

Chapter II

MODERN-DAY EUROPE

In this chapter, we will attempt to profile the continent from a variety of perspectives. How should Europe be conceived of and analyzed? How should we understand the role of sovereign states? How has Europe's vast diversity – in terms of political and economic systems, demographic situation, societal inequalities and cultural system – played into its nature and identity? What role have the resulting divisions played? Each of these questions will be addressed in turn.

1. How should Europe be conceived of and analyzed?

In order to answer our overarching question of “Where is Europe headed?” we must first explain how we understand “Europe” in this analysis – i.e. whether we take it as being delineated by the boundaries of the continent or by the borders of the countries that are commonly regarded as European. Geographic boundaries define Europe as a physical area, yet on the other hand its nature and importance are determined by specific countries. The issue is further complicated by the fact that there are several countries that straddle and stretch beyond Europe's geographic borders – especially two large countries of particular importance for not only the current but also the long-term history and politics of Europe, namely Russia and Turkey. Notwithstanding the fact that the significance of these countries was certainly greater in the past than it is now, they do still play an important and not always positive role, by influencing developmental policy and in other ways. The role of the policies that they pursue should be understood in the broad sense of the word, which also includes ideological aspects and, to a large extent, real political action.

However, analysis of the research problem “Where is Europe headed?” cannot be restricted to a selected group of countries broadly similar in terms of their general philosophy of development – it must also encompass the countries whose economic, political, and cultural models differ from those that prevail in most of the countries on the continent. Europe is a collection of countries marked by both their own histories as well as by the history of the whole of the Continent. If it is correct to assume that the past shapes not only the present but also the future, then this analysis must not omit anything or anyone important – neither those whose

influence over economic development, state institutions, political models, and so on has been active and beneficial (including from the perspective of the involvement of broad social classes, as a consequence of not only development but also participation in it), nor those whose influence over this development has hardly been beneficial or even negative, whether in the short term or in the long run.

Europe is a collection of countries that have played a wide variety of roles in the past, and their contribution to developmental processes has been highly diversified. When analyzing the sub-problems wrapped up in the question “Where is Europe headed?” we must not omit even the countries that have played the smallest of roles in developmental processes, because their contribution to future development can hardly be assessed at the beginning of this road. We can only present forecasts of their future contributions to the directions and characteristics of Europe’s development. In order to do so, we will need to look in more detail at the varying goals, nature, and characteristics of European countries. The list of these characteristics is long, and it is obviously impossible to discuss all of them more broadly here. Nevertheless, we will describe those that we regard as particularly important.

2. A Europe of sovereign states

As the point of departure for our considerations, we will analyze the issue of sovereignty, because it is very important in the modern era, especially from the mental perspective of the societies that identify with specific countries. As we have already mentioned, sovereignty was related to the onset of the industrial stage of civilization and largely became a distinguishing feature of European countries, both those that reinforced and maintained their sovereignty and those that lost it and needed over a century to regain it. Independence was won in different ways, not only peacefully but also as a result of wars and many other radical actions.

What is sovereignty? Without going into great detail, we might define it as independence and the independent enforcement of laws laid down by an independent state. It means territorial control that is free from external interference in the political, social, and economic system and does not rule out the possibility of peaceful coexistence with other countries based on the principle of equality and mutual benefits. A sovereign state may establish relations with other states or international organizations and vest them with certain rights in a way that formally limits certain internal legal rules or powers in exchange for specific benefits.

The sovereignty of European countries should be analyzed in a diversified way. From this perspective, Europe should be generally analyzed in terms of a division into old and young countries. In addition, many of what are referred to as young sovereign states should be further divided into two groups, namely those

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that were sovereign in the past yet lost their continuity in the course of historical turbulence or other events, including armed conflicts, then regained it temporarily, and lost it yet again, and those that were never sovereign before. Different forms of dependency came to an end in Europe with the failure of the socialist experiment. As a closing date we can take the 1990s, with the end of the conflicts and wars that erupted in the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia. That bloody episode probably marked the beginning of the end of different forms of dependency of countries in Europe.

But did it entail full sovereignty of European countries? It is impossible to give an unambiguous answer to this, because the changes that have taken place in recent decades force us to ask several questions in connection with the emergence of dependencies that may not challenge the formal sovereignty of European countries but nonetheless mean that the reality of events raises several important doubts in this respect. The changes that have taken place over the past several decades chiefly resulted from globalization processes. In what respect and as a result of what processes could this mean a violation of sovereignty? Without going into great detail, we can list six fundamental factors.

