discipline and organization dominates in the north.

Portuguese professor Políbio de Almeida (1932-2008), when trying to define the behaviour of the three European major ethnic groups (Slavic, Germanic and Latin), pointed out that the amorphousness typical of the individual German ends when he becomes part of a group. Accordingly, whereas association is the source of fulfilment, for Latin people it becomes the opposite, a cause for suspicion. The individualism of the latter is confused with pride, vanity and a desire to stand out even at the expense of the group he may belong to. Pointing to the geography of southern Europe as a structuring force, Políbio de Almeida went as far as to affirm that the sociability of the Latin people is limited to small groups and is averse to centralized planning.⁸

The work of Dutch social psychologist Hofstede⁹ shows similar characteristics, albeit from a different perspective. The "power distance" (which in his view meant the degree of rigidity of society in which the influence of status at birth determines social position, among other things), was, in his opinion, most prevalent in societies where the Roman tradition prevailed, and lower in those where German egalitarianism was deeply rooted.

Events in England seem to be a clear demonstrator of the arguments advanced by the social psychologist. In that part of Europe, the legions called by Emperor Honorius in 402 to defend Rome eventually never returned. The withdrawal, at first believed to be temporary, became a definitive one, leaving the Britons powerless against the incursions of the Saxons and the Angles, who, after the fall of Rome, transformed their raids into migration. The society of the Britons disappeared in a short time, because unlike other parts of the former empire, in Britain there was no assimilation between the Roman-Britons and the new Germanic lords.

The traces of the German order were banished and replaced by a more primitive, yet more egalitarian German society. Hofstede stresses that among the Germans, the power of the chief was subordinate to the assembly of free men. In his view, this was an historical indicator of reduced *power distance*. Much later, in 1215, King John, in conflict with his barons, granted the Magna Carta. As pointed out by Hofstede, this document, considered to be the founder of English liberties, represents the victory of the rights of free men following the old tradition of the Germanic peoples.¹⁰ The small *power distance* thus plunged deeply into the history of England.

The high need "to control uncertainty" (the need to predict and codify everything) common to all Latin peoples and much less present in peoples from the North also derives from the Roman tradition. Hofstede also highlights two other factors: the existence of strong "individualism" in the North (up-frontness in relationships and acceptance that there are winners and losers) as well as high "masculinity" (with the glorification of competition and success, and the severe punishment of offenders), which opposes the "femininity" (which avoids confrontation and humiliation) that is characteristic of societies in the South.

⁸ Almeida, Políbio de (1994). "A casa comum europeia" in *Ensaios de Geopolítica*, Lisboa: ISCSPP: 211-216.

⁹ Hofstede, Geert (1980). *Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values*. London: Sage Publications.

¹⁰ Hofstede, op. cit: 100.



Language is another distinctive feature. Although derived from the major Indo-European group, European languages have come to differ to a greater or lesser extent (as part of a process made deeper by the large migrations of the first millennium) in such a way that each language soon became intelligible even to its closest neighbours, thus leading to the development of a "linguistic cantonalism"¹¹ that strengthened local identities which, in some cases, joined together as nations at a later stage, often through the imposition of a common language. Hence the growing need for a *lingua franca* for communicating among different groups and which, generally speaking, was only at the reach of the elites, with the own language being used for communicating within their own group.

Such was the role of Latin, French and nowadays clearly that of English which, for the first time, is within reach of a large mass of individuals. Tellingly, it is a European language, but it is as if it was from extra European origin, since the reasons for adopting it are related to the huge power of the United States, where the cultural models, fashions, management criteria, and military power stem from. It must be noted that the same language, when used by the British at a time when they had power similar to that held by Americans today, never played a major international role as an international communication vehicle outside the country.

Religion, in turn, having shaped identities, was also the reason for the largest fractures.

The religious matrix of Europe is undoubtedly Judeo-Christian. After having penetrated Roman society, Christianity only took three centuries to spread through the Mediterranean world and in the areas on the edge of olive and vine producing lands. Indeed, the Catholic rite is closely tied to bread (wheat), wine (grapes) and olive oil (olive trees), which in fact means to a specific geographical area.¹² Its expansion to the north even forced the expansion of vines into Belgium and England, in contradiction with the requirements of their natural vegetations, to meet the needs of celebrating mass. However, as noted by French geographer Albert Demangeon,¹³ as transport became cheaper, the cultivation of vineyards soon retreated to areas more suitable to their needs in terms of vegetation and ripening: the sunny south.

Many years later, with the demise of the Middle Ages, Rome's Pope-obeying Christianity faced deep tensions that eventually ended in rupture that approximately followed the ancient northern borders of the Roman Empire, which was a very old and strong line of cultural divide. To the north of this line, in general, the Reformation implemented Protestantism and a distinct way of seeing the world, without obedience to the Roman papacy. This was where a type of society, with much more simple and austere rites unconnected to Mediterranean geography, in a colder and more rigid Europe – how not to think about geography – developed and ended up playing a major role in the world.

