

**LIVING IN DENIAL**  
**THE CULTURAL FACTOR IN EUROPEAN POLICIES**  
**AND HISTORY**

**Fabrizio Tassinari**

Senior Researcher  
fta@diis.dk

**Lars Vissing**

Senior Analyst  
lavi@diis.dk

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DIIS · Danish Institute for International Studies  
Østbanegade 117, DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark

Tel: +45 32 69 87 87

E-mail: [diis@diis.dk](mailto:diis@diis.dk)

[www.diis.dk](http://www.diis.dk)

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European public discourse has often entertained parallels with the United States. Especially with reference to post-war Europe's federal aspirations, policy-makers and intellectuals across the continent have found themselves comparing the prospect of a United States of Europe with its American counterpart. In the process, they have argued that Europe should take its cue from the American experience of cultural amalgamation; the European Union's motto "united in diversity" is similar to *e pluribus unum*, ("from the many, one"), coined in the United States upon the Declaration of Independence.

On closer scrutiny, the parallel rings hollow, or is at least revealing of limitations. For all their admiration of America's "melting pot," do Europeans imagine that cultural assimilation in the New Continent could stretch far beyond its present borders? Do they imagine the likes of Colombia, Venezuela or Mexico being part of the United States, something like a "Union of Latin America and North America"? When corroborated by the existing challenges posed by American multiculturalism, the answer to this proposition is negative: at the height of Europe's post-Wall enthusiasm, German politician Günther Verheugen, at the time responsible for Europe's enlargement policy, argued that "for the EU to take in Ukraine would be tantamount to the United States taking in Mexico." In other words, what rings hollow is the assumption that different histories and traditions can be overcome, allowing for Europe's seemingly limitless expansion.

And yet this is precisely what has been done time and time again: Europe has attempted to achieve a Union of Latin and northern Europe, and more recently also of eastern and western Europe. More than that, the difference among cultures has played a fundamental role in the construction of this Union. In the past, whenever violent conflict was averted, it has been because Europeans grasped the necessity to set aside their differences and settle for mutually acceptable compromises through language, negotiation and diplomacy. When conflict has arisen, as so often in the continent's history, it has frequently been because culturally engendered disagreements could not be put to rest; instead, they have been exacerbated and sometimes abused in the discourse. Whenever a consensus to avoid a painful clash has been achieved, European policy-makers and negotiators have tacitly accepted a bargain, which included setting aside their cultural red lines. The sharper edges of their culturally informed positions have been rounded up. Post-structural philosophers such as Jacques Derrida<sup>1</sup> have seen in this process the creation of a new ontological whole, making Europe's "difference" a new, hybrid category of the political. But when seen through the lenses of actual historical experiences, the reality is more mundane. Europeans have not necessarily sought to settle their differences in order to create a new socio-cultural whole. Indeed, this line of argument is the same that makes concepts such as "European identity" so appealing but also so slippery and contested. Much more frequently, Europeans have accepted that deeper cultural factors, whether organized along national or regional lines (north, south, east, west) are in fact non-negotiable and that any prospect of cooperation has to accept this reality and indeed work around it.

Constructive ambiguity has been the instrument that has enabled the EU to advance and deepen its political and economic project and Europeans to establish mutual

understanding and bonds among themselves. If the results of various European political encounters at the highest level often appear half-hearted and half-baked, it is not because of a supposedly European habit of flip-flopping on important issues or watering them down. Instead, what joint European communiqués often reflect is the result of a systematic attempt at dissimulating differences. The converse of this argument is that mutual understanding in Europe has suffered, or collapsed altogether, whenever it has foregone this search for cultural accommodation. In those cases, the role of culture in the emergence and resolution of disputes has been underestimated or overblown, being reduced to folklore, treated as prejudice or established as a line in the sand for political reasons, with the result that Europeans have found themselves unable to relate to each other.

In this sense, the history of European integration is also a story of the establishment of a replacement culture, whose complex system of rules results in a remarkably powerful—and ostensibly neutral—institutional culture that provides a level-playing field for regional integration. Scholars have talked about this process as turning Europe into a “normative” power – a great ambition, but also a heavy responsibility in the face of so many internal contradictions. Normative power literally reflects the aspiration for Europe to indicate to its constituents and to the world what it means to be “normal.” The normative argument has fed into a certain self-righteous European discourse of homogenization that in recent years has risen in importance and been harshly criticized. For example, the expansion that a decade ago brought ten Central European countries into the EU was among other things a process of cultural determinism, which allowed any eligible country that met certain strict and technical criteria to be admitted into the European fold. But by promoting certain norms, be they liberal democracy or capitalism, Europe has in fact chosen not to be neutral about the values it does not recognize. Just as importantly, Europe’s homogenizing, “normative” platform tends not to account for how national variations and regional specificities in the political and economic order influence cooperative processes. In the last instance, Europe’s search for convergence among nations blinds it to the origins and implications of cultural differences. In its inability or unwillingness to recognize and nuance the proper role of culture in political interaction, Europe also reveals itself as a victim of positivism. Whatever is not quantifiable is not tangible; whatever is not measurable is not real.

By giving weight to historical markers, ethnographic roots and linguistic signifiers, this article aims to put some of these immaterial cultural divergences into perspective by reaching back into early modern history. In order to underline the significance of today’s practices, this paper will proceed in the reverse order, starting from recent examples of cultural diversity in Europe, and then moving back in time.<sup>2</sup> It will then proceed to present a study of the negotiations and cultural red lines that preceded and followed the Reformation, which is marking its 500th anniversary this year. It concludes by offering an alternative, ethnographic reading of European history and of the implications of such a reading for future European political undertakings.