The first of these is the need to open up markets, which arises when a country wants to participate in the benefits offered by the world's market. An open economy brings numerous benefits, starting from the stimulating influence of external markets, the flow of foreign investments, incentives for innovation, and so on. In turn, the open nature of such an economy entails the introduction of new customs and rules, the influx of foreign employees, and the mixing of cultural systems.

The second and probably more important factor is the emergence of multinational corporations that act as the main stimulus for globalization processes. They may force, and as a rule do force, specific benefits upon a sovereign state or impose certain new solutions. A similar role is played by different international organizations – specific countries draw benefits from membership in such organizations, but this also forces them to give up certain elements of their sovereignty.

The third factor is the information revolution, which may limit sovereignty in a wide variety of ways. Here, the main components are the process of ever-greater visibility of existing realities and the possibility of blanket surveillance. Visibility means in particular showing other possible solutions related to systems of government, which are sometimes more attractive than those in place in a specific country. Blanket surveillance, in turn, allows the penetration of various solutions, ranging from political to scientific and technological ones.

The fourth factor is the possibility of actively shaping the social awareness of specific groups, even entire societies, by arguing that solutions related to a specific system of government in the broad sense that exist in a specific country are disadvantageous to a specific society.

The fifth factor is the possibility of influencing or even molding the ruling elite or the elite opposed to a specific action and the development of institutional measures unfavorable from the perspective of the real interests of a specific country and its society.

Finally, the sixth factor is the possibility of disseminating different ideologies that challenge the existing institutional and legal order to the benefit of more oppressive measures in various spheres of the activity of entire society, certain social groups, or political parties.

We could probably list several additional factors that could impose limits on full sovereignty, both through a certain institutional framework and without such formal alterations. Regardless of how we look at the problem of sovereignty in the modern-day conditions, there are many factors that may limit it to a substantial extent.

3. Europe's diversity

The problem of the differences and discrepancies that exist between individual countries is important not only when we treat Europe as a single entity but also when we consider the countries that comprise it. And this is what we must do if we want to find an answer to the question of "Where is Europe headed?" It is often the case that different countries offer different answers to questions about the vision of Europe's future, its shape, forms of links, expansion opportunities, and many other issues. The sources of these divergent answers or even controversial concepts of solutions lie in the diverse nature of the European countries themselves. We will return to the influence exerted by the world around Europe somewhat later in this book.

We may examine Europe's diversity from various points of view. In essence, in the case of countries belonging to the European culture, these differences can be found in all spheres of social reality, which of course does not mean that they are always numerous aspects that divide them. It could be even argued that many of the things that divide European countries also bring them together in a certain way.

Apart from philosophical and historical aspects, we find it important to look at Europe through the prism of the main types of differences that exist between specific countries and fall into an interrelated five-way configuration:

1. Differences in political systems
2. Demographic differences
3. Economic differences
4. Income and social inequalities
5. Differences resulting from different or modified cultural systems.

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A detailed analysis of these differences goes beyond the scope of this study, so we will restrict ourselves to listing only their most important aspects.

3.1. Political differences

In analyzing political differences in Europe, we will strive to highlight the differences between specific solutions in place in specific political systems, which may even formally belong to the same category. As a point of departure, we can analyze political models from two points of views. One takes into account the level of freedom of citizens – from unrestricted freedom to models that are oppressive to a smaller or greater extent. The other attempts to show political models of a democratic nature that nonetheless differ in terms of institutional solutions in different spheres of activity.

If we analyze, taking the former point of view, the evolution of political systems in the emerging industrial stage of civilization, we will notice that a very important characteristic (or even the most important) was the continuous broadening of the rights of individual social groups, which led to the full development of liberal democracy. It was a gradual process, and evolution in this direction was not a common phenomenon. More importantly, it was not a one-way or irreversible process. We could even say that it was full of turning points, transitions from a democracy to systems that were to a smaller or greater extent oppressive. What is more, democracy, just like other political systems, is very unstable. It sometimes even exhibits tendencies towards decline. However, as the history of Europe proves, it can also be reborn, although not always on a permanent basis. From this perspective, the twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st century have been full of surprising turning points. However, these changes had one important characteristic, namely their strong links to different ideologies. Without analyzing this problem in great detail, we could list at least three important trends here: from nationalism, through fascism, to communism. Of course, we omit here numerous variants of these models. What mattered in each of them was the impact of various cultural systems. Among the components of these systems, there were at least three that played an important role, namely: tradition, history, and religion.