Max Weber, rightly or wrongly, even saw the reason for the birth of the capitalist spirit in that separation. According to him, by sanctifying work and daily life instead of

¹¹ Even today, local dialects spoken by small groups coexist with the official languages of the states. This is the case, in Portugal, of the *Mirandês*, which is officially recognized.

¹² Chauprade, Aymeric (2003). *Géopolitique, constantes et changements dans l'histoire*, Paris: Ellipses: 298.

¹³ Demangeon, Albert (1952). *Problèmes de Géographie Humaine*, Paris: Armand Colin.



waiting for the reward after death, Protestantism, alongside the advancement of science, contributed to the “decriminalization” of profit and to the sanctification of work. He completes his opinion by saying that almost all big businessmen from Germany in his days were Protestant, mainly Calvinists.¹⁴

In Southeast Europe, a third division, also the result of ancient cultural boundaries stemming from the Great Schism which, following intractable conflict between the Emperor of the East and the Pope and which mirrored the clash between the Greco-Byzantine and the Latin-German worlds, led to the division in 1054, to this day, of the two churches, with the Orthodox Church becoming subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople. When Constantinople fell under Turkish rule (1453), the head of orthodoxy moved to Kiev and then to Moscow. Thus, we have at least three or four “Europes”. The role of infra-national forms of organization, even the most basic, is not smaller. The kinship-based clan is a structured basic human group which is both the oldest and the first – when territorialized – to have a proto-geopolitical meaning. In this case, it is inside the clan that the first social relationship between humans and their territories takes place. In other words, it is within the clan that the embryo of geopolitics is generated. Successively grouped into tribes and ethnic groups, clans still exist in a few human societies, as is the case in some parts of Africa or that example well-known in the Western world provided by the famous Scottish clans which, even today, have a surprising degree of cohesion. As for the tribe, it is less cohesive than the clan because it is the result of the junction of several clans. It carried the germ of political cohesion and is rightly considered as such. Indeed, the first political manifestations as we see them today – one people, one head, one territory – coincide with tribal organizations. Tribes eventually became federated into nations. But this was a very long process and the coincidence of national borders with the borders of the states is a relatively recent phenomenon. Inheritance, historical or conquest rights slowly overlapped the “right of peoples to self-determination”, and it was only in the wake of the social and political changes triggered by the French Revolution that the so-called “springtime of peoples” began. Hailed as the primary cause of war (well expressed in several of the famous 14 points of President Wilson¹⁵), the mismatch between the State and the Nation was severely restricted after the First World War, when the political map of Europe (as elsewhere in the world) was redesigned at international conferences. However, in the contemporary world, many states are not formed by a single nation, let alone by a single ethnic group. It is true that outside Europe, some states – true artificial constructs – are even directly formed by tribes whose only connection is that of a conglomerate.

Indeed, when artificially grouped into states, many ethnic groups cannot resist the social, demographic, political and religious tensions that occur, often independently of human will. History, including contemporary history, is filled with inter-ethnic conflicts. But the deep resistance of primitive forms of human organization is better demonstrated in places where the state proves to be too weak to perform its basic function - failed states - and where societies regress to their more primitive identities,

¹⁴ Weber, Max (2001). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Portuguese translation, Barcarena: Presença (orig. from 1920).

¹⁵ Snell, John L. (1954). "Wilson on Germany and the Fourteen Points", in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, The University of Chicago Press, Dec.: 364-369.



be them the ethnic group, the tribe or even the clan. The shattering of the former Yugoslavia and, more recently, the events in Libya, are a daunting example for all those who believed in the inexorable march of progress.

Finally comes physical geography and, within it, first, the climatic factors. Historian David Landes spoke at length on this subject.¹⁶ According to him, Europe, particularly its western part, enjoys privileged conditions: the winters are cold enough to prevent the spread of diseases and gently enough to foster a good balance between inhabitants and the environment. Rainfall is distributed throughout the year, creating fertility conditions rarely found elsewhere. It was this same uniform and moderately abundant supply of water, combined with low rates of evaporation, which freed the Europeans from prevailing tyranny, namely the "river civilizations", where the necessary irrigation works generated central and authoritarian powers that Europe has not known.

These exceptional conditions favoured Europeans with good and relatively uniform harvests, combined with large herds and dense forests. This almost unique combination gave rise to sedentary civilizations that raised cattle and which have proven to be bigger and stronger than the rest of the world, in addition to producing natural fertilizer healthier than the one used in Asia, based on human faeces. The powerful European horse was thus able to carry the heavy medieval knight, was supreme in charges, and for many years unbeatable in conventional combat.¹⁷ It was also the strength of European animals that allowed more efficient heavy work and the transport of goods, as well as, at a later stage and with enormous impact, the towing of artillery to the battlefield.