## THE GOVERNANCE ORIGINS AND LEGACY OF THE SOVEREIGN-DEBT CRISIS

Over the course of this past half decade, the EU's sovereign debt and banking crises have produced an evident gap between the northern parts of Europe and the countries of the south. This divide has been brought into the public debate and tentatively explained with reference to a variety of factors, from social trust and tax collection to labor-market legislation and competitiveness. Southern governments have repeatedly pleaded with the north for more solidarity in recognition of the design flaws in the single currency and balance of payments disequilibria in the Eurozone. Northern European countries, on the other hand, stressed their inability to take on more liability for debts incurred by nations they have learned to mistrust. "Over the years," writes Matthias Matthijs, "there was a gradual widening of the popular-perception gap separating a 'financially more orthodox' northern core of surplus countries that mainly saved, invested, produced and exported, from a 'debt-ridden' Southern periphery of deficit countries that predominantly borrowed, consumed, and imported."<sup>3</sup>

Underpinning this narrative is another kind of dualism, not between north and south, but between rules, and specifically economic rule-making, implementation and enforcement, on the one hand and culture, particularly political culture, on the other. A seemingly irreconcilable tension between rules and culture has pervaded the public discourse during the Euro-crisis, impinging on policy practices and on the overall effectiveness of crisis-management mechanisms. EU institutions have often been considered the staunchest proponent of the first school of thought, which assumes that the implementation of legally binding rules represents the standard and principal measure of progress. The language of EU conditionality is typically one of harmonization and homogenization, to which member states must subscribe. As mentioned, even before the crisis, this attitude was apparent in the process of EU enlargement, based on the acceptance, implementation and verification of the *acquis communautaire*, the EU's accumulated rule-book, which now exceeds 100,000 pages of legislation. In this reading, specific cultural habits of governance are regarded as something that can be changed through socialization. In the public discourse, northern EU member states are usually seen as being behind this line and as pushing the south towards the enforcement of rules even more inflexibly than EU institutions.

The perceived rigidity of this approach has been met with a backlash, which visibly exaggerates and exacerbates the role of culture. Faced with unpalatable European *diktats*, southern European policy-makers have started to reclaim the value of national solutions and are pitting them against the EU's lack of flexibility. Even a typically measured figure such as Italy's Mario Monti, who has described himself as "the most German of Italian economists," has warned of the risk of Italy being ruled by a *podestà forestiero*, something of a medieval "foreign overlordship" based in the European Commission, the European Central Bank and, not least the German government. More recently, another Italian Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, echoed this sentiment: "Europe is depicted as a place where we come to take homework,

but it isn't like that. Italy knows perfectly what to do, it does it by itself, and for the future of our children." In northern European member states, on the other hand, it has been insinuated more or less openly that fundamentally different political cultures made it difficult, if not impossible, to enact reforms in the countries of the southern periphery, with Eurosceptic parties being particularly adept at targeting southern Europe as "garlic countries" or worse, as "economic gangrenes."

As such, the sovereign debt crisis that started in 2008 is one long story of underestimating the significance of culture. Any resolution to the crisis must come from a tightening of rules, whether in the form of a banking union or a fiscal union. The treaties upon which the current crisis management mechanisms are based, above all the Maastricht Treaty, reveal a long series of compromises, exceptions and opt-outs. They are aimed precisely at accommodating not only policies, but also different national sensitivities and cultural particularities on a matter as consequential as a currency union. This crisis has also laid bare the limitations of the European project that has been designed over the past six decades. Uncomfortable questions about its viability and limits have been brought to the fore. What price must be paid, from now on, in order to understand individual and collective identities, and the nature of the common project? Can the proposition still be entertained that an essentially homogenous culture exists, with "diversity" only becoming manifest in variations in folklore and a number of languages, which we believe can be indefinitely neutralized and culturally disinfected through translation? If the reply to the latter question is negative, what consequences can we expect? Do we subscribe to the nativist conceptions that are inspiring Eurosceptic populist movements? Or do we facilitate the emergence of a cultural interface that accounts for compatibilities and incompatibilities in managing time, space and discourses? A broader look at the European public sphere helps provide a better context with which to appreciate these questions.

As the sovereign debt crisis deepened and widened, it became apparent that the problem areas extended far beyond its narrow financial and economic confines. This has been a crisis of governance, leadership styles and political cultures. The recent negotiations with Greece and the premises for and implementation of privatization are all chapters implying significant cultural factors. However, this is nothing new in the modern history of European integration. The establishment of the internal market and the trade policies of the 1980s represented another actualization of north-south confrontations, revealing fundamentally different intentions and ideas on the purpose and use of borders, as well as in choosing adequate instruments for trade policy purposes.

Paradigms, templates and formats express local conditions and identities. For a Community that had mostly lived in denial regarding cultural differences, a rare moment of the recognition of such specifics was the passage from the first to second generation of Technical Harmonization Directives.<sup>4</sup> This new departure, which stresses performance as the only criterion, proved a concession to national design cultures (proportions, measures etc.). It thus ultimately accepted that norms and standards could be culturally specific, effectively acknowledging that, in the absence of a common perception of space and proportion, cultural and local

conventions prevail. The same could be said about environmental questions. They are the products of different contexts as regards the weight of land, water and air pollution. They also correspond to cultural norms and perceptions, and have regularly divided EU member states.

More recently, the refugee crisis has brought out the divergences, not only political but also cultural, in the use and management of borders. It has also revealed different expectations regarding the suitability of accommodation facilities for refugees. Such divergences painfully remind member states that the Schengen system providing for the free movement of people inside the EU may exist as an agreement, but judging by the way it is being perceived and implemented, its principles have not trickled down and become harmonized across the Union. EU instruments devoted to addressing local and cultural differences, such as the so-called structural funds, constitute about a third of total EU spending. They are designed to foster convergence, alignment, harmonization and homogenization according to EU standards. The poorer regions receive significantly higher financial support in order to grow according to European rules. Regions willing to cooperate and twin with each other according to European guidelines are rewarded with further financial subsidies.