When we analyze the modern-day European countries from the second point of view, in turn, we will see that we can formally ascertain the existence of a certain form of democracy in each of these countries, if we adopt the occurrence of general elections as the main distinguishing factor. However, the very fact that such elections are held, notwithstanding its importance, is itself not decisive. From this perspective, it appears possible to classify countries into a few groups. One is formed by democracies in the full sense of the word, namely countries that meet all the requirements to be called fully democratic. The second is formed by democracies that are not fully liberal and do not meet all the requirements set for a democratic country. A third group comprises authoritarian countries, which

meet certain formal requirements of democratic solutions, but the ruling camp's governance is characterized by strong authoritarianism. Finally, the fourth group of countries consists of more or less open dictatorships.

In a report recently published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the democracy index for 2016 was determined based on criteria including electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. Based on these criteria, Europe comprised 17 countries that could be described as full democracies, 19 flawed democracies, five hybrid democracies, and two authoritarian regimes (this latter group could arguably also be extended to include Turkey, which was not taken into account in the study). Even this cursory classification shows that democracy in European countries is highly diversified, which would be certainly even more clearly visible in a detailed analysis of the individual components of the study, especially if certain aspects of cultural systems were taken into account.

Bringing the issues of political diversity into the foreground is justified by the fact that, in practice, the politics of a given country has, if not a conclusive influence, then at least a great deal of influence over numerous decisions regarding various spheres of public life.

3.2. Demographic divergences

Europe is inhabited by 745 million people (2017), and it is unique as the world's only continent characterized by a persistent decline in population numbers. Another important characteristic is population aging. Such trends have been indicated by demographic projections for the ethnic population at least until 2050. However, this does not mean that Europe's population will not increase as a result of an influx of refugees, chiefly from Africa and partially from Asia. This poses one of the problems that Europe has as yet been unable to resolve. Also, this situation has been a source of numerous differences of opinion between specific European countries, regardless of the fact that there will be probably not enough workers among Europe's ethnic population in the future.

When considering Europe's demographic problems, we should above all point out to the enormous differences in population numbers that exist between European countries. In a broad-brush classification, we could categorize them into countries with relatively large populations and those with small populations. The most populous countries are (data from 2015): Russia (over 143 million), Germany (over 80 million), Turkey (over 80 million), United Kingdom (66 million), France (over 64 million), Spain (over 46 million), and Ukraine (over 44 million). The least populous countries are: Estonia (slightly over 1.3 million), Denmark (over 1.9 million), Latvia (over 1.9 million), North Macedonia (over 2 million), Lithuania (over 2.8 million), Albania (nearly 2.9 million), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (over 3.8 million). Among the EU member states, three are in the group of the most populous countries and four among the least populous ones.

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Europe's demographic disparities can also be seen in the context of the share of the total population residing in urban areas. In the past, this was an important indicator of economic development, because the level of a specific country's development was back then determined by the industry, which was as a rule concentrated in cities. Nevertheless, this indicator is still a good gauge of development and the presence of most of the important institutions with which today's citizens have contact and whose services they use. According to Eurostat's figures (data from 2015), Europe's urban population accounted for over 40% of the total population. The countries with the largest shares of the urban population were: Malta (100%), the Netherlands and the UK (71%), and Belgium (68%). The countries with medium shares of the urban population were Sweden (56%), Estonia (52%), and Bulgaria (47%). Finally, the countries with the largest shares of the rural population included Iceland (73%) and Slovakia (50%).

Demographic issues deserve special attention, because the most valuable "products" of each country are always people. Their education, character, creativity, tolerance, and justice determine mutual relations not only within a specific country but also the relations with neighboring countries and inhabitants of that country who represent foreign cultures. Multiculturalism poses a particularly important problem for Europe, especially modern Europe, and we will return to this issue later in a somewhat different context.