As a result, European had access to a richer diet, growing increasingly stronger and relatively free from the worms that plagued China and India. Accordingly, not only animals but also human beings were stronger. The European domination, which later spread throughout the world, was frequently due to the inequalities of nature.

However, this strength is also the result of other stimuli. Paul Kennedy, the renowned author of "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers" points out that, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, no one would believe that the small states of Western Europe would impose themselves on the major centres of power that existed at the time: Ming China, the Ottoman Empire, the Mongol Empire, Muscovy, and Japan. It was the absence of a single central authority - which Kennedy sees as the happy result of the fall of the Roman Empire and of the compartmentalized geographical features of Europe, where there are no dominating large plains or huge water basins surrounded by fertile lands capable of imposing uniformity of thought - that was responsible for the huge degree of freedom and for the relatively few barriers to change that led to the spiral of scientific and technical progress that led to the supremacy of the West.¹⁸

With such tools, it is not surprising that during an extended period of time Europe dominated the world. However, the strength of the Europeans turned against them and

¹⁶ Landes, David S. (2005). *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations – Why are some so rich and others so poor*, Portuguese version Lisbon: Gradiva, 7th Edition (original edition from 1998).

¹⁷ In particular they stopped the Muslim onslaught towards Central Europe – which used light Arabian horses – at the Battle of Poitiers in 732. In 1187, the Muslims had their revenge when the knights of Saladin, mounted on light horses, destroyed at Hattin a force of crusaders mounted on heavy armoured horses that had carried their heavy riders throughout the day under scorching sun.

¹⁸ Kennedy, Paul (1987). *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Random House, New York: 3-30.



also encouraged their rivalries. Even a cursory look at history shows that the peoples of Europe seem to have never aspired to large unions.

Having looked at the non-geographical and climatic (albeit strongly influenced by physical geography) aspects that seem to lie at the root of this situation, it is time to examine physical geography, whose continuity is everywhere in Europe, as elsewhere in the world, where it continues to act as a *deep force*. It must be pointed out that there are large islands near Europe whose critical mass is enough to generate island nations, with their typical sense of exception and isolation. This applies particularly to Great Britain, which was the seat of maritime power, embodying Europe's superiority while keeping itself on the flank of the continent.

There are also a number of large peninsulas in Europe, and it is known that they tend to become autonomous from mainland¹⁹ or even unite politically.²⁰ Indeed, all great peninsulas in Europe have long been the home of one or more independent states, the latter being justified by geographical barriers (such as in Scandinavia) or by cultural ones (like the Iberian Peninsula). Opening up to the Atlantic or the Mediterranean, they all have been home to maritime powers and have the typical mentality of these powers which, about 2500 years ago, caught the attention of Greek historian Thucydides²¹, and which differs greatly from the continental mindset that prevails in the centre of Europe.

In the same fashion, the topography of Europe is characterized by the abundance of mountain ranges that either compartmentalize space (this is the case of the Pyrenees, amongst many others) or are zones where mountain people have settled (like in Switzerland). In any case, for thousands of years they have constituted physical barriers hampering easy movement, also facilitating defence and thus impeding the great empires. They also give origin to true "cultural cantons", since the mountain culture tends to differ from the one that usually dominates the plain. Among other reasons, it was this topography that enabled small – sometimes minute – political units to subsist to this day. These are marks that progress will eventually fade away, but that cannot be ignored.

The river basins of Europe also have a role to play, as well demonstrated by German geographers in the first half of the twentieth century. In the absence of a structuring large river like the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Yellow River, Europe's powers and wealth concentrated over several large navigable rivers which allowed the movement of goods at low prices. The Danube has Vienna, the Po has Milan, the Rhine has Amsterdam and Frankfurt, and the Thames has London.²²

Again, geography separates the North and South of Europe which, with the exception of the Po valley, has no major river that can be used for trade purposes. As a possible consequence, the people of the South, when they developed their own business, they did so from a distance and by sea, disadvantaged by nature, which did not give them the possibility of linking their ports to the interior which otherwise could have happened. Accordingly, northern Europe became more urban, industrialized and technocratic, whereas the South tended to be more rural, agricultural and less

¹⁹ Ratzel, Friedrich (1987). *La Géographie Politique*, Fayard: 107.

²⁰ Chauprade, Aymeric, op.cit: 126-153.

²¹ Thucydides (2010). *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Raul Rosado Fernandes and Gabriela Granwher, Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

²² Zeihan, Peter (2010). STATFOR, 21 December.



developed in terms of industry. In a world that emphasizes the values of the north, the formerly civilized and refined south has, for now, become a kind of periphery.

