

The Interrelation Between Democracy and Responsibility: The Greek Crisis as a Paradigm Case for the EU



La interrelación entre democracia y responsabilidad. La crisis griega como caso paradigmático para la UE

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ABSTRACT One of the main lessons to be learned from the Greek crisis is that large scale supranational communitarisation is a danger for democracy if mutual obligations between members undermine substantially the possibilities of political choice for the single member states. I argue that a well-balanced relation between (self-) responsibility, solidarity, performance incentives and democracy involves taking subsidiarity serious, as well as to admit a certain amount of institutional flexibility. This flexibility is demanded especially in the case of large scale communities which include countries as members, like the EU, and in which the basic ideas of social, economical and financial policy are rather heterogeneous. Democracy, responsibility and solidarity must be in a well balanced relation for any community to function and to be generally acceptable to the citizens. This includes the defence of rather ambitious forms of civil participation and sovereignty of the people against the paternalistic pretensions of experts or of political and cultural elites. And responsibility – as a basic condition for democracy – requires that the design of the contractual basis of the EU must make possible that voting communities really assume responsibility for their decisions, which includes bearing possible negative consequences of these decision on themselves. Preserving a certain leeway for differing decisions about economical, financial or social questions is necessary for giving democratic substance to the demand of the *primacy of politics*. This puts serious limits to ambitions for treaty-based supranational communitisations.

KEY WORDS Europe; crisis; Greece; democracy; responsibility; solidarity; justice; community; subsidiarity; reform; paternalism.

RESUMEN Una de las principales lecciones a aprender de la crisis griega es que la comunitarización supranacional a gran escala se convierte en un peligro para la democracia si las obligaciones mutuas entre los miembros socavan substancialmente las posibilidades de elección política de los estados miembros particulares. Argumentaré que una relación bien equilibrada entre (auto) responsabilidad, solidaridad, incentivos de rendimiento y democracia implica tomar en serio la subsidiariedad, al igual que admitir un cierto grado de flexibilidad institucional. Esta flexibilidad es demandada especialmente en el caso de comunidades a gran escala que incluyen países entre sus miembros, como la UE, y en las cuales las ideas básicas de política social, económica y financiera son más bien heterogéneas. La democracia, la responsabilidad y la solidaridad tienen que estar en un equilibrio adecuado para el funcionamiento de cualquier comunidad y para que ésta sea aceptable en términos generales para sus ciudadanos. Esto incluye la defensa de ambiciosas formas de participación civil y soberanía del pueblo frente a las pretensiones paternalistas de los expertos o las élites políticas o culturales. Y la responsabilidad —como condición básica para la democracia— requiere que el diseño de las bases contractuales de la UE haga posible que las comunidades votantes asuman las responsabilidades de sus decisiones, lo que incluye sobrellevar las posibles consecuencias que tales decisiones podrían tener sobre sí mismas. Preservar una cierta flexibilidad para decisiones dispares sobre cuestiones económicas, financieras o sociales es necesario para dar sustancia democrática a la demanda de *primacía de lo político*. Esto pone serios límites a las ambiciones de comunitarización supranacionales en base a tratado.

PALABRAS CLAVE Europa; crisis; Grecia; democracia; responsabilidad; solidaridad; justicia; comunidad; subsidiariedad; reforma; paternalismo.

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Events and crisis come thick and fast in Europe and its neighbourhood in recent times: financial crisis, Greek (-debt) crisis, Near East crisis, refugee crisis.¹ It appears as if the *project Europe* is exposed to reality tests in increasingly shorter intervals. Obviously, in the face of the latest developments, the (partly) substantial differences between the single countries of the European Union and the European Monetary Union (EMU) can be less and less concealed by flowery speech about unity or by compromise formulas. I want to make use of the Greek crisis—which by no means has yet been fully overcome—in order to raise some fundamental issues concerning the idea of a communitarisation of national states in general and of the special case of the European Community. In my view, the institutional setting of some European communitarisation projects lead to a threat for democracy, partly due to a defective balance between solidarity and responsibility and partly due to an underestimation of cultural differences and a lack of institutional flexibility. In this context, I will also discuss some general questions about the sense and the purpose of (national or supranational) communities or associations and, subsequently, some dangers of paternalism for democracy.

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A second intention of my dealing with the Greek crisis here is to take a position on the main reasons for that crisis and to reject some often-heard assumptions made by the opponents of the so called *austerity policy*. On the one hand I will repudiate some of the harsh leftist critique of the reform requirements towards Greece by the so called *Troika* (IMF, European Central Bank and), which seems to me either embezzling or ignorant regarding some hardly deniable facts about Greece. On the other hand I will agree with the critics, that a democratic deficit of Europe and its institutions became

¹ With the British vote for a *Brexit* on June 23, another crisis must be added to the list. As many commentators have noticed this vote represents, at least partly, a justified dissatisfaction with the current state of the EU felt in broad sections of the population in other countries as well. But it might also be analysed in more constructive respects, and as confirming some of the main points made in this essay: On the one hand, the simple fact of this referendum taking place is a strong signal for the possibility of a *democratic and peaceful* separation (hardly imaginable in many other parts of the world), showing that this community rests on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, the possible negative effects of its result, which seem to become clear to many proponents of a Brexit only now, might function as a salutary shock. It might teach protest voters with diverse motivational backgrounds to take into consideration the possible negative effects of their vote more seriously in the future.

manifest in this crisis. My hope is that we might learn something from this crisis (once more), something that could help to countervail the growing dissatisfaction with the EU and its institutions.

So, even though the comments I want to make on the Greek-crisis are important in their own right, their main purpose is to serve as a background for reflecting on deep structural deficits of the constitution and organisation of the EU, the EMU (European Monetary Union) and other joint institutions, which have to be resolved if the project Europe is to survive. For what the Greek crisis reveals to us, with regard to more general issues, is that there are serious limits to a democratic legitimation of substantial political decisions within the actual shape of the EU and its different institutions already. Obligations by constitutional treaties of EU institutions are (at least, if they were taken seriously) apt to undermine the possibility for differing ways of balancing out, for example, between solidarity and self-responsibility or between social redistribution and performance incentives in the different member states with their political, economical and cultural peculiarities.² At the same time, how the crisis was handled reveals to us at least two things. First, the steps of deepening the European communitarisation already executed or strived for reinforce the tendency to take crucial political decisions, under the pressure of events, in a crisis mode and with a serious lack of parliamentary control (both on the national and on the European level). Second, national elections or votes run risk of losing their point and their credibility, if European treaties undermine the possibility of serious political consequences, corresponding to the intentions of those who gained a majority in national elections or voting.