3.3. Economic differences

Economic differences are influenced by numerous variables, and at least several of them deserve special attention. The primary variables include geographic and territorial location, natural resources, the characteristics and continuity of the state, and the possibility and level of external links. Of course, a given country's political model is also important, and this holds true in particular for the related economic model. The above characteristics have great influence over the freedom of citizens as well as the scale and possibilities of economic expansion. As for general conditions, an important role is played by cultural systems, which largely determine the systems of values in place in specific countries as well as their institutional characteristics and relations with other countries or ethnic groups.

The above general remarks lay the basis for formulating the general hypothesis that Europe, or strictly speaking the countries that form it, have always been diversified. From a very general standpoint, we could present a simplified division of these countries into at least three groups: the first group, which comprises economically most developed countries, is formed by Western Europe; the second comprises Southern Europe; while the third and final group is formed by Eastern Europe. Differences between these groups result from at least four important processes. The first of these was the different timing of the transition to the industrial stage of civilization. In this respect, there is a gap of at least 100 years

between Western Europe and Eastern Europe. The second process is formed by two centuries of a highly diversified history of various wars. In terms of civilization, the consequences of those conflict were more beneficial to the west of Europe than to the east. The third important component of differences between European countries was formed by various experiments with systems of government that differed in terms of their persistence, for example fascism and communism. Both delayed economic development to a substantial degree.

After the end of World War II, several Western European countries, taught by the experience of the two world wars, concluded that it was necessary to form a supranational organization that would on the one hand minimize the possibility of armed conflicts and on the other one actively foster the economic and social development of this part of Europe. In this spirit, consecutive supranational organizations were established, and this process culminated in the formation of the European Union, an organization that was gradually enlarged to comprise today's 28 member states (prior to Brexit).

One of the EU's main goals, apart from maintaining peace in Europe and creating conditions for socioeconomic development, involves continuously reducing disparities in the standards of living for those who live in Europe. Such goals are extremely important and noble, and they have been put into effect with various degrees of success. Let us first look at the European countries from the perspective of the GDP per capita (2016). To put this into perspective, we will compare the five most developed countries and the six least developed ones, ignoring Luxembourg, which has a very small population yet the highest GDP. The countries with the highest GDP are: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Denmark, and Sweden. The countries with the lowest GDP are: Albania, Belarus, Romania, Russia, Croatia, and Latvia. It is worth pointing out that two of the top five countries with the highest GDP are members of the EU (Denmark and Sweden), compared with three EU members among the countries with the lowest GDP (Romania, Croatia, and Latvia). The difference between the GDP of Denmark and that of Latvia is huge, namely 6.2 to 1.

However, comparing differences in GDP alone does not reflect the full scale of the disparities between specific countries, though it shows the important gap that exists between them. It appears highly unlikely that this gap will be bridged not only in the course of the next decade but most probably in the long run, even if we assume the absence of more serious conflicts in Europe. As we have mentioned earlier, this is because non-uniform development is a certain universal rule. Of course, this does not mean that it is impossible to bridge the gaps that exist between specific countries. However, this necessitates that several important conditions should be met, for example continuing peaceful development on the whole of the continent, effectively implementing solidarity-based policies and providing assistance to less developed countries, and finally promoting tolerance in the broad sense. Another measure that is urgently needed is the tempering of the com-

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ponents of foreign and domestic policy that are currently generating very strong emotions in many countries.

3.4. Income and social inequalities

One of the most important barriers to modern-day development is created by ever-widening differentials in income levels and social inequalities. A detailed description of these disparities goes beyond the framework of this study, and we will therefore restrict ourselves to certain general remarks. These differences have two levels: one pertains to the area of socioeconomic inequalities, whereas the other focuses on the analytical dimensions of the emergence of such disparities. Before we move on to present these differences more closely, we find it expedient to describe the reasons why they are currently characterized by such rapid change. After all, income differentials and social inequalities existed also in the past. What are the reasons behind such far-reaching differences, then?

These reasons can be presented as falling into a certain four-way configuration: (a) globalization; (b) the emergence of the global market and the dissemination of free-market economics on the global scale; (c) the information revolution and the related visibility processes; and (d) transitions from one stage of civilization to another related to the degradation of both industrial civilization and agrarian civilization in former colonies as well as dependent and poorly developed countries. The processes related to these four factors are strongly interconnected and increase the intensity of the changes that each of them could cause individually.