Therefore, there are several "Europes" and, within them, a wide range of states which, having withstood the vicissitudes of history, jealously retain their prerogatives as nation-states. There was no lack of ambition to impose unity by force. But even when its military power was overwhelming, it all stumbled upon the defiance of those who insisted on becoming independent.

The last two attempts of a military nature came from Germany, and its own power was so strong that it took extra-European interventions to restore the previous order, or at least something resembling it. Again, in the latest attempt, this time not military oriented, Germany was the one of the key drivers. A little analytical retreat at this point seems appropriate to better understand it.

The Germans, who suffered from large scale "European-type cantonalism" until 1870, started to move towards their own unity with a customs union which, by encouraging common geographical and cultural factors, soon produced the desired results. It was perhaps too successful, inasmuch as, as soon as Germany became the main European power (its population grew 65 percent between 1871 and 1914 and on the eve of World War I, Germany produced twice as much steel as Great Britain ...²³) and soon denoted hegemonic ambitions.

It was a dream that went wrong, and defeated Germany was forced to sign the humiliating treaty of Versailles in 1919, which was a sore for the country's national pride. The purpose of war, set in September 1914 by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, was to form a customs union extending from France to Poland, keeping Great-Britain and Russia apart from the European continent, which was theorized by Friedrich Nauman (1860-1919) in 1915 in his book *Mitteleuropa*,²⁴ and failed completely.

When Germany was admitted to the League of Nations in 1926, its pacifist government, which wrestled with profound internal problems and the demons of revanchism, soon proposed (1929) the creation of the United States of Europe through Gustav Stresemann²⁵.

Nevertheless, in that same year, the crash of the New York Stock Exchange plunged the world into a full-blown crisis and also silenced the voices of common sense, releasing the demons of nationalism and racism. Ten years later, the world watched the launch of the greatest catastrophe in history. It led not only to another defeat of Germany (again, it took the entire world to overwhelm it) but also to the ruin of Europe and to its decline on the world stage.

Even during the war, German lawyers built what they believed to be a new model of relations among states. It encompassed some of the most permanent and negative matrixes of German ideas. Written by jurist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), who led the War Institute for Politics and International Law, the project *Treaty between Germany, Italy*

²³ Desfargues, Philippe Moureau (2003). *Introdução à Geopolítica*, Lisbon: Gradiva: 70-71.

²⁴ It corresponds to Central Europe. Nevertheless, in addition to anticipating the direct political control of almost the entire region, the concept advocated Germany' economic control up to the Caucasus (including also the Ukraine and the Balkans) and could extend to Bagdad.

²⁵ Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929), Chancellor in 1923 and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany between 1923 and 1929. Nobel Prize winner in 1926 together with his French counterpart Aristide Briand, due to his role in the Treaty of Locarno.



and Japan on the configuration of Large Areas in Europe and Greater East Asia, drew a world that was remarkably different from the one that came to be established by the Declaration of St. Francisco and the principles of Bretton Woods.²⁶

The Large Areas were to be articulated in Communities of States under the guidance of a Directing State that reserved the right to impose, within its limitations, its own political conditions. Thus, a less unitary entity than the state, albeit a more cohesive one, would emerge.²⁷ Under the Directing State of Each Community of States there would be independent states with limited sovereignty. In theory, the adhesion of these States – to which every state geographically located inside the Large Area – would be done on a volunteer basis and conducted by a bilateral treaty between the Directing State and each of the acceding states (article 3). Relations with non-members would be governed by International Law.

In an interesting preview, the Treaty referred to the existence and recognition of International Law, the Domestic Law of States and created a new figure within each Community of States: Community Law. It is clear that the use of this figure by the enemies of the idea of European Community conceals, in fact, the huge difference between the two concepts: the accession to the EEC or to the EU resulted from a volitional act, not from imposition by force, as rightly stressed by Mario Losano.²⁸

Despite all the fears that a possible resurgence of Germany caused among its former political adversaries, or maybe because of it, when the new German political autonomy emerged– the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) – the founders of the Benelux countries, together with France, the FRG and Italy, decided in 1952 to put together the industrial means that traditionally supported military apparatus, creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and thus the first European community.

In the same year, the same countries tried to go further and integrate their own military apparatuses and this led to the signing of the Treaty of Paris, creating the second European community – The European Defence Community (EDC) – which never came into being as it was rejected by the French Parliament.

This event strengthened the importance of NATO and, once the North American “shield” was secured, Europe was able to engage in economic development.

In 1958 and through the Treaty of Rome, the six ECSC countries signed the European Economic Community treaty (EEC) which would lead to the creation of a common economic area. In the same year, another means of making war – the atom – was held in common by the EURATOM treaty, and this meant the existence of three European communities. Since then, the ECC continued to widen and deepen.

This was an unparalleled historical construction whose achievements are undeniable and unprecedented in the European continent, and whose assumptions remained unaltered until the political earthquake of 1989. There had never been such prosperity and cooperation among Europeans for so long. It seemed that the inter-state conflict had definitely been put away, the same applying to war.