These dangers could be reduced, so I claim, if the principle of subsidiarity would be taken seriously in the construction of European treaties and their implementation by leaders and administrators of EU-institutions and its member states.³ Subsidiarity would help to retain

² It is not only European treaties that are in danger of undermining the democratic leeway of nation states of course. A good current example is the *Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership-Treaty* (TTIP) which is negotiated between the EU and the USA at the moment. On these problems, see the instructive analysis by Udo Di Fabio (2016), the former judge of the German Federal Constitutional Court.

³ By this I mean the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary (that is, a supporting, rather than a subordinate) function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.

leeway for voters to choose between real political alternatives on national and regional or other subordinated levels. This suggests that at least any further steps towards integration should allow serious opportunities of democratic voting below the European level, particularly on the national level. By *serious* I do not only mean substantial here, but also that majority decisions on a certain subsidiary level may result in *noticeable consequences* for the respective community of voters. To make this possible, particularly the consequential financial costs of an election result —e.g. because of social programs or tax cuts promised by the winning party—, should not be shiftable to the community level, on which citizens are affected, that could not take part in the voting. And if the majority of a member state votes in favour of a policy that amounts to a violation of commonly agreed rules, treaties or values, it must, as a final consequence, be possible to exclude that member from common institutions like the EMU or the common market. That is taking democracy seriously!

These demands may appear harsh and risky. But in this way, the responsibility of citizens might be strengthened, particularly by forcing them, as voters, to take into account more seriously the possible negative consequences of their votes. And it might be the only way to re-establish and strengthen trust in politics and democracy in all member states. This again might be helpful against tendencies to seek salvation in a provincial nationalism and to foster a more positive attitude towards the advantages of supranational communitarisation instead. A possible, or maybe even necessary, consequence of these demands is a higher flexibility concerning membership or *multi-speed Europe*, a consequence, towards which European politicians should overcome their fear.

The following will not amount to a comprehensive theory regarding the questions I will be concerned with. I cannot supply such a theory. Anyway, I believe that matters in the overlapping fields relevant to my discussion, like politics, economy and ethics, are much too complex to be apt to be captured by something one could justly call *a theory*. And even so I will take a stand regarding controversial political questions, I want to emphasise in advance that I am rather unhappy —though unable to avoid— using labels like *austerity*, *Keynesians* or *paternalism* as markers for an allegedly unitary

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and clear cut position to which one can (or should) position oneself with a *Yes* or a *No*. I am quite aware of not being able to do justice to the diversity of positions that could be summed up under labels like these within the limits of this essay.

Disunity, Democratic Deficits and Wrong Incentives: Learning From the Greek Crisis

The Greek sovereign debt crisis and the handling of that crisis by European policies raise fundamental questions, but they are also in some respects instructive. Thus, conflicts and disagreements within the EU and the EMU on economic, financial and socio-political issues, so far rather subliminal, became manifest. Obviously, there are fundamental disagreements between European countries about whether or not the best way to overcome such a crisis is by means of a rather market-oriented policy based on international competitiveness and balanced budgets, or by means of a policy rather based on demand-orientation, state intervention and geared for debt financed social transfers and stimulus programs. At the same time, the diverging cause analysis of that crisis and the heterogeneous proposals for coming to terms with it made it once more obvious that up to now there exists no answer, or at least no answer shared by all members, to the central question of what the essential purpose of the EU is and in which direction the EU and the EMU should be developed in the future. Is the ultimate goal a kind of federal state or rather a federation of European states with regulatory competences remaining to a large extent at the level of nation states? An often-stated basic problem of the European Monetary Union is the failure to establish a legally binding common or at least convergent fiscal policy. Instead of converging, the fiscal and economic policies of the member states drift apart. But it is particularly controversial, if the Euro countries should surrender fundamental fiscal competences to the European level to remedy the tensions within the EMU. The central, lastingly unanswered and controversial question here is which consequences, if any, such a transfer of national core competencies to the European level must have with regard to a necessary strengthening of the democratic legitimation of respective European institutions.

The reflections made here are based on the view that attempts to recover the general support of European citizens for the project Europe has to begin with the insight that at least any additional steps towards integration, especially any additional transfer of competences from nation states to the European level, should be accompanied by a strengthening of the democratic legitimacy of European institutions. At the same time, the core of the so far prevailing state sovereignty, in particular the budgetary powers and the tax (-raising) powers, should not be restricted any further without an appropriate referendum in each member state of the EU or the EMU respectively. Without such a referendum, citizens will justly feel excluded by the political elites.

But that's not all: The democratisation of EU institutions must be accompanied by a flexibilisation of forms of European memberships. This would allow for a multi-speed Europe with different forms of communitarisation within a *framework-EU*, held together by a nucleus of commonly accepted values, rules and purposes. Within such a framework, closer associations or unions would be possible between countries that show higher degrees of lasting political agreement. Accordingly, the legal ties between countries within such closer associations would be stronger than those obtaining within the more general common framework. This includes that a deliberate violation of the rules or duties of the community, voluntarily entered into (like the EMU for example), may have effective consequences, even the exclusion of a member state as a last resort. One of the lessons to be learned from the Greek crisis is that the EU should allow and develop loosened exclusion and exit rules for members who, on the basis of democratic decision, don't want to abide by the rules previously agreed to on the respective level of communitarisation (like the EMU).

The general demand for a stronger democratic legitimation of any closer political tie between countries by national referenda affects especially the idea of developing the EU or the EMU into a form of transfer union, in which, while the responsibility for state budgets remains with the single member states, the financial risks—and the potential higher debts respectively—are communitised. As a result, taxpayers of member states with a sustainable economic and fiscal policy would be liable for the debts of

member states with a non-sustainable policy. Thereby, not only would the incentives for a sustainable policy be undermined, but also the fundamental principle of being responsible for the (foreseeable) consequences of one's own political decisions. Democratic communities must in principle bear the consequences for their majority-decisions primarily themselves.

To take a position against the EU as a transfer or debt union does in no way mean to call into question the possibility or even necessity of aid and support for member states in need of help or structural development. What must be avoided is an institutionalized abuse of the idea of solidarity between member states, which would mean that some have to pay for the political decisions of others on which they have no (and should have no) influence. The challenge, which European policy faces, is to get to an appropriate ratio between self-responsibility, democratic legitimacy and solidarity based on principle subsidiarity. In any case, the increasing influence of European institutions on fundamental fiscal, economical and socio-political decisions needs a stronger democratic legitimation than is currently the case. My rather pessimistic diagnosis is that the further approximation of fiscal, economical and social policies could only be achieved, at least for the time being, by measures that will increase the already unacceptable democratic deficit of European institutions. Under these circumstances, essential decision-making powers should remain on a national or regional level, at least for the time being.

