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Europe's unity in European values

VIEW



JAN PETER BALKENENDE

Only by embracing their shared values can Europeans prevent their Union from becoming a spiritless machine. Together, Europeans must find what connects them, and derive new enthusiasm, new spirit from what they find — a spirit sorely needed to tackle the great issues of today. After more than fifty years, Europe as a community of values remains as necessary as ever

meaning in the constitution, but will also determine the vitality and energy of the EU itself.

The EU, being the product of several great religious and philosophical traditions, is a community of values. The ideas of the Greeks and Romans, Christianity, Judaism, humanism, and the Enlightenment have made us who we are. Dialogue with Islamic and Arabic cultures also helped form our identity. The pattern of our values has been woven over hundreds of years.

Europe is the continent of Michelangelo and Montesquieu, but also of the guillotine and the gas chamber. Indeed, the bitter experience WWII taught Europeans how fundamental is the importance of shared values. In an impoverished, war-ravaged Europe, people yearned for peace, freedom, stability, and a new chance to prosper.

The architects of European integration — Monnet, Schuman, Adenauer, De Gasperi, and others — understood that these ideals could be achieved only by combining and interweaving the practical interests of Europe's countries. They built their fragile house of peace on a foundation of coal and steel.

The founders passed the torch on to the generation of Jacques Delors, Helmut Kohl, François Mitterrand, Václav Havel, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and others. They broadened and deepened European cooperation. Their leadership made it possible for Europe to make great strides towards its post-war ideals — peace, stability, and prosperity.

We now stand at the threshold of a new phase of European cooperation. In late October, the EU's Constitutional Treaty will be signed. A new generation of politicians is ready to carry the torch onwards.

But is the torch still burning bright? In the early 1950s, Jean Monnet wrote: "We are not forming a coalition of states. We are uniting people." Apparently not. As the Union races ahead, it seems that it has lost Europe's citizens along the way. Many are turning

their backs on the whole project. They have trouble seeing what is common to Europe. They do not feel part of the great whole. Even in the new member states, enthusiasm for the European family of democracies is cooling. We have achieved a united Europe without uniting Europeans.

Today's post-war generations, lacking direct memory of WWII, view Europe's great achievements — liberty, peace, and prosperity — as a given. The idea of Europe as a heritage and a mission does not mean much. But, without ideals, Europe's foundations will erode.

The emphasis on pure self-interest increases this threat. My generation grew up with the image of Europe as an *economic* form of cooperation. Political motives behind European integration were overshadowed by the economic project. The result is an impression of Europe as a marketplace. A Europe of markets and money, not of man and morals, dominated the project. But without a moral foundation, there can be no free-market economy.

Today, we are paying the price for not attending to Europe's shared values and common *mission*. Until Europeans know precisely what Europe stands for, what inspires and motivates us, the Union will not be able to take joint action in the world.

The EU Constitution will make Europe more democratic and more transparent. It provides further guarantees that decisions will be taken by those closest to citizens, and it acknowledges the significance of the values on which the Union rests: respect for human rights and dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, and the rule of law. These shared values are the glue that binds governments together in the recognition that clinging to pure self-interest is no longer reasonable when common concerns call for a common strategy.

For what is the point of doing away with Europe's physical borders if borders between its citizens remain? How can Europeans be happy that the Iron Curtain is gone if individ-

uals and groups across the Union barricade themselves behind private iron curtains?

Indeed, fear, insecurity, and nationalism are again raising their heads. It is important for Europeans to reflect on that as they prepare for further rounds of enlargement and consider starting accession negotiations with Turkey.

The preamble of the Constitution states that Europe is "united in its diversity". This may be the most concise statement of what makes Europe Europe. But the words "united in diversity" raise the question of where this unity lies.

The answer lies in the values on which the Union is based. They are contained in three concepts: freedom, solidarity, and mutual respect. These three *together* make it possible for Europe to open its doors to a great diversity of peoples and at the same time to speak as a community of peoples prepared to take responsibility for one another.

Making such a community a reality will not come about by believing that Europe's culture is better than others. We will make it a reality through dialogue and deep reflection about Europe's common values. Values must be the road that leads to what cannot be reached by markets and institutions alone — the accession of Europe's *citizens* to the European Union.

Only by embracing their shared values can Europeans prevent their Union from becoming a spiritless machine. Together, Europeans must find what connects them, and derive new enthusiasm, new spirit from what they find — a spirit sorely needed to tackle the great issues of today. No country can address these issues alone. After more than fifty years, Europe as a community of values remains as necessary as ever. —DT-PS

Dr Jan Peter Balkenende is Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and President of the European Council

ALONGSIDE THE DEBATE ABOUT THE European Union constitution, a debate about European values has also developed. This debate is important not only for implanting