What brings this disparate set of examples together is the EU's structural inability to take account of cultural differences. Economic, security, judicial, environmental and other policies may all imply significant cultural factors. Out of mutual consent and respect for what is customarily known as the 'Monnet method,' no individual culture becomes part of the bargain. Functional and transactional cooperation rules. With some notable exceptions, scholarly attention to cultural problems in the multilateral system at large, and in the EU specifically, remains modest.<sup>5</sup>

By comparison, it may be apposite to observe how corporate structures – businesses<sup>6</sup> as well as other organizational platforms<sup>7</sup> – explicitly see culture, and even the stress on culture, as a factor. Mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, the integration of military units, multinational forces, universities, styles in technical writing, the structuring and management health systems and environmental risks are all fields where cultural differences are recognized as realities and explicitly valued as such. Cultural specifics are deeply entrenched in gender-specific contexts and in different conceptions of control, accounting and accountability. For example, cultural differences characterize the components, the process and style, of airline crisis communications. They form the basis for expectation management in military conflicts, for the definition of operational cohesion of multinational forces and peacekeeping, for defining trust in tourism, for handling public-service support to families. Cross-cultural differences have also been found to impact on the acceptability of advertising or, by contrast, the functioning of the disgust scale, thus calling into question the possibility of developing a science of happiness that transcends temporal and cultural boundaries.

Different forms of behavior and customary allegiances are associated with regional<sup>8</sup> cultures, and even with post-modern<sup>9</sup> alternative identities and subcultures. They have become legitimate theoretical objects as such. In other words, in significant



dimensions of the public and private spheres, the necessity to adopt a critical approach in order to overcome mental and attitudinal obstacles is rarely questioned. An anthropological viewpoint is essential in order to anticipate negative consequences that may be detrimental to the desired outcome. This is especially the case when handling the issues of differences in attitude, local cultures, corporate histories, alternative values, guiding beliefs, styles, understandings and ways of thinking.

Inside the EU, however, the denial of cultural divergences is maintained. There are just variations in numbers and volume: languages that are spoken by more or fewer people. The unifying factors are the common institutions, common policies and common agenda. A cultural project becomes eligible for subsidies if it implies a “European” perspective. The cultural viewpoint also acquires acceptance and legitimacy if it can be adopted obliquely by being integrated into a conventional field of negotiation. Wherever essential cultural factors are, albeit indirectly, part of a package, the level of difficulty increases sharply. This dynamic is consistent with a long and checkered history that in Europe has tended to deny or align cultural specificities.

## **SUPPRESSING OR UNDERLINING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: A HISTORICAL TOUR D'HORIZON**

The period of European integration in the second half of the twentieth century is not the first example of dominant conceptions tending to suppress the effects of cultural difference and thus dissimulating polarities and oppositions: other collective phenomena than formal projects of integration could be considered. Taking a *longue durée* approach, and prioritizing patterns of historical structures rather than events, epochs with different profiles appear. Some periods sport effective harmonization, the establishment of common platforms, agendas or perspectives. Others are dominated by confrontation, including in explicitly cultural terms.

It is an often formulated assumption that eighteenth-century rationalism, the age of the Enlightenment starting with the circle of the Encyclopedia, represents a period of “cultural peace”. A knowledge society, combined with the epoch-specific themes of equality and universalism, of political reflection and critical spirit, of tolerance, seemingly cuts through differences. The systemic playing field is leveled out, shaping a dominant transversal cultural tonality. However, the existence of this ambiance does not prevent the expression and carrying over of strands of reflection on cultural diversity in Europe. For one, the eighteenth-century French diplomat and writer François de Callières<sup>10</sup> pointed out the importance of essential north-south cultural divergences in Europe and of anticipating the related problems through suitable negotiating behavior. Regarding the differentiation of cultures and languages, the north-south divide remained just as essential to the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.<sup>11</sup>

The Western European Middle Ages constitute another prolonged period of cultural alignment. Thanks to past decades of patient work by historians such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Jacques Le Goff, Georges Duby and others, its unifying factors appear even more clearly. They are partly climatic, due to the significant increase in temperature of the period, which led to deforestation and significant increases in the area of arable land, and facilitated transport by land as well as by sea.<sup>12</sup> However, the main elements of cohesion are cultural: a common religious platform, Christianity, and a language, Latin. This related to common agendas and purposes: saving souls and fighting the infidels. For an additional interpretation of the homogenizing dynamics of the Middle Ages, Duby<sup>13</sup> has stressed the structuring and stabilizing role of the tripartition of Indo-European-speaking societies into priests, warriors and economic producers. Against the background of what the Catholic Church represents today, it is hard to perceive its medieval profile and institutional behavior. Compared to what came out of the Council of Trent (1545-63) – a strict organization and revised doctrinal platform that ushered in the Counterreformation – the pre-Trent version of the Church was a forbearing entity. Synods in northern Europe registered persistent difficulties in creating respect for Church disciplines and rules, including sacerdotal celibacy. However, in this loose and tolerant framework of medieval Christianity, the discrepancies and variations did not endanger the unity that had been achieved. The enforcement of disciplines

was not so strict that north-south incompatibilities need be put to the test. This tolerance was, in itself, a factor in cohesion and allowed for the cohabitation of contrasting cultures.

Not least in the collective imagination of modern-day European state-builders, the Roman Empire remains a model and a precursor of globalization. Yet, this era can hardly be considered a period of peace, be it civil or “cultural”. The Republic and Empire both existed in a nearly permanent state of war. Flexible Roman colonization and immigration policies, including access to Roman citizenship, were potent unifying factors with cultural implications. The delivery of a systemic whole in terms of law, public administration and military organization proved efficient for the integration of the Mediterranean sphere, while the Rhine-Danube line came to mark the northern border that excluded regions that presented serious problems of integration. When the Emperor Diocletian divided the Empire into east and west, the partition of political power and administration were the central factors. The development of differences, as articulated from the early Church councils to the Great Schism (1054), is mainly related to political and institutional power and can hardly compare with the potential for cultural difference deployed at the Rhine-Danube *limes*.