But there are other, more lasting reasons for remaining with a federalism of states as means of strengthening democracy in large scale communities. Thus it seems desirable that certain forms of political and economical competition, and thus a certain minimum of different economical and social policies, continue to be possible between EU member states. In particular, individual countries should, to a certain extent, have an option to choose between a policy based on global competitiveness and investments in the future or a policy based on consumptive spending and domestic social transfer. Citizens would be in a position to compare the consequences of different fiscal, economical, or social policies and draw their practical conclusions. Maintaining a certain choice between alternative policies for member countries within the EU would allow for

a comparison of the results of these different policies, and in this way for learning from those comparisons.

In my view, even in case of an overall more democratic constitution of a future EU, a certain minimum level of political options within the common obligatory framework is necessary to keep up or revive broad support for the project Europe by its citizens. This appears particularly plausible, if one keeps in mind the heterogeneity of the political and economical cultures or mentalities within the EU. An enforced EU-wide homogenization concerning these matters would be difficult to legitimize democratically. Furthermore, such a homogenization would be suitable for undermining solidarity between member states and would reinforce the increasing centrifugal forces in the EU in the long run —rather than the renunciation of social transfers or of establishing a kind of fiscal *joint liability community*, I suspect.

So, according to the view put forward here, the democratisation of the EU-institutions can only succeed if its federal constitution leaves sufficient leeway for different economical and social policies. Europe is too big and too heterogeneous for it to be plausible that a common uniform economic, fiscal and social policy could be democratically legitimized. In accordance with the idea of subsidiarity, different possible forms of integration for different countries with looser entrance and exit possibilities are needed. This doesn't fit well to an idea of integration, which is declared as *irreversible*, and which necessitates harmonisations felt as imposed from outside by many. But a top-down approach for enforcing a common policy within the EU would be harmful to the future acceptance of the European project by its citizens. The problem of a democratic deficit of the EU not only concerns, inter alia, the limitations of control of the European Commission or of the Council of Ministers by the European Parliament or by national parliaments, including and their lack of potential influence on European policies (particularly the EU Parliaments lack of a right for legislative initiative). It is also important to give citizens the possibility for direct influence and choice between substantial political alternatives. In fact, democratic *elbowroom* is more and more constrained by the increasing integration, which comes along

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with binding European (or other supranational) treaties, narrowing the range for alternative policies in member states.

The advantages of communitarisation within the framework of the EU or the EMU have often been stated. These are especially the economic advantages of a common internal market, as well as the comparatively greater influence which a Europe that agrees to a large extent about its values and political goals has in a globalised world (e.g. on the negotiation of international treaties or contracts), particularly with regard to superpowers like the USA or China. Europe considers itself also as a community of values. Beyond that, the EU was always understood as a peace project by its founders and promoters, based on the bitter experience of a long history of wars within Europe.

However, the attempt to integrate national economies with partly very different capabilities, with different economical mentalities and with different political cultures by means of a common currency has now paradoxically reversed the overcoming of differences, resentments and prejudices hoped for. Also for this, the Greek crisis is a showcase. Furthermore, the handling of the crisis by European politics not only endangers the global model character of the European project concerning possible supranational communitarisations of states in other regions of the globe, but also seems apt to nourish doubts on the functionality of democracy in a globalized world —what would be the most unwelcome effect of the crisis, in my opinion. Against this background, I want to defend a rather rigorous, consequent position of some countries towards Greece, based on demand to comply with common rules and treaties.

The Greek Crisis and the Reproach of a Failed *Austerity Policy*

Another way in which the Greek crisis could be considered as exemplary is seeing the dispute about the best type of measures to cope with it as a kind of *proxy war* taking place between leftist and rightist (or liberal) economists and intellectuals. From a German or generally northern European perspective, one might have been surprised about the vehemence of the international critic, particularly also in the Anglo-Saxon world, of the common European negotiating position vis-à-vis the Greek government,

which, just as a reminder, consists in a astounding coalition of the far leftist *Syriza*-party and the far rightist nationalist *Independent Greeks*-party. It is quite remarkable that for some of the advocates from the far left, as well as from the far right political camp hardly any argument seemed to be absurd enough to look mainly for others than the Greeks themselves to be blamed for the problems in Greece. The usual suspects were, once again, Germany, the financial markets, or simply the capitalist system itself. Most astonishing was the lack of sophistication with which even distinguished economists, such as Joseph Stieglitz (2015), Paul Krugman or Thomas Piketty (2015), saw the main cause of the economical and social problems of Greece (and other southern European countries) in the so called austerity policies enforced by Brussels (under the influence of Germany), without sufficiently taking into consideration the specific economical and political deficiencies in Greece (and other southern European countries).⁴ As if the real problems of Greece, Italy and other countries began only with the reform measures enforced by outside pressure.

It is also true of course that the international financial crisis, which was, among other things, made possible by the unscrupulous deregulation of the financial markets, contributed to the Greek crisis (e.g. Häring, 2015). In general the costs and risks of bank rescues were, to a large extent, passed on to the taxpayers. But especially in those countries that suffer the longest struggle with the crisis, the debt problem was indeed intensified, but not *structurally* caused.⁵ That is illustrated particularly well by the Greek example: The structural causes here consist mainly in widespread corruption and clientele policy, a low tax compliance, widespread subsidy fraud, a lack of control by a poorly equipped bureaucracy, a weak judicial system, economic and working structures that are anti-competitive and not conducive to economical growth, a strong increase of unit labour costs (until 2011), unsustainably financed social welfare services (particularly pensions), as well as a generally disproportionate, but inefficient public sector, in which public positions were frequently awarded as a courtesy, but not according

⁴ Even the President of the United States, Obama, expressed some sort of sympathy for *Syriza*'s position —whereby on motive might have been the strategic importance of Greece as a NATO-member.

⁵ For an opposing view, see e.g. Zezza (2012).

to qualification.⁶ To make matters worse, it seems to be a general tendency in Greece to blame others for ones grievances. This tendency comes along with a lack of civil initiative, public spirit and readiness to take (personal) responsibility.⁷ These facts, which will be confirmed by practically every connoisseur of Greece, are hardly noticed, if not completely brushed aside, by many leftist economists and intellectuals, it seems. Possibly it doesn't square with established certainties that the main cause of the crisis is not the banks, the financial markets, the neoliberal austerity policy, the EU or capitalism in general. Instead, it has to do with a lasting refusal by large parts of the Greek society to confront reality and to accept the necessity of fundamental reform of a system of patronage and unfair privileges for influential interest groups of any political colour.⁸

Against this background, the demand for a renewed haircut for Greek debts fails to address the real problems. With the second aid package for Greece, the redemption of the Greek debts was deferred far into the future and the interest burdens for Greece were set so low, that this came very

6 The corruption index (CPI) of *Transparency International* registers Greece (together with Italy) in 2015 at rank number 69 of 174 countries—and thus at least slightly improved compared to the year before. Although in Greece more than 15 (!) governmental agencies are responsible for the fight against corruption. But they don't work properly, are understaffed and cannot enforce sanctions, because they encounter a weak justice. Moreover, there is no central registration of data, neither for taxes nor for the registering of land. Because nobody records which land belong to whom, several different >owners< can pocket subsidies for the same olive grove, for example. In addition, many Greek public officials have neither the ability to analyse balance sheets, nor are competent in English, which obstructs the processing of international cases, in which Greek companies are involved (cp. for the subsidy fraud: Winkler [2012]).