Globalization processes and transitions from one stage of civilization to another have resulted in the emergence of several political, economic, demographic, social, and income-related phenomena that have changed the face of the modern-day world. Here, we could list several particularly important of these phenomena: first of all, the emergence of around 100 new relatively sovereign states over the past half-century; secondly, a huge demographic boom, especially in Africa and Asia; thirdly, enormous capital flows between countries facilitated by multinational corporations and financial markets, and; fourthly and finally, enormous changes in the distribution of the world's income, half of which remains in the hands of or is controlled by a small percentage of the population (some NGOs that analyze such trends stress that as much as half of the world's income is controlled, managed, or even held by as little as 1 percent of the population).

The first domain of inequalities is related to the possibilities of individual choices, and can be roughly described in the following way:

1. Inequality in knowledge and education levels as well as access to knowledge and education
2. Inequality in health care standards and access to health care
3. Inequality in access to decent housing

4. Inequality in access to financial services
5. Inequality in access to broadly understood public goods
6. Inequality in access to new technologies and innovation
7. Inequality in production capacities resulting from the lack of factors of production or access to such factors
8. Inequality in the choice of ways of life and effective action

The second domain of inequality, which remains beyond the sphere of individual choices, can be presented in the following way:

1. Social and economic differences between countries
2. Differences that exist within a specific country
3. Differences between urbanized and non-urbanized areas
4. Differences between urbanized/non-urbanized areas and megacities
5. Differences with urban agglomerations
6. Differences in the social positions of women and men
7. Differences in positions between social groups or individuals that result from ethnicity or place of origin

Income and social inequalities pose one of the most dramatic threats to the world. On top of this, the problem is growing. Disparities keep widening, and we can say that they have turned into a persistent phenomenon over the past two centuries. In addition, they apply both to affluent or even very affluent countries and the ones that are poor or very poor.

We can comment on this process in the following way: income and social inequalities, which have always existed, gathered particular momentum with the arrival of the industrial revolution and the development of the market economy. The market and its mechanisms as well as private ownership, not to mention different levels of creativity of different individuals as well as a certain amount of happenstance, are the main reasons behind ever-widening income differentials and social inequalities. Fortunately, this does not mean that some countries are not trying to minimize such disparities, often in a successful way.

Although income differentials are timeless, the 1970s witnessed rapid changes that occurred in connection with globalization, the emergence of the global market, and the gradual adoption of the neoliberal model of economics. The best known and most frequently used gauge of income inequalities is the Gini coefficient, which measures differences in income levels on a scale from zero to one. A value of zero means that no such inequality exists, whereas a value of one means that the entire income is held by only one entity (for example the 10 percent of the wealthiest people) in the group of all those observed in a specific analysis. Of course, the latter situation has never occurred, but differences in the Gini coefficient in specific countries show that income inequalities will continue to exist, and the coming decades are unlikely to favor efforts to reduce them.

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Let us look at the Gini coefficient in 2010 in the main European countries as well as all the important non-European countries, from the United States to China and India. According to Atkinson (2015), the lowest inequality was observed in Sweden (0.23) and the highest in South Africa (0.59). Over the past decade, this inequality has not changed to any substantial extent in the world or in Europe, despite the fact that the rankings of specific states have moved up or down.

Income inequality also has a significant impact on social inequality, because it correlates strongly with education opportunities and access to health care, which in the final analysis determine the possibilities of functioning in the job market, especially the ability to adjust to changing conditions in the job market as well as participation in social or political life, even if only in a passive way.

3.5. Different cultural systems

Cultural systems are a major distinguishing factors for societies. A cultural system can be defined in different ways. However, in this analysis, which pertains to Europe, we can list its components as follows: language, tradition, history, religion, and society's attitude to the state and the state's / the ruling elite's attitude to society. If we analyze all of these components very carefully, we will see that European countries differ considerably in terms of their culture, and these differences have the potential to generate conflicts.

Language. Although there are apparently no major conflicts against this backdrop in today's world, we should note that the past two or three centuries have witnessed the dominance of certain languages. Those were initially French, then German, partially and temporarily Russian, and currently English, which has almost become a commonly spoken language in light of the development of the global market and globalization processes. The conflict-prone nature of languages manifests itself chiefly in fear of the loss of national identity as a result of the growing dominance of a foreign language over the language traditionally used in a given society and also in the fact that foreign languages sometimes serve to promote various ideologies and generate various emotions that may impact on public moods in real terms.