The logical counterfactual to these periods of relative cultural integration, albeit under different signs, are the historical moments in which cultural divergences in Europe have played themselves out in full. Significantly, the confrontation between Prussian Lutheranism and Catholic conservatism in the nineteenth century was explicitly called a *Kulturkampf*. As the residues of eighteenth-century universalism and rationalism faded, the conditions for the deployment of cultural differences increased, as did their primary acceptance as valid discriminators. In the second half of the nineteenth century, culture as a field of contrasts and conflict returned with a vengeance, sustained by, among other trends, Romanticism, colonialism, Gobineau’s racism and Darwinism. The insistence and ideological force with which these intellectual strands and ideologies were propounded proved sufficient to inspire subsequent extremisms in the twentieth century, such as fascism and national socialism. In return, the drift of these movements explains why, in post-WW2 European integration, efforts were made to go about these questions with a degree of caution and political correctness that involved a *de facto* denial of cultural factors. Indeed, while contemporary divergences on issues such as fiscal consolidation and debt reduction might well also be qualified as the elements of a *Kulturkampf*, they cannot be recognized as such because political correctness takes the priority. The reverse was true of a series of nineteenth-century European events, which were identified and named according to their cultural nature.

If these contrasts are central, more than culture is at stake: outright power struggles are being played out. In this conflict the “north” is represented not only by Protestantism, Prussia or its Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, but also by the home-grown northern factor in Italy: Piedmont-Sardinia. Conversely, Pope Pius IX’s moves in this confrontation – including promulgating principles such as the infallibility of the Pontiff, *syllabus errorum*, the role of religious authorities and the

Virgin Mary's 'Immaculate Conception', in many respects constitute exemplary actualizations of classical Latin perceptions.

## CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND CONFRONTATION DURING THE REFORMATION

The Reformation period remains the main example of a fully deployed north-south interface in Europe in religious, political, economic and cultural terms, including in matters of governance. The preceding two centuries of evident degeneration, characterized by simony and nepotism, had not been sufficient to challenge seriously the spiritual leadership of the medieval European *Christianitas* by the Catholic Church. There had been a long series of earlier heresies, a separation from the Orthodox Church in 1054, a new legacy of medieval heresies – Waldensians, Bogomils and Cathars. Yet, no event is comparable to the sheer alienation brought about by the abuse of indulgences, that is, the unrestricted sales and purchases of penances for sins committed. This coincided with emerging differences regarding economic development and literacy and was promptly exploited by the northern German princes for the benefit of their own political and economic interests.

These differences were instrumental in reestablishing the Ancient Roman *limes* under fundamentally different premises. The Roman historian Tacitus had already associated the north with political health, which he compared to the degeneracy of Rome. The analysis of Niccolò Machiavelli goes even further in this direction, stressing German and Swiss confederate political health and *virtù* as examples for others to follow.<sup>14</sup> The Protestant Reformation draws our attention because of its specifically cultural components. Significant north-south discriminators are present at the emergence of this process, which gradually confirmed the consolidation of northern European identities within the seemingly unitary framework of medieval Christianity.

No question mark can be placed on the fundamentally religious motivations of Martin Luther: the *Sola Fide* reading of Saint Paul and a strict canon as the only basis for the Christian faith remain at the center of his interpretation, which stands firmly on spiritual grounds. Confronted with the perceived symptoms of institutional degeneration, materialized through the extended sale of indulgences, Luther initially sees himself as invested with Catholic legitimacy: the aim is to reform what exists, not to establish an alternative church.

From this point onwards, the contrast is played out in these cultural terms. The indulgences represent an extreme exploitation of a specific Latin cultural feature: the reliance on intermediaries – in this case the role of the clergy, the saints and Mary – as compulsory channels between God and the believer. Faith is apostolic: no links are direct. As in Latin society at large, the Roman Church is based on the central role of a corpus of professionals, in this case religious technocrats, monopolizing the relationship with the higher powers and performing their act in front of audiences. The intermediary remains a legitimate operator in the Latin context. Intermediaries of this type raise systemic questions in cultures that put a premium on direct links, strong local cohesion, autonomy, self-reliance and habits of consultation. The overblown marketing of indulgences, managed by different levels of intermediaries, appeared as an evident abuse, revealing profound

differences of perception in how things ought to be and how they should be effectively handled: differences regarding views on governance, authority and credibility.

The resulting questions are, *inter alia*, how do communities governed by principles of autonomy, civil discipline and the need for close governance and participation cope with this distant Latin, mainly verbal authority at a moment when the words being delivered clearly do not correspond to the facts? The corresponding devaluation of Church authority, already often seen as distant and of little relevance, suddenly becomes overwhelming after decades of erosion at the hands of popes Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, Alexander VI, Jules II and Leon X. The idea of a law, in this case the Bible, that would need to be supported constantly by interpreters also challenges the cultural understanding that links have to be direct and that no intermediaries are needed. Papal authority cannot exceed papal credibility. Once this credibility is lost, the legitimacy of the ecclesiastical intermediary is at stake.

Religion, faith and territorial and economic interests are not sufficient to explain a development that also represents a confrontation between specific, imported practices and local attitudes. It is a cultural stress-test gone wrong, starting a process of alienation. These questions might be observed through the lenses of the instruments that have recently been made available by cross-cultural studies and political anthropology, and by Hall and Hofstede in particular: admissible distances from power, preferred versions of legitimacy and authority, tolerated discrepancies – or not – between declared intentions and factual action.<sup>15</sup> But they might also, as suggested below, be considered in the light of the changing profiles and outcomes of the religious encounters that marked the Reformation process from 1517 to 1555.

These encounters – disputations, conferences, colloquia – represent a permanent staging of cultural divergences and of specific types of conflict management, not only in religious but also in economic and political terms, as well as in relation to ideas of governance.<sup>16</sup> The initial style is one of direct confrontation. During the first dispute between Cardinal Cajetan and Martin Luther in the presence of Emperor Charles V at the Augsburger Reichstag in October 1518, the staging is not a negotiation, but a situation in which a religious authority (the Catholic Church) is questioning an emerging heretic (Luther). The two papal Bulls, *Exsurge Domine* and *Decet Romanum Pontificem*, concerning the new heresy and Luther's excommunication are also formulated in this confrontational mode. Methods against religious deviation clash with strong convictions. The same climate can be witnessed eleven years later, at the event that formalized Protestantism, at Speyer.<sup>17</sup>

Several events, encounters and religious dialogues have a preponderantly local impact, such as the *Religionsgespräche* held in Nürnberg and Memming in 1525. But the issues handled on these occasions remain right at the center of the mental dividing line between northern and southern conceptions, here specifically regarding the role of intermediaries. Does the Church as an institution need to perform confessions? Is there a need for conventional intercessors, such as the Virgin Mary and the saints? Are they legitimate or illegitimate as intermediaries? If

the ecclesiastic intermediary is illicit, then what about the taxes perceived by the Church? Is the Mass a sacrifice, a pious work, a show of Faith, or is it a remembrance of the death of the Christ dying for our sins?