7 The mix of clientelism, a widespread lack of trust in the market economy and the public institutions, as well as an inflated, but weak and inefficient public sector, which is one of the main reasons for Greece' problems, has historical roots of course. Some of them reach far back into the distant past, in which Greece was part of the—in many respects backward—Ottoman Empire. Some of them can be located in recent history, like in the 'Greek Socialism' of the PASOK-era of the 80ies, dominated by Andreas Papandreu, which was generously tolerated (and subsidised) by the EU, presumably for mainly geo-strategical reasons. To take into account these historical roots doesn't however change anything about the findings concerning the conditions in Greece today (for a comprehensive and up-to-date overview, see Klemm & Schultheiß (2015)). See also the articles by Papavassiliou (2015) and by Drossou & Fücks (2015).

8 A typical example for the widespread refusal of reforms is given by Telloglu (2014). By using the monopoly on the sale of formula by pharmacies in Greece as an example, Telloglu describes how interested parties succeeded again and again to thwart the opening of the market, and with that a significant cost saving for consumers, by tricks and lobbying.

close to a (disguised) haircut anyway. Presumably, one must consider a further reduction of the Greek debt burden in the future. But the decisive point is that this will be a *sustainable* successful measure only on the basis of binding commitments by Greece to actually implement the promised reforms. Otherwise, Greece threatens to become a bottomless pit for European taxpayers. If Greece is to stay in the Eurozone, it must undergo profound reforms of its economy and society. Greece must be enabled to render its necessary public services without a continuous accumulation of debts at the cost of its own future generations or of others. However, since until recently—as was shown by the results of the referendum in July 2015—large parts of the Greek society still don't show any willingness for the respective changes; the prospect for reforms felt as imposed from outside by many Greeks is unfortunately not very high. But the impression that Greece is continuously living beyond its means and not willing to get a grip on the expenditure side on the one hand and to sustainably improve the revenue side on the other also undermines the willingness for solidarity with Greece—understandably enough particularly in those countries, whose gross domestic product is below that of Greece.⁹

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The representatives of the *three institutions* in the negotiations with Greece have been accused of not respecting the democratic majority decision of Greek voters and of *blackmailing* and *humiliating* Greece.¹⁰ Also members and supporters of the regnant parties *Syriza* and *Independent Greeks* have made this allegation not only in connection with the elections in January 2015, but also in connection with the referendum in July 2015. This allegation ignores the fact that the representatives of the other 18 governments, which took part in the negotiations about the (second) aid package for Greece, are also democratically elected. They jointly insisted on complying with the treaties and agreements, to which the (democratically elected) preceding governments of Greece had committed themselves. Furthermore, it also ignores the fact

9 In May 2016, the Greek parliament has agreed with a narrow majority to conform to the demands of the international institutions involved to reducing the budget deficit to a bearable level — unfortunately mostly by raising taxes instead of reforming the public sector.

10 Thus is also the tone of voice of the memorandum “Europa neu begründen” (open). These accusations are distorting the facts in an remarkable way. It were rather the Greek negotiators who tried to blackmail other member states with the suffering of parts of the population to be expected in case of a bankruptcy of the Greek state.

that notably *Syriza* made promises in the election campaign, which simply implied the breach of contracts with European institutions, other members and the IWF. But promises in election campaigns cannot by itself be a reason for the other member states to accept the breach of contracts. International contracts or treaties would become pointless if each following government wouldn't feel bound by them any longer. Trust, reliability and predictability are at stake here. If contractors or third parties cannot rely on the compliance to treaties, they cannot adjust their actions and plans according to them. By a continual non-compliance to treaties or agreements, trust in the reliability of the contract partner (at least) is squandered, so that it will become unlikely to conclude contracts or agreements for the (presumed) mutual benefit in the future. One may have comprehensible reasons in an exceptional case to withdraw unilaterally from an agreement. But one must then be ready to pay the price. And the price may be that one doesn't find contract partners in the future no more.

Now the Greek government and its advocates have argued that the treaties were unfair and that the so called austerity policy, which they implied, did not lead to success, but worsened problems instead. In answer to this it should first be noted that most of the reforms that had been demanded by the international creditors and contract partners in exchange for granting aid funds for Greece were, at that time, either implemented only partly or not at all and had been severely diluted or delayed again and again.¹¹ Hence, the possibility of assessing if the measures were (or rather would have been) successful, is very restricted. In any case, there have been indications for a slow improvement of the economical situation before the parliamentary elections in January 2015. As experience with structural reforms in other countries shows, it usually takes some years until it's gains are effective for the population at large. Unfortunately, the first signs of progress were destroyed by the Greek government within a short period of time.

Of course, austerity policy —I would prefer to speak of sustainable budgetary policies— is no end in itself. And I am far from defending an unjust and imprudent cut of government spending or investment in times of crisis that does not distinguish for whom or for what money is spend. Also

¹¹ This applies (inter alia) to the reform of the financial management, the tax system, the pension system and the labour market.

a policy based on the goal of balanced budgets must ensure that the burdens of benefit cuts are distributed as just as possible and must allow for a decent existence, including a home, medical care, education opportunities and participation in society. The same applies to public investments in future development opportunities like education and infrastructure. In order to ensure this, solidarity of other EU-members is called for. Furthermore, the dangers of the negative economical effects of a sinking domestic demand must be taken into account. However, one should keep in mind that the requirement that public spending should not exceed the revenues, at least in the medium to long term, is a *requirement of justice*, particularly of justice towards subsequent generations. Borrowing may solve some problems and fuel the economy by an increase of domestic demand in the short term. The temptation of borrowing is especially high when interest burdens for credits are comparatively low. But in the medium and long term, growing debts restrict the room to manoeuvre more and more.¹² And, as past crisis suggest, it seems to be just a question of time until domestic or international debtors lose their confidence in a growth stimulated or sustained mainly by ever higher debts (instead of growth sustained mainly by technical innovations and the increase of productivity).