²⁶ It must be pointed out that the difference is formal rather than real. The political-strategic blocks of the Cold War had their Leader State, and many of the weaker members had, *indeed*, limited sovereignty.

²⁷ Losano, Mario G. (2006). “Il Mondo secondo Hitler”, in *Limes. Rivista italiana di geopolitica*, n. 5: 238.

²⁸ Losano, Mario, op. cit: 248.



But in 1989 the world changed. As usual, at the time people only spoke about the “dividends of peace” and of radiant tomorrows. The spectacular move back of the Soviet Union covered the profound change that occurred in Europe. In fact, and despite arising old fears in France, the United Kingdom and Russia, the same fears that in 1907 had led to the “Triple Entente”, to the cooperation between France and Russia in the 1930s and the occupation of Germany after 1945 (Mitterrand even nurtured the dream of cooperating with Gorbachev to prevent the reunification of Germany, under the complacent eyes of Mrs. Thatcher²⁹), Germany was reunited in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In a profoundly altered international context, the European project that had started as a great “Zollverein” (name of the customs union created in 1834 in Germany under the aegis of Prussia and which ultimately facilitated the creation of the Second Reich), albeit with the purpose of “pacifying” Germany and make war unthinkable, was actually transformed into the European Union in Maastricht in 1992.

Europe’s impotence before the Yugoslavian crisis – the cacophony had began right after the unilateral recognition of Slovenia and Croatia by the new reunited Germany – pushed the proponents of the European idea and of the old continent as a global player to new leaps forward. The theoretical advances made in Amsterdam, Helsinki, Nice and finally, in Lisbon, allowed the creation of a facade of a political leadership, a caricature of common foreign policy, as well as a kind of military structure aimed at lesser tasks – the Petersberg tasks.

Compared with the major success of the EEC, the Union’s integration ambitions have not produced brilliant results. By incorporating a broader range of countries – with often quite diverse traditions, cultures, interests, loyalties and hostilities - and by trying to extend its action beyond economic cooperation, the EU, and forgive the simplification made here for analytical purposes, faces two basic dilemmas: either it undertakes the policy agreed by its most powerful members or, due to the wide divergence of a few national and regional interests, it limits itself, as a rule, to govern by consensus, that is, by the lowest common denominator.³⁰

Also the method adopted so far in European integration – a “top down” decision that excludes the supposedly unenlightened masses – seems to have reached its limits, as those masses increasingly demand to be heard. However, when consulted, they frequently invalidate the development of European integration, often, it must be stressed, to “punish” their national governments. This does not help matters, rather favouring the re-nationalization of policies and the rebirth of national selfishness. Only the great unifying events appear to be able to revive the faith of the Europeans, but the reality and creativity of the people insist on failing to come up with them.

Rather, the recent financial crisis exposed a number of structural weaknesses and brought to the surface the various “Europes” that underlie the theoretical constructs. Oversimplifying for purposes of analysis (the reality is too complex and multifaceted to be addressed in an article of this size), basically we are in the presence of a cold, protestant and economically flourishing Northern Europe that, having taken enormous

²⁹ Kissinger, Henry (1996). *Diplomacia*, Lisboa: Gradiva: 100-102.

³⁰ The analogy with the Confederation Helvetica, which cautiously maintains its neutrality, balancing the centrifugal forces that inevitably result from an alignment that displeases one of its language minorities, has come to the mind of many people.



advantages of the single currency, has been refusing solidarity to what it perceives as the chaotic southern countries, which, with the blindness that characterizes those who do not value forecasting and planning³¹, lived in the illusion they were Northern without being so and relinquished their most basic means of production, adopting lifestyles that were not theirs, while squandering a wealth they did not possess.

A third "Europe", even more continental and ingrown, always fearful of Russia (due to the weight of history and the geographical position) lies to the East and tends to yield to German interests, while viewing with concern the growing links between Germany and Russia that raise old historical ghosts, seeming to believe a lot more in the eventual North American protection than in European solidarity and its incipient defence mechanisms.³²

These fears are not confined to Eastern Europe. Indeed, what is happening on a global level seems to justify these worries. On that aspect, difficulties also seem to favour old selfishness and the return of power politics that are their inevitable consequence. In 1904, Halford Mackinder theorized in a classic text of geopolitical thinking³³ that an alliance between Germany and Russia would create such a combination of power that the maritime powers would find themselves excluded from Eurasia. The United Kingdom and the U.S. fought against this nightmare in World War I, and it is legitimate to assume that it was to stop it from occurring again that the United States intervened in Europe from 1942. NATO, which was geopolitically justified by Mackinder in 1943,³⁴ served the same purpose again. Currently, in the face of a Russian geopolitical school that aims to rebuild the empire and the rebirth of the "pan-isms",³⁵ the European have obvious reasons to worry again, especially when the U.S. seems unconcerned with European affairs. How long for?