Yet other encounters in this phase are mainly procedural: mutual promises to meet again, to work in certain directions, to accept this or that text as a basis for negotiation, but also to prolong existing arrangements and truces. This is the case in April 1539, at the *Frankfurter Anstand*, which extended the religious peace for another six months. The conference that followed, at Hagenau in June-July 1540, is yet another procedural undertaking in view of the convening of a meeting for substantial discussion at Worms.

At yet other moments, the theological and ecclesiological substance may have been just a smokescreen, the actual convening being done for political and tactical purposes. Hiding his intentions to wage war on the Protestant princes of Germany, the Emperor called a conference at Regensburg in 1546. The formal pretext – another discussion of the main theme of Justification – was hardly a credible subject in view of prior confrontations and the simultaneous opening of the Council of Trent.

But there are also occasions when both sides of the divide embark seriously, directly, upon a negotiation of the points of contention and look for compromises. The objects of such possible understandings on the central questions of the Reformation debate were laid out in theological terms right at the beginning. At the June-July 1519 encounter in Leipzig between the theologian Andreas Karlstadt and Luther on the one hand and Catholic theologian Johannes Eck on the other, the questions of free will, grace, purgatory, the sale of indulgences, the need for and methods of penance, and papal authority are central. These issues are not just theological, but reflect larger cultural fundamentals of the north-south divide in Europe. They concern the possibility of a direct line between two points, as against the requirement for oblique proceedings and for secular and spiritual clientelism, with their chains of intermediaries at all levels. There is either acceptance of purely verbal authority, out of veneration for a formal function rather than respect for the example given, or the rejection of intermediaries between God and the believers, of indirect links, of intercession.

The three disputations conducted at Zürich between January 1523 and January 1524 come equally close to a situation of substantial negotiation. The outcome – the *Bildersturm* and the elimination of the Mass – goes to the heart of the north-south conflict. The rejection of the religious ostentation represented by the Roman liturgy and the elimination of the Mass illustrate the cultural opposition between an integrated German culture that assumes a unitary egalitarian space and an imported Latin culture that separates the world into groups of actors and spectators, and builds on the Mass as a technical-theatrical religious concept.

The 1530 *Augsburger Reichstag* also entails intense substantial negotiations leading up to the presentation of the Confession of Faith. However, it ends in a confrontation: the Catholic *confutatio* of the confession, read by Charles V, and the imperial rejection of the apology presented by the Protestants. Again, the north-

south cultural divide is drawn up, and sharply: top-down authority on the one side, against the inclusion of local powers and communities on the other. Ten years later, the Worms conference, which sat from November 1540 to January 1541, represents a rare and essential moment of negotiation over substance based on the gradually acquired mutual confidence and good faith of the two main figures involved, the Catholic theologian Johannes Gropper and his Protestant counterpart Martin Bucer. Both sides are acutely aware of the stakes involved. The informal configuration of the encounter set up by Antoine de Granvelle, principal advisor to the Emperor, excludes official exposure and positioning and prioritizes confidential drafting. Sterile confrontation is thus avoided. A certain proximity and mutual understanding is established. A *Stimmung* and trust effect, propitious for compromise formulas, is created. The Protestant Bucer gradually allows more reference material – the early Church councils and some of the Fathers, especially Saint Augustine – to be drawn into the question of what constitutes the relevant corpus. The Catholic Gropper also moves significantly from his point of departure, agreeing to the question of faith and the Lutheran reference to Saint Paul being placed at the beginning of the joint text on the essential Article V.

At Worms the parties thus find themselves looking for a pragmatic deal. There is a will on both sides to achieve a result and if need be to paper over the clearly articulated contrasts that had emerged during the preceding two decades. This is the essential moment in which concepts, vocabulary and lines of thinking are stretched in order to bridge a gap. The emerging doctrine of the *duplex iustificatio* is a central example of this stretching, itself an illustrative example European negotiating methods: the Christmas Tree of contradictions, but also words to alleviate and hide contradictions. Article V on the *iustificatio* is twelve pages long, compared to which the average *Wormser Buch* article is a section of one to three pages.

At the following conference in Regensburg, in April-May 1541, the same substance is on the agenda. However, the format, atmosphere and mood have changed. Gropper and Bucer are no longer alone at the table, and the Worms understanding, enshrined in the *Wormser Buch*, comes under pressure through the intervention of others. Both the Pope and Luther refuse to endorse the Article V drafts. Any compromise on the article on transubstantiation – reality or pure symbol? – seems remote. From that point onwards, an authentic negotiation on the theological contents can no longer be generated. After 1546, the Council of Trent also fails to develop any effective alternative interface between Catholics and Reformers. Only a marginal crypto-presence<sup>18</sup> of Protestant views is registered.

Another dozen years, including open confrontation and military conflict, are necessary to bring about the prerequisites for a different platform of negotiation, now centered upon juridical and political questions. After the Schmalkaldic war is won by the Catholic side, discussions are again conducted at the *Augsburg Interim* (May 1548), but they are no longer primarily connected with any ecumenical purposes or even hopes. The agenda is now one of examining the possibilities of cohabitation between Catholics and Protestants.