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Keynesians argue, that one should not start with savings pro-cyclical, thus during a crisis or an economic downturn, because this would reduce the financial scope for possible investment and consumption, inter alia by causing a higher unemployment, and results in reinforcing the crisis in the sense of a doom loop (see e.g. Skidelsky, 2010. A Keynesian case against austerity is made by Blyth, 2013). As I indicated above, I agree to this argument to a certain extent. But in my view, this argument has some flaws. It neglects, inter alia, structural causes of economic crisis like inefficient bureaucracies, corruption, patronage systems or systems hostile to competition and innovation. Furthermore, experience so far suggests that politics hardly ever follow Keynes' suggestions consequently: In many European countries, debts were not reduced even in times of economic prosperity. To the contrary: Public spending was steadily increased and

¹² Stelter (2014) argues against Piketty that debts are frequently even a cause for inequalities, namely by the —compared with average income from work— higher earnings from property (e.g. interests), which are fostered by a policy of cheap money (lending rates).

financed by new borrowing in the last 40 years or so. Carrying out cost savings during an economic upturn is in practise, contrary to what Keynesians demand, the exception, not the rule.¹³ In fact, in a demographically aging Europe, most governments prefer going into more debt at the expense of future generations, since most of the money is not spent for important investments in the future, like education and infrastructure, but for consuming. And it is high debts that have increased dependency on the much-chided financial markets.

Now, the negotiations between the so called Troika and Greece have never been solely about cost savings anyway, but rather, as mentioned above, about reforms which are supposed to stimulate economic growth and, as a consequence, also increase tax revenues in the middle term, such as a reform of the labour market, of the investment conditions, of the education system or of the taxation system. But the Greek side never really seemed to be prepared for the necessary changes; influential interest groups resisted any kind of change. Also those governments, which were in power since the beginning of the crisis, have maintained and defended the system of preferential treatment and patronage.

Democratic (And Other) Limits to a Deep and Large Scale Communitarisation of National States

Now, already the intensity of the debate about the Greek crisis suggests that there is more to it than the specific problems of Greece and the best way to their solution. Obviously it is also about general questions of economy, financial and social policy plus the future development of the EU and the Eurozone. At the same time, the debate is about something very fundamental, a dispute about the interpretation, ranking, weighting and actual implementation of basic goals, values or virtues, such as wealth, security, justice, freedom, democracy, solidarity and autonomy. I assume here that these goals, values or virtues are widely approved in every modern

¹³ This can be illustrated particularly well using Italy as an example, which (with very few exceptions) increased public spending even in times of economic upturn and thereby also increased its budgetary deficit in the last 40 years. And the decline of Italy's growth rate has begun long before cutting public spending.

and liberal society. And I assume that they are basically beyond dispute also between the opponents in this dispute. Controversial is their interpretation, priority and actual implementation.

A strong argument for the European integration has always been that at least some of these goals, values or virtues are better to be achieved or at least secured for many European citizens by creating common institutions and ties between European countries, which share those goals, values or virtues. This appears plausible, particularly considering the fact that the options for political control and for influence on shaping the rules for an increasingly globalized world diminish more and more on the national level. Ultimately, the recovery of political control in the face of globalized markets actually seems to require something like a *global domestic policy*, which would allow global political institutions to regulate markets in the general interest. Of course, beyond this there are other important goals that seem to make supranational or global agreement and cooperation mandatory, like coping with ecological problems, peacekeeping and the enforcement of human rights. Much of what speaks for a communitarisation of European countries speaks, in principle, also for a communitarisation on the global level. Ultimately, one could therefore consider a kind of *World State* as desirable.¹⁴

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From this perspective, the restriction of membership to countries, which fulfil certain *geographical* criteria, should only be a pragmatic and realistic intermediate step towards a corresponding process of communitarisation on the global level. In fact, there *are* serious steps already in the formation of global institutions. These include existing institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the International Criminal Court, as well as efforts to reach global agreements or treaties, such as trade agreements and a climate protection agreement. For sure, all of this makes good sense. Financial investors don't know borders, ecological problems are often global problems and human rights apply to all humans on earth. What is needed here are globally unitary standards or norms, or at least a harmonisation of these. However, for various reasons the question of a communitarisation on the global level does

¹⁴ On the purpose, the limits and the conditions for a World State (*Weltstaat*), see for instance Habermas (2011), and Höffe (1999).

not seriously arise at present, if only because it is unlikely that countries like the USA or China will do without their national sovereignty to a large extent. At the same time, the existing differences regarding national interest, culture and the level of social and economical development between all the countries are substantial, thus letting the prospects for unitary regulations appear low. Furthermore, those questions that are largely unsolved on the European level would become even more urgent on the global level. Even a communitarisation beyond European borders, which would aspire no more than what has been achieved on the European level today, could only function on the basis of a certain minimum of shared interests, values, conceptions of the legal system and convictions about economic and social policy (and it is even doubtful that this minimum is given within the EU).¹⁵ Therefore, the idea of a kind of *Global Union*, *World Republic* or *World State* has the character of a utopia which can hardly serve as a useful target in the daily business of realpolitik.

Anyway, there are sufficient grounds for doubting if a global communitarisation in the sense of a Global Union or a World Republic governed by a central government with executive competences would be a desirable goal at all. Because of its sheer size and heterogeneity, such a structure would hardly be suited to allow a universal balance between wealth, security, justice, democracy and autonomy acceptable for all citizens on the globe. If only because of big differences between the national economies, no fundamental consensus between the peoples on these matters is to be expected in the foreseeable future. Instead, we must rather assume a lasting pluralism of interests and of political and cultural convictions and values, which will time and again drive centrifugal forces and make a comprehensive social and economic policy improbable under democratic conditions.

Similar issues arise, to some extent, on the European level already. Presumably, only over time and reinforced by the Greek crisis, many citizens of the Union have realized how much national sovereignty, autonomy and democratic control they had already lost by getting part of the EU in general and by certain European treaties in particular. But to raise public awareness

¹⁵ On the question if, and to what extent, a European citizenship within an EU as a federation requires a common identity by shared values and, see e.g. Follesdal (2014).

of this and initiate an intensive public debate doesn't seem to be in the interest of large parts of the political and cultural elites of Europe (with the exception of a few countries like Great Britain). In any case, the impression is reinforced that Europe tends to be an antidemocratic elite project, which rather prefers to present a *fait accompli* to its citizens than to encourage their participation and struggle for their consent.