In this scenario, Europe gets distracted with financial matters and lacks the energy and vision to look after its much battered union. Enlargement is no longer part of the rhetoric and there is the suspected perception that it would bring more problems than benefits, as it could import into the Union fractures and rivalries that could make current problems even more difficult to solve. Accordingly, the old divisions become, again, very clear and rooted, at least in part, in the cultural and geographical factors explained earlier. Even if these are mere perceptions and not concrete realities, the difference is not that big. Is there hope for Europe or will the old ghosts return?

What is happening in Hungary (let us also recall the split of Czechoslovakia), in Finland, Denmark (which unilaterally revoked the Schengen Agreement) and, in a distinct way, in Belgium, gives great cause for caution. Ethnicity and History are being brought back with a vengeance not only by nationalist parties, even in Germany, where the failure of multiculturalism has been proclaimed and German citizenship laws that recall the darkest periods in recent history have been enacted. We must not forget that in 1944, when not even the propaganda could hide the disastrous course of war for Germany, an

³¹ According to Hall's criteria with regard to the organization of time, societies are divided into "monochronic" (where the organization of time is sequential and activities take place according to an organized chronological flow) and "polychronic" (where there is the tendency to carry out several activities simultaneously without prior ordering the sequence). Hall, Edward (1993), *Understanding Cultural Differences - Germans, French and Americans*, Yarmouth: Maine.

³² Friedman, George (2011). *Visegrad: A new European Military Force*, STRATFOR, 17 Maio.

³³ Mackinder, Halford J. (1904). "The Geographical Pivot of History" in *Geographical Journal* 23.

³⁴ Mackinder, Halford J. (1943). "The Round World and the winning of peace" in *Foreign Affairs* n.º 2.

³⁵ Dugin, Alexandr (2010). *The Great War of the Continents*, Antagonista (original from 2005).



article entitled "The end of Europe?" published in the magazine of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Berlin Rom Tokio* stressed that whatever the organization of Europe after the conflict, Germany would remain a Directing State or Guiding State, at the risk of the breakup of Europe.³⁶

Is this what we are seeing?

Both Helmutths (Kohl and Schmidt), who ruled Germany for 24 years, feared that future. Convinced that the leaders after them (and not only in Germany) would forget the war and return to the nationalism of the nineteenth century, they recommended the acceleration of the European integration as a panacea against further disaster. Schmidt went even further: in his view, Germany should never have nuclear weapons, nor belong to the UN Security Council, as the country had shown only too well what it was capable of when given a free rein".³⁷

It was not even necessary to wait long. Selfishness did not take time to surface. As early as in 1991, during the first Iraq War, Kohl himself refused to consider a missile attack on Turkey as an attack on NATO,³⁸ refusing the solidarity that turns strength into an alliance. Shortly afterwards, as mentioned earlier, Germany, without any consultation with its partners, unilaterally recognized the independence of Croatia and Slovenia and adopted a policy that favoured its own economic interests, a situation that was particularly clear in the Balkans. However, candour has its limits, and in May 2010, President Kholer was forced to resign after declaring, in Afghanistan, that the intervention of German armed forces had the purpose of protecting German economic interests.³⁹

Indeed, it is very difficult to counter the *deep forces* that may only be evaded with patience and perseverance. This lesson has been frustratingly difficult to learn by those who, by ignoring them, act like children on the beach and build sand castles convinced that they will withstand the force of the tide.

In a continent that invented the nation-state and continues to be carved up into multiple sovereignties,⁴⁰ where the selfishness of citizens is expressed democratically and has the force of law, top volunteer unions have a difficult time surviving, although, of course, nothing is impossible. The process of European Integration – whatever form it will end up having - in addition to a mobilizing ideal that goes beyond mere economic issues (a new negative association formed due to the fear of others is obviously never excluded), needs time and can only be attained throughout several generations. It also requires that the basic purposes of the state – ensuring Security and Welfare – may be undertaken in a climate of tranquillity, peaceful coexistence and domestic prosperity.

Clearly, the future of Europe, in purely theoretical terms, has several solutions. Without wishing to make a comprehensive analysis of all possible variants, I shall focus on just three possibilities: the first, which was unthinkable only a few years ago, is the

³⁶ Losano, Mario, "Il Mondo secondo Hitler", cit: 243-247.

³⁷ Cutileiro, José (2010). "O Mundo dos Outros – Natal em Março" in *Expresso*, 23 Dezembro.

³⁸ Huntington, Samuel P. (1999). *The Clash of Civilizations*, Portuguese version Gradiva: Lisbon: 162.