The same line of action is detectable in the negotiations leading to the *Treaty of Passau* (1552). The conflicting religious and cultural spheres, Catholic and Evangelical, are now perceived as realities, and the will to bridge the doctrinal and cultural gap is receding on both sides. The priority is rather to handle the existing ecclesiastical, economic and political interests affected by this division of the Church along north-south lines. The *Wormser Religionsgespräch* of 1557 is a late attempt, going beyond the 1555 Religious Peace, to achieve an ecumenical platform. It remains a rearguard action and lacks any follow-up. In between Passau and this last ecumenical initiative, the *Augsburger Religionsfrieden* of 1555 ratifies the north-south division of the German church, with important consequences well beyond German territory. Even if future reunification is not formally excluded, the aim is no longer to reach a common interpretation, but rather to establish mutual recognition of the Catholic and Protestant creeds, that is, of essential differences that cannot be reconciled. Even in this perspective of division in the German Church, contradictions are papered over and ambiguities actively used to make points of conflict look less apparent. Achieving a result becomes so important that a will emerges on both side of the table – as at Worms in 1540-1 – to pay for it with uncertainty.

## INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The negotiating styles, as well as the ways and means that were found to cope with individual situations during the encounters leading up to the religious peace at Augsburg, contain analogies with proceedings at other times and places, including contemporary multilateral negotiations. Their equivalent can also be found in contemporary EU practices and other multilateral forums: moments of direct confrontation, local discussions of limited impact, procedural moves, delaying matters to buy time, moments of diversion, manipulation and tactics; but also, at times, direct attention to and handling of matters of substance – either making tangible “progress”, effective solutions; or revealing symptoms that are also discernible in contemporary multilateral diplomacy, such as the “lowest common denominator”, the Christmas Tree, or ignoring or passing over solutions. In these cases the price of agreed texts is paid for by a lack of clarity and consequence, writing around the up-front problems in order to construct an agreement. Climate, human rights and population issues are recent examples in this category in the wider UN context; monetary issues, taxation and Schengen regulations represent similar themes for the EU.

The analogy in itself is not the issue: the central point is rather the actualization of essential contrasts that stimulate identical symptoms over time. During the Reformation, such contrasts were carried over and only provisionally put to rest in the *Augsburger Religionsfrieden* (1555). No new platform for a period of “cultural peace” is established, but rather something resembling an armistice in the north-south conflict in Europe. The doctrinal and military ceasefire lasts sixty-three years, until the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618.

Max Weber has drawn major attention to the Reformation as an ethical and cultural divide, but where were the seeds of these contrasts before 1517? The perspectives delineated by E.T. Hall and G. Hofstede, hypothesizing cultural stability and consistency through time, lend legitimacy to this type of interrogation. Georges Dumézil, working on the regional interpretations of myth and epic in the common Indo-European corpus, found essential differences in Nordic-German attitudes and symbolic space with respect to other interpretative currents.<sup>19</sup> Conclusions are similar when the focus is placed on family structures: “It is effectively the frontline between German and Latin spheres developing here, from the North-West towards the South-East. The analysis of the imperfect type of the incomplete stem family thus represents a spectacular confirmation of the association between family types and ancient historical-ethnological categories ...”<sup>20</sup> Based on a demographic analysis linked to that of political systems, Emmanuel Todd identifies a “border phenomenon”, the incomplete stem family structure, at the interface between the north and south, which corresponds closely to the line between the lower Rhine and the upper Danube, the location of the Roman *limes*.

These elements are just some of the points that might induce caution or a measure of hesitation before declaring the existing cultural platforms in Europe by-products of nation states or reforming movements. They could also be ancient lines, conflicting algorithms in an enduring cultural programming, making the

Reformation a moment of the actualization of the divide, rather than one of its emergence. In the affirmative Latin cultural impact, the area north of the Roman *limes* would represent only an intermediate period, from the conversion of Saxony by Charlemagne through the missions to northern Germany and Scandinavia to the Lutheran Reformation.

At the very origins of European ethnography, the Hippocratic *Treatise on Airs, Waters and Places* and the corresponding medical theories linked cultural and behavioral divergences to climatic contrasts. Had the voluminous Posidonius corpus been preserved, we might have found an even earlier and more distinct origin for this reflection. The polarity between north and south is also articulated in other sources. The *De Germania* of Tacitus considers it a fact, sustained by a series of cultural details. It is clearly the purpose of Tacitus to stress specifics and differences, and to underline the contrast with Roman culture. Livy, by contrast, might not explicitly formulate cultural nor ethnographic questions, but there is still an enduring interrogation of the antinomy between individual and collective interests, between personal and shared power, between monarchy and *Res Publica*. This questioning constitutes a reflection on the essential structural tendencies of Latin civilization, including the inherent risks of institutional degeneration associated with the personalization of power through, for example, the establishment of clientelas at the expense of the maintenance of sound functions for the formal structures. Livy shows an unlimited and unconditional respect for what is “public”. This fundamental commitment to the maintenance and defense of the political health associated with the *Res Publica* reflects his attention to a structural challenge in the Latin political system, dominated by a permanent risk of disinvestment of public matters by its citizens and the personal appropriation of the privileges that pertain to functions of political responsibility. The examples of Catiline and the Tarquins are illustrative in this respect.

Much later, the same themes are caught in a “Latinity-internal” reflection through Guicciardini’s concept of the *particulare*, a reference to the personal interest – here defended as central, and as fully legitimate – of any political power-broker, even when operating out of public office:<sup>21</sup> “...*However the positions I have had in the service of several Popes have forced me to love their grandeur, for my personal interest; and had it not been for this purpose I would have loved Martin Luther as much as myself, not in order to free myself from the law of the Christian religion in the way it is commonly interpreted and understood, but to see this stack of scoundrels diminished, and be without vice, or without authority ...*” Similar interrogations can be found in Giannotti:<sup>22</sup> “... *But when Catilina wanted to suppress the Republic, its citizens did not defend it at that point in time with the same vigor and strength of spirit as was the case at the time of the Tarquins. Thus it is necessary to see to it that the citizens are partisans of their republic, attached to it, so that in times of danger they are ready to defend it, not as a public thing, but as private. It is even more important to see to this, because it seems natural that the things that have to do with many are always defended lazily and coldly ...*”

Rather surprisingly, Julius Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* does not refer to the strategic, political or military challenges of expanding Roman colonization north and east of the Rhine. Caesar retains other reasons for marking the difference between Gaul

and the Germans, and for implicitly putting Germany off-limits with respect to the Roman zone of influence. In the excursus of Chapter VI, the Rhine is not envisaged as a political border, nor as a military defensive line, but rather as an essentially cultural boundary. On the one hand, there is a Gallic civilization, which appears close to Roman cultural standards – manageable, adaptable, capable of being integrated. The analogies and essential cultural cohesion between Gaul and Rome appear as a counterpoint to the analysis of Germany: on the other side of the Rhine, conditions are different. Establishing compatibility and understanding would seem beyond all reasonable expectations.