Tradition. Here, the situation is a lot more complicated, because tradition comprises a mixture of actual events and numerous myths and perceptions. In social awareness, these two categories are mixed together quite significantly, especially because the current historical narrative, particularly in politics, uses both actual events from the past and certain myths embedded in social awareness. Politics focuses on what a specific nation or country can be proud of, whereas the events or facts that have rather negative associations are pushed into oblivion. Each nation, and in particular each government, plays down earlier defeats, crimes, and bad alliances, bringing into the foreground accomplishments and acquisitions in the intellectual, social, and military sphere.

Tradition is a very important component that makes it possible to manipulate society quite skillfully in various situations. Each country does so, whether to a smaller or greater extent. It is impossible to eliminate the importance of tradition from cultural systems, but it is nonetheless necessary to make efforts to prevent it from creating barriers in collaboration with other nations or countries and to cause it to create positive incentives for the development of not only a specific society but also a broader community.

History. It is a collection of events and facts in which a specific country and its society have been involved. However, history is a collection of facts and events that shows not only a country's accomplishments and acquisitions in the military, social, and economic sphere but also numerous mistakes, defeats, and failures. How this narrative looks poses a fundamental problem for every government. There is no doubt that it must be a selective, and it is likewise quite obvious that it will be dominated by the facts and events that show the glory of that country. The problem starts only when decisions must be made on what dark sides of this history should be shown. This is always an open issue, and, more importantly, there are no solutions that are sufficiently good from this perspective, because everything depends on the time and place in which a specific country functions and, more importantly, on this country's allies and opponents or even enemies, both temporary and more permanent ones. The tally of these circumstances determines the historical narrative and the extent to which it will be characterized by continuity or will be disrupted or altered.

Religion. It forms a particularly important segment of the cultural system. It is characterized by specific functions and a long-lasting nature. Most importantly, if it changes, these changes are typically only cosmetic. Religion wields a huge, sometimes even decisive influence over the system of values, which translates directly into the creation of a specific country's institutional system. In the most general sense, it determines, if not institutionally than in actual terms, the relations with the social groups that profess other religions or other denominations of the same religion. This holds true in particular for Christianity. Religion, especially the dominant religion, also plays another important role, namely has an overwhelming influence over spiritual bonds within society.

Religious systems are by nature not tolerant, which follows not only and no so much from the nature of a specific religion but from the nature of all religions. A religion should show a certain spiritual path and therefore must be authoritarian. Religion, unlike tradition and history, has a much broader reach, because different denominations of the same religion function in numerous countries and societies. Such societies may be close and have shared interests or not favorably disposed to one another or even hostile.

From this perspective, Europe is a conglomerate of both different religions and countries of different attitudes to these religions, and this fact is obviously determined by their history. We should also stress that wars were waged in the past

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by countries dominated by the same religion. In such periods, religious identity could not compete against the interests of nations and countries.

Europe is characterized by a plurality of different religions, which as a rule cannot be clearly assigned to individual countries. There are very few countries that are homogenous in terms of religion. The data on the religions in the European population cited below come from 2009, which means from before the great influx of refugees, most of whom are followers of Islam:

- followers of Roman Catholicism – 38%
- followers of Protestantism – 9%
- followers of Eastern Orthodoxy – 27%
- followers of Anglicanism – 4%
- followers of Islam – 6.5%
- followers of other Christian denominations – 0.7%
- followers of Judaism – 0.3%
- others: atheists and agnostics – 13.5%.

This list shows far-reaching differences in Europe in terms of religion, which naturally leads to numerous antagonisms and conflicts. If we take into account the influx of refugees, chiefly adherents of Islam, we will understand growing tensions, not only national but also religious ones. However, we must simultaneously remember the significant impact of multiculturalism on development. There are numerous examples showing that multiculturalism provided an important stimulus for broadly understood development, and the best example is provided by the United States as well as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In Europe, one classically positive and practically conflict-free example of development under conditions of multiculturalism is offered by Switzerland.

It appears that the general conclusion regarding future development both in the world and in Europe is that the future population structure of countries will be increasingly multiethnic and religiously diversified, and the countries that will be creating barriers for multiculturalism will gradually undergo marginalization. What we are talking about here, however, is a long-term process that has no direct impact on ongoing dilemmas, which require measures that guarantee political and economic stability in the coming decades.

Society's attitude to the state and the state's attitude to society.