An obstacle to a democratisation of the European Union and its institutions that has also been much discussed in the political sciences is the deficiency of a European public.¹⁶ Notably Jürgen Habermas has emphasised again and again that a functioning public is an essential precondition for a real democracy (1992, chap. 8).¹⁷ But even if one considers the existing deficiencies with regard to the development of a European, or even global, public as surmountable, the question arises whether or not this would inevitably involve a levelling of cultural and linguistic characteristics and peculiarities, which we should regard as desirable for reasons of an intrinsic attractiveness of cultural and linguistic diversity. Even if the major part of the global population would gain access to free media via the Internet, it would remain doubtful if just by this fact a *global discourse* of a kind could emerge, which is necessary for an exchange of mutually understandable arguments and allows for commonly acceptable decision making processes (as preconditions for a functioning democracy).

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Since the prospects for a democratic legitimation and control of global institutions are rather bleak, we have good reasons to concentrate our efforts on the European level on those tasks, whose European regulation is indeed advantageous to and accepted by the European citizens. And, with regard the global level, we should concentrate our efforts to those regulatory tasks, that inevitably must be dealt with on this level, such as the terms of trade, the implementation of human rights, security, peacekeeping and environmental protection. Also in a long-term perspective it should be clear that exactly those questions, which have not been satisfactorily answered on

¹⁶ This deficiency would be an even bigger problem for a democratic union on the global level of course (see Pinzani [2004]).

¹⁷ Habermas defines the public as "ein Netzwerk für die Kommunikation von Inhalten und Stellungnahmen, also von Meinungen [...]; dabei werden die Kommunikationsflüsse so gefiltert und synthetisiert, dass sie sich zu themenspezifisch gebündelten öffentlichen Meinungen verdichten" (1992, p. 436).

the European level, become more pressing the more we strive for progress with regard to (forms of) supranational or global communitarisation. A fortiori in this case, a kind of federal organisational structure, which is committed to the principle of subsidiarity and allows for certain regional/cultural differences in balancing out and implementing values, goals and virtues, seems more promising than a politically unified entity with a widely centralised organisational structure.

A further reason is that a global alignment of social, fiscal and economic policies would undermine the possibility of both realizing differing political ideas and comparing the results of their respective implementation. In my view, a certain pluralism and competition between communities with differing political conceptions is desirable, if only because it provides voters with a good basis for comparison with regard to future political decisions. A real choice between alternative forms of organising a community seems to me preferable or, from a democratic point of view, even mandatory (though on the basis of general framework of norms regarding human rights, the rule of law, democracy, ecological sustainability and fair terms of trade, I should add). At the same time, this would promote self-responsibility of democratic communities for the consequences of their political choices and set certain limits on demands for a supranational (respectively global) redistribution policy in the name of distributive justice.¹⁸

The Interrelation of Responsibility and Democracy and the Danger of Paternalism

As should be apparent by now, I agree with Habermas and other critics of the so-called austerity policy that any additional transfer of national competencies to the EU-level, such as the right to charge taxes, would only be acceptable, if at all, on the basis of a new union treaty (and, as I would like to add, on the basis of making the principle of subsidiarity legally binding). Such a treaty would have to put the relevant European bodies on a new, democratically legitimised footing. In particular, this means to strengthen

¹⁸ For arguments against the idea that distributive justice must be applied on the global level in the same sense as on the local or nation state level, that is, without any restrictions, see e.g. Rawls (1999) and Miller (2005).

the rights of the European Parliament for initiative and control and have its representative function be less determined by national contingents for its parliamentarians (Habermas, 2011; on this, see also Bohringer, Habermas, & Nida-Rümelin, 2012). And like Habermas, I fear that the respective transfer of competencies to the EU will take place *without* a referendum in all participating countries and presumably without a real democratic legitimation for the respective executive bodies to be newly created. It is more likely that this will be pushed through in the style of an intergovernmental crisis management, that almost has become the usual case. And it is to be expected that the real consequences of the respective changes will be, once more, disguised towards the citizens (Habermas, 2013). Apparently, most European leaders—at least since the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands on the European constitutional treaty—lack the courage to let their citizens vote on essential questions of European policies and the future of the Union. Unlike Habermas, though, I do not believe that the centralisation ambitions are mainly due to the pressure of the financial markets. The Euro was launched primarily for political reasons, to foster the integration of the participating states, not under the pressure of the financial markets. The construction defect of introducing a new currency without a simultaneous sanctions-based institutionalisation of a convergent financial and economic policy is not the fault of the financial markets or its actors. Likewise, it was a political decision of individual EMU-members *not* to use the favourable interest rates that resulted from the membership for debt reduction, but rather, at least partly, for a debt-financed increase of state services.

It is simply not convincing to condemn the criticism of Greece's decision to massively break common rules, while not being prepared to bear the consequences, as *undemocratic*. Anyone joining the EMU must accept its rules, at least as long as one finds no majority for other rules or more freedom. To insist on compliance is therefore not undemocratic, even when the ruler-breaker is democratically legitimized. Those who don't want to accept the rules of the community and cannot organize a majority for a change should ultimately be prepared to leave the EMU, or they might otherwise be forced to leave. In order to reduce the negative consequences of an exit as much as possible, measures must be taken in advance of course.

Now, it should be beyond dispute between all parties in the debate about austerity and a solution for the Greek crisis that freedom (to choose between alternatives) and responsibility (for the choices made) are interrelated. What is important for the following reflections is that such an interrelation exists not only on the level of individual actors, but, in a certain sense, on the level of peoples or nations who are self-determined in the sense of democratically constituted communities. If the decisions of governments are legitimated by democratic elections, not only will those who voted for that government be co-responsible for the decisions and actions taken by that government (at least for those which are in accordance with what the respective parties have been elected for or which were generally expectable), but also, in a limited sense, those who had not voted for the government but agree with the basic conditions of democratic decision-making processes in their community, namely in the sense of a liability community. And this also applies with regard to the decisions of democratically elected predecessor governments, albeit to a decreasing extent. (radical apostates might, in the end, have no other choice than to leave the country). Accordingly, the government of a constitutional and democratic community can legitimately demand legal conformity also from those who had not voted for it. And the contractual partners of a country, say, within an association or union of states, can *legitimately* demand that contractual compliance shall extend to contracts, treaties or agreements concluded with democratically elected predecessor governments —true to the old legal principle *pacta sunt servanda*.¹⁹

To emphasize the responsibility of citizens and communities (or peoples) seems particularly necessary against the background of a frequently encountered, latent antidemocratic tendency of some politicians, intellectuals and media representatives to look at political conditions and opinion-forming processes from a quasi *elevated external perspective*. From this perspective, one imagines oneself to have an advantage with respect to the mass of the citizens, since one dares oneself, but not the cognitively overstrained ordinary voter,

¹⁹ May be we should admit that, if a government entered into commitments, which differ substantially from what could have been expected from it by (or was promised to) the voters, then a later government would be entitled to denounce these commitments entered into. In this case, also the contract partners would be released from their initial commitments of course.

to understand the actual mechanisms of social acting and of decision-making processes. For this reason, one arrogates oneself to be able to determine, which facts are bearable for the citizens, and to warn of prejudices and false conclusions, which could be drawn from certain information. It is assumed, of course, that one is able to draw the right conclusions. Ultimately, such a point of view undermines the idea of the responsibility of citizens. For it seems acceptable to thwart the decisions of citizens (respectively voters), which cannot be taken too seriously, for the benefit of the *greater whole*. It then seems more important to manipulate the voters in such a way that (allegedly) necessary administrative action is not disturbed.