The corresponding descriptions of the particularities of Germany reinforce this recognition of an essentially cultural boundary, long before any fortification of the upper limits of the Empire – the Rhine-Danube *limes* - were even considered.

## CONCLUSIONS

The preceding considerations authorize few other conclusions than those drawn while moving along, but they raise a few final questions. Is European integration simply a matter of the adjustment or alignment of policies? Are the different interpretations of a common cultural basis sufficiently compatible to permit a project of Union? Can the Monnet perspective and method – understood as achieving pragmatic progress on specific issues of integration as the only way forward, culture remaining a matter of folklore – guarantee sufficient mutual understanding for the pursuit of a political project corresponding to the actual Union?

Recent and seemingly irrational events suggest a negative answer. Instances such as the Greek debt crisis and the referendum on the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, among others, are not explainable by means of political content or reasons alone, but also need a reference to the endurance of radically different sensibilities producing alternative realities. With exceptions such as Bonaparte<sup>23</sup> The visions, or illusions, of a common culture, required and sustained by the EU, hardly correspond to any previous model of European integration. Neither the pre-Trento nor post-Trento Roman Church operated on the presumption of cultural similarity. The former was flexible, close to loose, condoning regional particularities short of outright aggressive heresy; the latter was forced into consolidation mode by the Reformation and renounced any ambition for continent-wide integration. Before the Church, neither the Roman Republic nor the Empire entertained any ideas regarding a cultural "common ground". Rather, both readily absorbed other cultures – Greek, Oriental – making them part of Rome's mental and spiritual patrimony. Largely tolerant immigration and integration policies implicitly recognized the limits of cultural integration, and differences in attitude were thus reckoned with. The contemporary British model is, in some of its aspects, systemically close to these paradigms: a general social frame exists, but there is no expectation of the complete and unconditional harmonization of all cultural currents inside the frame.

Another observation concerns the so-called French-German tandem or "locomotive" – metaphors are legion – and its function inside the European Union. In various measures, these metaphors all convey the idea that some "energy" or dynamism is being generated from this coupling, positively influencing the overall climate of cooperation in the negotiating areas of the EU. Are any of these metaphors apt, even approximately? The factual history of French-German summits over several decades paints a different picture. Whatever the field concerned, these encounters represent a long chronicle of up-front disputes, of potential or explicit conflicts over nearly all areas of cooperation. The price paid for an "understanding" in this sort of situation is often similar to those of the religious encounters of the Reformation period, leading up to the Augsburg Religious Peace: papering over the cracks, and leaving uncertainties, contradictions, ambiguities etc. behind.

Recently the differences over the solutions for Greece, on the sovereign debt and Euro crisis, on the immigration and Schengen dossiers and on the refugee crisis, have illustrated this systemic and cultural antinomy.

Bridging the most important mental-cultural gap in Europe – that of the *limes* – by means of this bilateral platform does not constitute a preparatory move to factual integration, but rather the deployment of an umbrella so large that nobody underneath it gets wet. Compromises will be comfortable, common denominators low. Consequently, almost any viewpoint can be accommodated under a French-German agreement. The essential functions of these consultations, attempts at coordination and achieved understandings might thus be insufficiently perceived through inadequate metaphors like the tandem or locomotive.

The nature of French-German cooperation may also provide some of the reasons why the European project has to be pursued in denial of cultural divergences, specifically those influencing important governance practices; it commands strict respect for this closet. It is no coincidence that the Reformation was handled in strictly opposite ways in these two countries. As the contemporary model of integration remains intimately connected to the bridging of the north-south divide by the two major continental nation states – right on the historical and cultural *limes*, the line of past confrontations – as a peace project after three wars between them, the cultural aspects of the north-south divide must necessarily be put to rest.

A counterfactual perspective: would the situation have been any different if the Union had emerged directly out of one of the symbolic moments it often designates with reference to the pan-European idea: the humanism of Erasmus and Justus Lipsius, Charlemagne's restoration of the Roman Empire, or out of *limes*-overstepping states, such as historical Burgundy or Habsburg Spain? The preceding observations point to a negative conclusion. Whether we consider the constitutive elements of a state, as in the Belgian case, or of a Union of States, as in the case of the EU, the enduring cultural divergences remain as real as they are within the Swiss Confederation, that microcosm of north-south European discrepancies. In view of this reality, the achievements are significant: for close to seventy years the European Communities, then the European Union, have been able to produce effective policies in a number of fields without drawing attention to these divergences – a range of attitudes equivalent to what one finds in the Americas. The doctrine of diversity as a positive factor has been instrumental in this denial.

However, neo-national movements, doubts regarding further integration, Brexit and immigration policies lend critical relevance to yet another question, at once topical and political, that lies outside the analytical perspective of the preceding considerations. Will the symptoms of attitudes and governance practices described above, be they contemporary or historical, remain in the custody of historians and researchers? Will they be lived out in further dissimulation or denial, expedited by town-twinning, support for less spoken languages and regional cultures, or be left to produce new fractures?

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## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992, pp. 9-10).

<sup>2</sup> Culture as defined by Kluckhohn and Hofstede; cf. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 2001, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Matthias Matthijs: "Mediterranean Blues: The Crisis in Southern Europe," *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 25, no. 1, January 2014.