³⁹ *New York Times-Europe*, 31 May, 2010

⁴⁰ The level of cohesion, which is the highest inside the clan, decreases as the social basis expands, and reaches its lowest level among nations, a level where usually the most efficient aggregating cement is the existence of a common enemy.



end of the Union. Whether it takes the form of a return to the nationalist policies of the nineteenth century, or whether it ends up limiting the Union to a club of the richest countries, the tendency for the come back, this time quite openly, of the Directing States⁴¹ will be inevitable. No doubt that the "natural" geopolitical groupings would be favoured by this solution. The question is the fate of the weakest links: reduced to a condition of states with limited sovereignty in the worst style of the vision of Carl Schmitt, they could attempt to get together in natural geopolitical groups, although such a future is unlikely due to the large differences that continue to exist among them. Poverty is a bad counsellor.... Still within the previous scenario, there is also the possibility of seeking external solidarity, something which is believed to be more realistic in the case of states with historical ties outside Europe. The United Kingdom (which is not part of the single currency) is a clear example of that possibility, thanks to its special connection to the U.S. and its traditional policy of separation from continental politics, whose hegemonies it has almost always fought against. A sharp European decline may lead some states of the current Union to tread the paths of the past again.

Another possibility is, of course, the deepening of the Union according to the federal model, surpassing the inter-governmental model that has shown a strong tendency towards the Directing State of group of Directing States, as aimed by the "founding fathers". This solution might allow going beyond the Post-Modern State⁴² which, after all, in practice perpetuated the notion that, whereas all states are equal, some are more equal than others. This solution might also provide an answer to the poor solidarity that the various "Europes" have shown to each other and would require at least an economic governance of the Union.

However, there is another alternative, which is strongly provocative but equally promising: I insisted earlier on the strength of infra-national forms of social organization. Not without reason, as they underlie all societies and are present in states that are too big to deal with small things and too small to address large issues, which means that local issues tend to gain strength, albeit in a different form.⁴³ Maybe because of precisely that, it is necessary to go beyond the nation-state, even the post-modern state, and go back to some form of tribe and localness (in history, recurrences never take the same form), which, in a confusing and tentative way, are emerging without a geopolitical rationale that confers them consistency, at least for now. If, to this, we add the undeniable internal change that European policies caused within the states, the habits of free-movement, the clear dispute among transnational groups for the monopoly of power of states, whether they are financial groups, social or opinion movements, then we may have the fertile melting pot that encourages change.

Could the continent that invented the nation-state also declare its death? Is cooperation possible by consensus of values and culture, as a recent work intended,

⁴¹ Remember the words of President Cavaco Silva in October 2011 in his speech at the University Institute of Florence.

⁴² Concept defended by Robert Cooper, among others, in *The Post-Modern State and the World Order*, Demos, 2000).

⁴³ Topic addressed by various authors: Among other, see the excellent paper by Ana Margarida Roldão, "Da Europa das Nações à Europa das Regiões" in *Informação Internacional, Análise Económica e Política*, coord. by José Félix Ribeiro, Ministry of Planning, Forecasting and Planning Department, vol I, 2001: 307-335, or Aymeric Chauprade, *Géopolitique...* cit: 810- 833.



albeit with huge gaps, to have been the model that prevailed in ancient Greece?⁴⁴ Is peace attainable by simple consensus, by “complex interdependence” (I took the liberty to refer to the ideas of Nye and Keohane⁴⁵) without a strong hegemony project? Or is it that the so-called thinkers of the “realist” school are right and the *deep forces* condition human nature to such an extent that we are doomed to repeating ourselves?

It is important to reflect, albeit briefly, on the role of Portugal in this stage of intertwined interests. Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe and indeed, the one with the oldest borders. Never having suffered from secessionist attempts – even when it had more than one political power, they fought for the same central power⁴⁶ – it may well be said that it enjoys from an enviable degree of national cohesion, a quality all the more remarkable as it is not based on any marking geographical differentiation (if we exclude its position), but primarily on linguistic and cultural factors. However, this position deserves further thought.

Indeed, it was Portugal’s position that enabled its maritime vocation (although it obviously did not determine it). It is due to its position that Portugal has a more benign climate than most of the Iberian mini-continent and it is also thanks to its position that the country has become, from very early on, a platform for supporting the maritime powers that since then, directly or indirectly, ruled it. As a southern country, although tempered by the strong influence of its Atlantic coastline, Portugal boasts the majority of defects and qualities of the people of the South, including polychronism (associated with the traditional “*desenrascanço*”, that is, the capacity to “pull a macgyver” and always come up with a solution to a problem at the last minute with no advanced planning and no resources).