Following results in the field of cognitive psychology and the behavioural sciences, some theorists suggest to make use of certain techniques of behavioural control, of paternalistic *nudges*, which could lead people to a more objective view on things and a more rational behaviour (e.g. Sunstein, 2008). Now it isn't especially difficult to prove people of having cognitive deficiencies or irrational habits. And it seems unproblematic or even advisable indeed to take into account certain conditions, which may distort judgement (like e.g. the famous *framing effect*), when organizing democratic decision-making processes or carrying our demoscopic survey. But at the same time, there is the danger of paternalistic arrogance on the side of those who think they have debunked the rational deficiencies in the beliefs and actions of normal people or citizens. A seemingly acceptable or *soft* paternalism can easily merge in to a complacent or cynical one that takes one's own point of view as the superior standard for right and wrong and feels entitled to use its alleged insights for the manipulation of opinions and behaviours.

Already the often heard accusation of *populism* or certain kinds of explanation patterns, frequently used by the media, telling us that certain political statements or decisions are due to a pending election campaign, indicates a latent anti-democratic paternalism.²⁰ Apparently the question

²⁰ It is amazing that also representatives of the German Green Party, formerly advocates of >grassroots democracy<, have criticised the dunning words of the German Federal President Gauck, that a successful coping with the stream of refugees will create a great challenge for Germany, by saying that one shouldn't further unsettle the people (thus the chairman of the parliamentary group of the Greens, Anton Hofreiter, on September 27, 2015). Obviously, he doesn't have much confidence in the ability of the people to judge.

arises of how these critics can be so sure to have a privileged access to truth and rationality compared with the normal folks (or voters respectively). It is also quite amazing with how much complacency representatives of the media sometimes exalt themselves as against the alleged stupidity and ignorance, which is always the stupidity and ignorance of others. But of course, no one is free of misjudgement or error. Also experts make their judgements partly within the limits of knowledge and according to criteria of the particular field in which they are recognized as experts. For coming to good political decisions, however, quite diverse kind of considerations might be relevant. And nobody is an expert with regard to all aspects, factual issues and criteria that might be relevant for deciding a complex political question. Rather, it seems as if the best safeguard against bad political developments consists in the transparency of the processes and procedures of political decision-making and opinion formation and their embedment in (respectively their control by) a public discourse, a discourse allowing for an unrestricted contest for (or dispute over) the better argument. In any case, neither experts nor the intellectual elite can give a better warranty for the accuracy of political judgements or decisions.

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Of course, the danger that average citizens might often be overloaded with the task to understand complex interrelations and to form an adequate opinion on matters is a serious one and a cardinal problem for all modern democracies. Though this is not really a new problem, it seems to become more urgent in an increasingly globalized, scientific and collaborative world. However, obviously also experts are neither always or even mostly in complete agreement, nor are they immune to error. Still it is not my intention here to call into question the claim to leadership of the political and intellectual elites in general. The crucial point is rather a reservation in principle, namely that in the end there can be no privileged access to truth with regard to the question of what is politically right or demanded. For sure, experts and elites will play an important role in political decision-making and the forming of public opinion. But this doesn't mean that they have the last word. Rather, they are also exposed to public criticism (and that applies as well to justice and jurisdiction by the way. All decision-making relevant to society needs an external control by a critical, interested and well-informed public. There is simply no alternative).

Conclusion

After this small excursion, let me resume the considerations above. In my view, one of the main lessons to be learned from the Greek crisis is that large scale supranational communitarisation is a danger for democracy if mutual obligations (e.g. in the spirit of solidarity) between members undermine substantially the possibilities of political choice for the single member states. I claimed that a well-balanced relation between (self-) responsibility, solidarity, performance incentives and democracy involves taking subsidiarity serious, as well as to admit a certain amount of institutional flexibility. This flexibility is demanded especially in the case of large scale communities which include countries as members, like the EU, and in which the basic ideas of social, economical and financial policy—you might also talk of respective *mentalities*— are rather heterogeneous.²¹ Democracy, responsibility and solidarity must be in a well balanced relation for any community to function and to be generally acceptable to the citizens. This includes the defence of rather ambitious forms of civil participation and sovereignty of the people against the paternalistic pretensions of experts or of political and cultural elites. For this, we first need to counteract the lack of transparency and the increasing centralisation of the decision-making processes in the EU.

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Now, responsibility in the sense that I was using the term here requires that the design of the contractual basis of the EU must make possible that not only democratic leaders, but also democratic communities below the European level (i.e. states) *really* assume responsibility for their decisions, which includes bearing possible negative consequences of these decision on themselves.²² Otherwise, democracy simply loses its point. The Greek crisis, particularly the tough negotiations following the elections in January 2015, have once more revealed very clearly the tendency to subtly

²¹ For reasons of simplicity, I leave out difficult questions regarding other cultural differences.

²² I cannot discuss the many intricate questions surrounding the issue of responsibility here, like e.g. the possibility of (and conditions for) collective responsibility, the justified limits of accountability for the causal consequences of decisions and possible normative demands concerning expectable improvements of cognitive conditions and abilities. But I would insist that collectives must be accountable for certain causal consequences of their decisions and actions, because democracy without such accountability would be >empty< in a way.

disempower and undermine the democratic possibilities of decision-making for citizens by far reaching EU treaties and a centralised, non-transparent administration and crisis management.

Of course, the Greek political parties now in government have made totally unrealistic election promises. And of course the Greek negotiators had to be reminded of the commitments entered into by the democratically elected previous government. But if elections or referenda are supposed to have any meaning at all, they must have relevant consequences, primarily for the country whose citizens have made the respective choice by the majority. And if the choice implies not to comply with contracts or fulfil obligations, voters should be prepared to bear the possible negative consequences. Certainly, voters should be informed (by the media, the experts and the politicians) sufficiently clearly about those consequences and the underlying correlations in advance. Also, Greece's negotiation partners should have formulated the possible alternatives very clearly before the elections—one of them being ultimately a *Grexit* (even if such a step would entail high costs for all parties involved)—and without being immediately accused of influencing the election or even of *extortion*. A clear articulation of alternatives, which must then, depending on the election result, actually be implemented, will not only promote the seriousness of the voting decision. It also meets the requirements for real democracy, a democracy which is not degenerated to a kind of *facade democracy* (*Fassadendemokratie* [Habermas]).

