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"Körber Stiftung Bergedorf Roundtable - "An ever more divided EU? Finding Common Ground after a Decade of Crises - Contributions to debates by Prof. Hübner"

23rd-24th of March 2019, Andrassy University, Budapest, Hungary

On Europe's Values and the Value of Europe

Setbacks in processes of change come because we miss the moments when bad changes begin. This is the case of legitimacy crisis of the EU, Brexit, refugee crisis, fascist ideology emergence in public space. At the end the setback takes us by surprise because first signs of the bad change look innocent. That is why - in reaction to Joscha Fischer's comment about the depressive mood in this debate - we have to have such debates doing the job of canaries in the mine. They signal the danger is coming but are often ignored or not heard. I believe it is important also to warn against this tendency to see nationalism, populism, anti-europeanism as entirely home grown phenomena in the Central and Eastern Europe. Justification is usually that these countries had been for long separated from political movements in the West. There are relatively recent addition, new guys on the block of democracy. But this ugly undercurrent of nationalism raises its head from time to time in Europe. In most member states where we see it now it is not a Trump style, not about building a great state here and there, it is more about what Pierre Poujade proposed: localism, healthy provincial values as a salvation path for Europe. So it is more about la Pologne profonde. There are differences between national versions of nationalism in Europe. They have, however, enough in common to see it as a European phenomenon. Of course the current version of European nationalism pretends to be different, stays in disguise sometimes misleading people, hiding the ugly roots. Nationalism of today is modernised. Nationalistic leaders speak to people with iPhones, use internet and social media. They build their own middle class growing national capital, they criticise cosmopolitan elites, even though they themselves convert very quickly into the establishment. But they also undertake a long march through institutions fundamental for the type of state they aim to build. They take over education. Let me conclude by saying that for that type of threat winning elections is not enough. The change is far too deep.

Session 2: 30 Years On: The Legacy of 1989

I would like to start my comments by asking Minister Gergely Gulyas to clarify his understanding of values, and specifically also rule of law. Do you accept the fact that shared European values are non-negotiable and cannot be subject to diverging interpretation. Mr Miklós Hajnal called it relativisation of values. I hope you agree that the Union is a community of law. Rule of law is a glue that keeps the system together. If we allow ourselves to differ on what the Union's foundation is, then the

Union would become an empty shell and its functioning would be based on political voluntarism. It would not be anymore a union of Monet and Schumann but a pastiche of Carl Schmitt. But rule of law is actually naked. It can be destroyed by any government. That is why we have given it strength through establishing a system with the ECJ and all national judicial systems whose objective is to protect citizens against the power of state and, indeed, the power of the Union. For citizens it is fundamental to know whether the rule of law is based on the EU values. Weakening this system by departing from common values and principles means weakening citizens' rights. It means losing our values. And we are lost without values.

On External Threats and a Post-Atlantic World

Just five weeks ago, during the Munich Security Conference the Munich airport was flooded with American planes. 10% of the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats were there. So I would disagree that in real terms we are in a post Atlantic era. But the risk is there. There are those who would insist that a post-Atlantic world had been in making long before the recent Presidential elections. During President Obama's time the issue of 2% was raised during the Wales NATO Summit. Pivot to Asia was the process of reducing the importance of links with the European Union on a parallel track. Probably signs of a slow shift of US away from the EU can be noticed already under the George W. Bush administration. Finally, when we haven't heard from President Trump anything on America's commitment to article 50 during the 2017 Summit, Chancellor Merkel made the famous statement that the EU had to take its fate into its own hands. But of course transatlantic relations have been an anchor for the Union, traditionally pinning up our hopes on the US to help us sort out our problems. List of examples is long: Balkan war, Ukrainian crisis, Russia on many occasions, wars in the Mediterranean. One can say that those crises exposed the disjoint nature of EU external action, not necessarily pushing us to get our act together. Without doubt our objective should be to spare no effort to maintain strong transatlantic bonds. Also, to bring China and Russia to the table. This - joint transatlantic approach - is the only way to cope with this challenge effectively, more effectively than through bilateral efforts. We agree on diagnosis. We do not, however, agree on solutions. This is not only about the security related issues. Also, on trade and in particular on what we should do together to change WTO rules, to reform multilateral system, jointly created by the US and Europe. We are now working on diffusing tensions but there are still huge distances to cover. Europe needs to strengthen its defense structures. We have discovered already some time ago that what has always been our strength, which is diplomacy, also economic, is not enough. We need to strengthen our potential in defense through European research and European procurement to increase our potential in the newest technologies. And do this with a view to enhance our global competitiveness. This is how Americans have always worked. We have to invest in defense not to please Americans but to strengthen our capabilities. And a last sentence on NATO. We will have to get accustomed and adjust to stronger Europe.

On the Future of the EU

We have never had so many debates and consultations about Europe as over the last several years. They have been organised at all levels of European governance, by governments, national parliaments, grassroots organisations. They have taken place in European institutions. The challenge is today to take stock of their outcomes, find affinity among all the expectations expressed during this process of European dialogue and reflect on how they can become part of a common vision and common work program. This can take us forward toward Europe delivering what is expected by citizens, by all those who feel owners of Europe, who feel responsible for Europe and for whom Europe matters. We will have a variety of outcomes of those unprecedented debates. The real challenge will be finding for those dreams a common ground. We spoke yesterday about the importance of a vital centre in the Union or, if you wish, an engine. We spoke about a Franco-German engine. Many of us would complain about lack of effective dialogue between a bold vision of President Macron and a cautious pragmatism of Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, highly probable future German leader. I believe that they will continue to be the vital centre in European politics. Unfortunately, at the moment they run on a parallel track. President Macron is stressing the need for an overhaul of our thinking about the EU, while CDU leader presents a much more constrained approach. Macron wants to build - and he presents his vision not to the governments but to citizens - institutional infrastructure for an ambitious European Renaissance. So we see a serious divergence between Macron's striving for a super Europeanisation of all EU efforts and an old style inter governmentalism of the German approach. As they might be leaders for a while their views and the divergence cannot be ignored. But it is also clear that at member states level, as it has traditionally been the case, there will be other projects coming from different configurations of member states, the V4, the Mediterraneans, the Hanseatic and more like minded groups can emerge. Maybe, this time around it will be different, maybe member states will just line up behind the French or the German approach, which would immediately mean a dividing line in the European Council. How to cope with this challenge? It will be up to the president of the European council to organize debate in the least divisive way. Probably we should not wait here for the new President. If in the context of Sibiu conference member states should look at issues where they could agree. I could imagine climate issue or external borders strengthening as examples here. We should assess those potentially uniting issues on their European merits and reach a consensus. I could also imagine at this stage that President Macron's approach can be more welcome in the European Parliament while the European Council could be more receptive to the German stress on the national dimension. There will be no better option than to come with the best possible convergence of different visions. That is why the leadership of European institutions will matter. We need leaders who will be able to work as a team and to avoid a power game at the expense of Europe and its citizens.