Ranked by Hofstede among the countries with the greatest “Power Distance”, “Femininity”, “Collectivism” and having also a great need to develop mechanisms for “Control of Uncertainty”⁴⁷ which, according to the social psychologist, are rooted in its Roman heritage, during a particular time in history Portugal was able to carry out with notable constancy and determination an expansion that still amazes today, and to build intercultural and inter-ethnic bridges held until the present day.⁴⁸

Persistently poor in natural resources, it lived for centuries out of the exploitation of the resources in its territories outside Europe, and when that possibility came to an end, it soon turned to Europe, in defiance of a tradition of many centuries. As a recent convert, it zealously pursued the objectives of common practices and went further than most European states in dismantling its primary sector, which puts it in a particularly vulnerable position before the crisis faced by the Union.

Historically linked to the sea, over the last decades the country has been run mainly by former emigrants blinded by the European mirage and for whom the sea represented the nostalgia of the Empire. Accordingly, a formerly relatively large merchant and

⁴⁴ Low, Polly (2007). *Interstate Relations in Classical Greece: Morality and Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵ Keohane, Robert and Nye, Joseph (1977). *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company.

⁴⁶ Nogueira, José M. Freire (2004). *As guerras Liberais – Uma reflexão Estratégica sobre a História de Portugal*, Lisboa: Cosmos/IDN: 289-290.

⁴⁷ www.tamas.com/samples/.../Hofstede_Hall.pdf, accessed on 23-09-2011

⁴⁸ Particularly stressed by the Brazilian Freyre, Gilberto (2001) *Casa Grande e Senzala*, Lisbon: Livros do Brasil (original from 1933).



fishing fleet associated with the ship building and repair industry disappeared, perhaps for a long time.

Recently, the country seems to have rediscovered the sea. Endowed with a huge EEZ that it wasted and whose rights are in part in the hands of the EU (article 3 of Title I – Domains and Competencies of the Union, Treaty of Lisbon), Portugal advocates the extension of its continental shelf, which, somehow nurturing some megalomania, would multiply the country by 40! However, for the time being, the exploitation of such vast resources is merely rhetoric. Whereas the political statements, conferences and opinion pieces abound, concrete actions are missing.

Mismanaged in general terms, and living from loans (a nineteenth century tradition that came strong into the twentieth century until the *Estado Novo*, and which was taken up by the Third Republic...) the country cannot, actually, dream about independent policies, let alone in an area where the appetites of the “great” of Europe will not fail to manifest. The great ocean where untold riches lie appears intended to becoming a bargaining chip against other vital forms of support, regardless of where they come from.⁴⁹

Indeed, Portugal does not seem to do very well in any of the evolution scenarios proposed. The end of the Union will certainly not be the end of Portugal, but the re-nationalization of some policies will probably lead to association. If such a catastrophic scenario leads to the splintering of the Spanish state, an Iberian federalism might eventually come to the fore and, within it, a state, which at least in name, will be Portugal.⁵⁰ But that state will perhaps have its extra-European links intact, in a way that no putative Hispanic nation can match. Can we get round history?

Perhaps the best solution for Portugal is the reinforcement of the European Union via de federal route. I have expressed my strong reservations about this scenario in terms of geopolitical bias, but it is not impossible. A sort of European “Arkansas” (but bringing a huge maritime area and transcontinental affinities with it, and guaranteed the representation of the minorities underlying a federal model) is obviously better than the tiny state⁵¹ which we may be doomed to becoming with the demise of the European project.

Portugal seems to do comparatively better in the third hypothesis. Due to its small size and cohesion, the country would be a natural region with sufficient critical mass in a Europe of regions, perhaps greater than that which Belgium currently has in the Europe of Nations.

Finally, and moving to the reign of utopia, and since it cannot counteract its physical geography, the country could, nevertheless, become an European part of an entity formed by various continents, as indeed the clever Talleyrand advised the count of

⁴⁹ For a thorough analysis of the Geopolitics of Portugal see Nogueira, José M. F., *O Método Geopolítico Alargado...* cit, passim.

⁵⁰ Ambassador Franco Nogueira foresaw a similar situation in the book in which he said farewell to politics and life, writing that “the failure of the Common Market would, first and foremost, be the *Iberian common market*, that is, a common market between two very unequal partners, one of which, three or four times stronger, would easily dominate the other. It would be the Peninsular Common Market, dominated by the will and the power of the stronger partner, and we all known that economic domination is followed by political domination”. Nogueira, Franco (1993). *Juízo Final*, Barcelos: Livraria Civilização: 39.

⁵¹ According to the definition by Moreira, Adriano (2009). *A Circunstância do Estado Exíguo*, Lisbon: Almedina.



Palmela during the Vienna Conference in 1815 with regard to the future status of Brazil.⁵² History is far from over...

This paper asks more questions than provides answers, but finding them with realism, rejecting determinism and thinking out of the box is the responsibility of today's European elites, where the Portuguese ones are included. Failure could cost us all much more than what we can afford to pay.

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⁵² Saraiva, hermano (1993). *História de Portugal*, Europa-América: 326-327.



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