This component of cultural systems appears the most ambiguous, because it is strictly related to the history of specific countries, which differ considerably in this respect for very obvious reasons. One of the most important of those reasons was the issue of state continuity and the fundamental problems resulting from its lack. There are over 40 countries that form today's Europe, a number that includes several that are not formally recognized. This situation is a result of the events that have taken place over the past several centuries. Space here prevents us from describing in detail both the collapse of European countries as a result of wars or

other ways of depriving them of their sovereignty and their reemergence or efforts to create them from zero.

What we can adopt as the starting point of our considerations is, for example, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, followed by World War I, which brought in its wake such events as the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire, and the German Empire. A dozen or so other countries emerged from their ruins, and many of those countries had already existed in the more or less distant past. Another stage of the loss of continuity and then reemergence on the world's map was marked by World War II. As a result of that war, some countries regained their sovereignty, whereas others were incorporated into the socialist experiment, created by the Soviet Union. The final stage of the process of the emergence of sovereign states in Central and Eastern Europe was marked by the fall of socialism and the transition to the democratic model based on the free market and capitalism.

This brief outline of the transformations that have taken place in Europe highlights the complex history of many countries, which often lost their sovereignty and became part of the winning powers, regained it, and then sometimes lost it again. These processes surely impacted significantly on the development of cultural systems and social awareness as well as the relations between society and the state as well the countries that played the role of invaders in the past, especially as the consequences of those invasions are still visible, because many areas have smaller territories than in the past. This is an extremely difficult issue, including because studies of cultural systems have not been conducted in a uniform manner in any country. Hence, we can only posit several hypotheses that follow indirectly from more general partial studies, not necessarily conducted from a perspective that could be of interest to us.

The first hypothesis can be formulated in the following way: if the continuity of a sovereign state is disrupted, whether on one or on more occasions, the links between society and the newly-established state become strongly disrupted, and the bonds between them become weaker or even disappear.

The second hypothesis, which is a certain continuation of the first one, holds that even after a state is constituted, certain past antagonisms are transferred onto it, and these antagonisms often assume the form of anticipation of the nature of the new government and its relations with society. Members of society search for answers to questions about ways to pursue the goals that they dreamed of in the conditions of dependence and fear elements perceived as the continuation of the former policies of the overthrown invaders.

The third hypothesis holds that regardless of how the existing policy of a newly-formed state changes, certain rules and principles of governance must be put into effect, because they are directly related to the general functions of each state. If the invading power was oppressive, then the nation's newly-gained sovereignty and the establishment of a new state will be largely a continuance of the

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previous methods of governance. Even if profound reforms are carried through, this oppressive nature will never be eliminated in full. Its scope will change, and it will only cover at best certain social groups, those that to a certain extent collaborated with the invading or occupying force.

According to the fourth hypothesis, when a sovereign state is formed again, there is always a group or a party that has a platform of governance and development that is not necessarily liked by other social groups or new parties that have a different model and vision of development.

All this prompts certain social groups of various sizes to distance themselves from the state in a certain way; this is something that applies to all countries, not only those that reemerged from temporary non-existence. Both domestic and foreign policies always favor certain social groups, and these preferences may change in a democracy, but the distance to the state remains, especially in the modern world, in which the information revolution has enabled masses of people to become familiar with the lives of other societies with different political and socioeconomic models, which translates into the scope of broadly-understood freedom as well as financial and developmental benefits.

4. Europe divided

So far, we have analyzed Europe as a geographic whole, without taking into account its modern-day division or the reasons behind this situation. Europe's current division has its roots in the political order that emerged after the end of World War II. Without going into detail as to what lay at the source of that division, we should only stress the formation of two opposed political blocs based on different systems of government. On the one hand, there was the bloc of the countries of Western and Southern Europe, based on liberal and democratic foundations and the market economy. On the other, there were the socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, whose systems were based on the dominance of public and state ownership and communist ideology. The former bloc was formed by sovereign countries, the latter by countries dependent on the Soviet Union with a certain group of quasi-sovereign states as well as countries that were fully incorporated and formally created a uniform group in the form of Yugoslavia.