<sup>4</sup> 'COUNCIL RESOLUTION of 7 May 1985 on a new approach to technical harmonization and standards (85/C 136/01)'; Pelkmans, 'The New Approach to Technical Harmonization and Standardization', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, March 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Adair, Adler-Nissen; sovereign diplomacy; stigma management; Bourdieu, Antonsich, Bernazzoli, Borneman, Brett, Busby, Cohen, Fiott, Fisher, Fligstein, Katsumata, Kim, Krzyzanowski, Matiniello, Mingst, Ruedin, Soldat-Jaffe, Ulbert.

<sup>6</sup> Boyd, Brouthers; *start-up; paradox*, Cai, Cannon, Capdevielle, Dachs, Datta, DiGeorgio, Doherty, Drori, Gill, Graham, Gray, Heuberger, Heuman, Jackson, Johnson, Krause, Krug, Kumar, LeBaron, Leonardi, Lubin, Marks, Marmenout, Morosini, Nguyen, Okazaki, Pepper, Piekkari, Richard Lewis Communications, Rosenbaum, Salacuse, Shearman, Shonk, Weber; *merger failure; cultural fit*, Wunderle, Zhao.

<sup>7</sup> Barnawi, Brown, Dube, Dunlop, Cai, Carter, Cohrs, Eguchi, Fay, Feierman, Fisher; *int. relations; ethnic conflict*, Friedman, Goldstein-Gidoni, Hauschild, Herzfeld, Huysseune, Kim, Kissinger, Martin, Mandall, McCarthy, McCormick, Melo-Pfeifer, Millas, Moloney, Moriizumi; *relational closeness; conflict styles; Japanese-U.S. families*, Nishishiba, Oetzel; *intercultural conflict; face and facework*, Paramasivam, Portera, Saunders, Schilling, Stewart, Tanaka, Tardif, Tzanelli, Vieira, Wang, Yano.

<sup>8</sup> Bauduin, Bond, Grasseni, Haid, Heribert, Hlebowicz, King, Korostelina, Krjukova, Ludewig, McDonald, Montanari, Nadel-Klein, Nordera, O'Rourke, Soldat-Jaffe, Storm, Stausberg, Wilson, Zayarnyuk, Zhang.

<sup>9</sup> Bach, Berezin, Brookman, Carr, de Gregorio-Godeo, Fox, Gori, Green, Hoenig, Kolár, Linke, Macgregor, Marinetti, Roberts, Salter, Seleny.

<sup>10</sup> *De la Manière de négocier avec les Souverains*, Amsterdam 1716, pp. 42-43.

<sup>11</sup> *Essai sur l'Origine des Langues*, Chs. IX, X.

<sup>13</sup> *Inter alia Féodalité*, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> *Rapporto delle cose della Magna* (1508), *Discorso sopra le cose della Magna e sopra l'Imperatore* (1509), *Ritratto delle cose della Magna* (1512); Jean-Jacques Marchand, *Machiavelli, la Svizzera e gli svizzeri*, pp. 15-24 atti del convegno IIC-Rabat, Dec. 2012; Bernard Wicht, *L'idée de milice et le modèle Suisse dans la pensée de Machiavel*, Lausanne 1995, L'Age d'homme.

<sup>15</sup> Amarasinghe, Brents, Busby, Cesari, Friese, Gordon, Hall; *cultural factors; hidden dimension; silent languages; cultural differences*, Hammer, Hendriks, Hofstede, Holmes, Kaasa, Katz-Gerro, Lentin, Luciak, Molina, Moriizumi; *relational closeness; conflict styles; Japanese-U.S. families*, Newman, Phipps, Oetzel; *intercultural conflict; face and facework*, Raghuram, Shi, Suny, Veiga.

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<sup>16</sup> Albrecht, Becker, Drecol, Eck, Ganzer; *Religionsgespräche (a,b,c)*, Gotthard, Honée, Lexutt, Mehlhausen, McGrath, Müller; *Teil I; Teil II; Lethetums*, Scheib, Ziegert.

<sup>17</sup> Die Protestation zu Speyer, April 1529.

<sup>18</sup> Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*, III/5, p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> Dumézil, *Loki* p. 234 note 1

<sup>20</sup> "...C'est bien le front de contact entre germanité et latinité qui se développe ici, du nord-ouest au sud-est. L'analyse du type imparfait qu'est la famille souche incomplète confirme donc de façon spectaculaire l'association des types familiaux et de catégories historico-ethnologiques anciennes ..." » Todd, *L'Invention de l'Europe*, pp. 54-55; Durant.

<sup>21</sup> *Ricordi*, 28 ... Nondimeno el grado che ho avuto con piú pontefici, m'ha necessitato a amare per el particolare mio la grandezza loro; e se non fussi questo rispetto, arei amato Martino Luther quanto me medesimo, non per liberarmi dalle leggi indotte dalla religione cristiana nel modo che è interpretata e intesa comunemente, ma per vedere ridurre questa caterva di scelerati a' termini debiti, cioè a restare o senza vizi o senza autorità ...

<sup>22</sup> *Repubblica Fiorentina e la Veneziana*, II, p. 80: Ma quando Catilina volle opprimere la Repubblica, non fu già da'suoi cittadini allora difesa con quel vigore, e fermezza d' animo, colla quale era stata difesa al tempo de' Tarquinii. Però è necessario con ogni industria provvedere che i Cittadini sieno partigiani ed affezionati alla Repubblica loro, acciocchè ne' pericoli di essa ciascuno sia pronto a difenderla, non come cosa pubblica, ma come privata. Il che ancora tanto più è da provvedere perchè par naturale, che quelle cose, le quali attengono a molti, sempre siano con pigrizia, e freddezza difese.

<sup>23</sup> Bourrienne vol. II/18: "What matters," he would often say, "that two countries are separated by rivers or mountains, that they speak different languages? With very slight shades of variety France, Spain, England, Italy, and Germany, have the same manners and customs, the same religion, and the same dress. In them a man can only marry one wife; slavery is not allowed; and these are the great distinctions which divide the civilised inhabitants of the globe.