That doesn't mean that the EU, especially the members of the EMU, are not any longer—within certain limits—obliged to help Greece to solve its problems, even when part of these problems arose only as a consequence of majority decisions in the last elections. The European Union is also a community of values, solidarity and helpfulness, which is why a certain form of solidarity with other members should not depend on national voting decisions, even if they appear egoistic (in a national sense) or erratic. But support and solidarity are appropriate only to an extent that does not lead to wrong incentives or undermines initiative and self-responsibility of those in need.

To take the EMU as an example: All countries joining the EMU should hold a referendum on this, but it must be clear in advance how far membership cuts their democratic leeway on fiscal and economical

questions. Within the defined limits, they can then decide how to develop the balance between, for example, growth-promoting incentives and social redistribution, between competition and solidarity, between economic freedom and social security in detail. But in my view it is not just and also thwarts the idea of democracy, if countries who decide for more redistribution and get into fiscal trouble thereby have the right to demand ongoing and quasi *unconditional* solidarity and support from financially stronger members, which are only in a position to support, because their voters decided for a more sustainable fiscal and more successful economic policy. On the contrary: Member states, required for financial support, can rightly demand action from those members, asking for support, that is suitable to make possible a sustainable financing of public spending, at least in the medium-term. The members asking for support can deny this of course. But then they should leave the EMU. This is why there must be eased exit conditions to save democracy on the level of supranational communitarisation.

Another sort of argument may support these suggestions: Those members who can pass on the costs of their political decisions on other member states (say by a communitarisation of debts in the form of Eurobonds), or who can count on other members of the Union—be it because of obligations resulting from treaties or because of fear of negative consequences for all—will continuously bear the costs of risks taken and will hardly learn from their mistakes and adapt structures correspondingly. Rather, an institutionalised communitarisation of debts or risks will often strengthen and consolidate precisely those structures in the member states due to which the support by other members becomes necessary.²³ We must counteract the danger of the interrelation between democracy and responsibility being undermined by the prospect of higher chances to win elections for those who promise the greatest benefactions without needing to worry much about the economical preconditions or the subsequent costs.²⁴

²³ Similar considerations apply, by the way, also for the risks banks are willing to take, if they are able to pass on the possible negative consequences to tax payers.

²⁴ This is not to deny that there are other, rather contrary, dangers for democracy, particularly if the majority of citizens loses its faith in the positive economical effects of the democratic system, in which they live. Thus, a study of the *Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft (Institute of the German Economy)* (2015) comes up with the alarming result that especially in southern-European countries most

Any member state should in principle retain the possibility to leave a European communitarisation project (on any level) on the basis of a democratic decision. But it must then be ready to bear the consequences. This will not be possible without loosened entry and exit rules for (kinds of) membership, of course. It is regrettable that many European politicians who have committed themselves to the idea of an irreversibility of the unification process lack the will or the courage to consider this alternative seriously. Thereby, they miss a chance to save the European project through a necessary reorientation and get it out of the political defence.

Democracy is essentially based on a choice between alternatives. Political decisions must principally be revisable, at least to a certain extent. Anywhere you can become a member you must be allowed to leave (whereas the entry as well the exit must certainly be subject to certain time limits and there can be no right to an arbitrarily frequent re-entry). In my view, these basic ideas are compatible with benefiting from the undisputed advantages of the European communitarisation. Pro-European politicians shouldn't shrink from the idea of a *simultaneity* of different forms of communitarisation of European states with levels of different *depth* or intensity.²⁵ This requires establishing different standards for different levels of membership, including levels that are easier to meet by certain countries, and to take measures to facilitate the possibility of an exit.

In my view, it would not only increase the trustworthiness of the politics, but also strengthen democracy as a whole, if politicians were bound to implement their pre-election promises by law. Maybe voters should, in the case of a formation of a coalition government, be allowed to vote once again on the new government's agenda determined by the coalition agreement if this agenda contradicts substantially to electoral promises of one of the participating parties (I admit that there are at least some practical difficulties connected with this idea). At the same time, European policy should have the courage to let the results of elections be effective even in their presumed negative consequences. This may lead to a strengthening of

affected by the last economical crisis, faith in the political system has steadily decreased.

²⁵ Interestingly, this describes, to some extent, the current situation, but is taken by many to be a deficiency, which has to be overcome.

the responsibility that citizens shoulder by their voting decision. They may take more seriously the consequences of the choice.²⁶

I am convinced that for saving the project of a voluntary communitarisation of European countries as a *democratic* project, for which there are good reasons indeed and might be a model for other regions of the world, it must take the shape of a confederation or a federation of states, which allows for entering different forms or levels of communitarisation (like a common currency, a customs union or a defence union). And it must be based on a certain flexibility concerning membership. One important requirement must be that, on the one hand, every single member can democratically decide on its exit from certain community on its own under certain conditions (e.g. regarding timeframes). On the other hand, as a last consequence it must also be possible to exclude a member who doesn't want to comply with the commonly agreed rules any longer, by a democratic common voting on the subject in all member states (whereas the conjunct majority of the citizens of all respective member states is relevant). In any case, the members of a voluntary community, like the EU, should be allowed to decide who can join the club, thus about the entry or re-entry conditions. Within certain limits, every kind of community must be allowed to determine under which conditions one can become (and remain) a member, defined by certain rights and obligations, certain values and certain goals or purposes.²⁷ Towards those who merely want to benefit from being part of the community, without accepting its commonly agreed rules and values, membership can legitimately be refused; and it can also legitimately be withdrawn from such members (though only in cases where membership is —unlike nationality by birth— based on voluntariness).

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I suspect that, if the possible negative effects of a withdrawal from or an expulsion by the EU (or the EMU or any other European institution) would be made as transparent as possible and also be allowed to come into

²⁶ I admit a soft form of paternalism as implied in these suggestions. But I estimate this as harmless (and, in a way, unavoidable), as long as it doesn't get arrogant or cynical.

²⁷ Michael Walzer (1983) gets to the heart of it, when he says: "Admission and exclusion are at the core of communal independence. They suggest the deepest meaning of self-determination. Without them, there could not be communities of character, historically stable, ongoing associations of men and woman with some special commitment to one another and some special sense of their common life" (p. 31).

effect, we wouldn't have to expect merely loose groups of countries with, in some respect, similar interests, which one joins or leaves on the basis of short term calculations about advantages and disadvantages or on the basis of a present mood—even under the conditions mentioned above. If the advantages of a certain stable form of communitarisation are obvious and the communitarisation is not considered as imposed from *above*, I am quite optimistic that informed citizens will opt for it.

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