The division into two rival political blocs manifested itself in the establishment of two separate economic organizations: on the one hand, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), set up in 1949, and on the other one, the European Union, whose first organizational forms emerged in 1952 as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSE), followed by the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, with the process culminating in the establishment of the European Union under the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993. The founding members of the latter were Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland,

Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. The fall of communism was followed a gradual process of the admission of new members. Initially, those were neutral states – Austria, Finland, and Sweden (which joined the EU in 1995). After that, or after 2000, the EU was enlarged to include other countries, chiefly from the former communist bloc: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. COMECON, in turn, was set up in Moscow and initially consisted of six countries, namely Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union. It was later enlarged to include Albania (which ceased to be a member in 1961), East Germany, Mongolia, Cuba, and Vietnam. COMECON was formally disbanded in Budapest in 1991, following the fall of communism.

Without assessing COMECON's effectiveness, except for the possibility of the Soviet Union's full control of the external links between other socialist countries, we must say that the organization could not be effective in the conditions of a poorly-developed market economy and the absence of important private entities, let alone civil liberties as a fundamental element of an effective economy. These short remarks about COMECON were necessary to stress that the EU was established not only to secure the economic development of the countries of Western Europe, and prior to this to prevent armed conflicts that had occurred in the past between the main Western powers, but also to compete with the communist countries, both in relations with ideologically foreign countries and in order to show the EU societies the advantages of a democratic and liberal economy that relied on private ownership. It was justified in that communism had a widespread influence over certain Western societies in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s.

If we ignore the past and focus on the 21st century, we can list several divisions in Europe that exist now and will probably continue to exist in the future, despite the fact that their configuration will probably change to a smaller or greater extent.

The European Union. There are several divisions within the EU that should be discussed briefly in this context to create awareness of a certain type of threats or challenges facing this organization.

The first of these is the division into old and new members. Essentially, the old members are the Western European countries, whose political and socio-economic models have long been based on democracy and free-market economics. Although all of them are well developed economies, they are also very diversified from various points of views, including both the socioeconomic model and partially the political model. The second group is formed by the new members. All of them or almost all of them have transitioned from a socialist to a market economy. They are characterized by a lower level of economic development, and the capitalist system in these countries is imitative and peripheral in its nature.

The second division pertains to membership in the euro zone, or the adoption of the common currency. Some countries use the euro as legal tender, whereas

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others have their own native currencies. This division differs quite significantly from the previous one, also because the euro has been adopted by some of the new members of the EU as well as some of the non-EU countries that remain members of the economic union and the currency union as well as those that remain outside these groups. Among the EU countries, 19 are members of the euro zone, and nine are not. The latter group includes: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the UK, which has decided to leave the EU. The euro is additionally used in Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, and the Vatican City, which belong to the monetary and currency union, but not to the EU. In addition, the euro is also used by Montenegro and Kosovo and in overseas territories, namely French Guiana and Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

The third division pertains to diversified cultural systems dominant in individual countries, and most of the components of cultural systems vary significantly across countries. In more important cases, this could cause tensions of various degrees of intensity between the EU institutions and specific countries, and it is likewise impossible to ignore the tensions between some of the EU member states. After all, history cannot be erased or forgotten.

Finally, there is a group of EU candidate countries and potential candidates.

The EU candidate countries are Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey. It is a group of very different countries that did worse in their transformation from socialism to a market economy, but it also includes Iceland, since 1944 a sovereign state with a market economy. Turkey has a different status – it became a candidate country years ago, but recent changes sparked by the country's main aspiration to revive the Ottoman Empire have caused it to transform from a democracy or a quasi-democracy to an autocracy or even a dictatorship.

Potential candidate countries. These are countries that have the ambition to join the EU yet do not meet the requirements to become candidates, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Morocco, Moldova, and Ukraine. All these countries, except for Morocco, were earlier part of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In the case of these countries, we can hardly expect them to become formal candidates for EU membership anytime soon.

Countries outside the EU. In this group, two countries deserve special attention – on the one hand Russia and on the other one Turkey – but these are also several other countries with similar political characteristics, for example Belarus. These countries have several things in common: an authoritarian political model that, according to some experts, may even be called a dictatorship, despite having formal characteristics of a democracy, such as general elections. Both Russia and Turkey pursue the fundamental goal of political expansion and want to return to the status of not only regional but even world powers.

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One general conclusion that follows from this brief profile of Europe that it appears that the continent will remain divided in the coming decades, and there is certainly no guarantee that there will be no further transformations or divisions (not only in the European Union, where Brexit may prove infectious). Likewise, it is impossible to rule out certain territorial shifts forced by Russia's actions or armed conflicts on the part of Turkey, as exemplified by its armed conflict with the Kurds.