

The European Ideological Consolidation

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The strategy matters

In the competitive world of nowadays every region, country, state and even the smallest society needs to establish and pursue a strategy which leads to gainings in several areas (economical, better living standards, access to education, etc) as well as to the assurance of the conditions to develop similar strategies in the future.

Today, it's possible to see how different regions have developed and deployed strategies during some years, that, with different levels of success, are bringing new strong players to the world scenarios, mainly to the economical and political. It's the case of the Asiatics Korea and Singapore, and the south American Chile. The former known as the east Asiatic tigers, the later as the Latin American tiger. All these three countries share the fact that developed from a situation like most of the poor countries, to a developed stable economy. They all differ in the means, the strategy they established and followed to achieve success.

For the Asiatic case the strategy was to produce goods for export to highly-industrialized countries, to provide education as a productivity leverage, high tariffs on imported goods, high savings rate, cheap qualified labor, among others. In the case of Chile the development was based on modernizations reforms, competition, market openness, adaptability and exports growth.

A strategy for Europe

Some of the EU's countries take part of the group of well developed nations, however, some others don't. The EU must provide the same benefits to all the nations attached to it, in other words, the same level of development.

These differences are caused because of the many economical, social and political shortcomings, which at last are undermining the unification process of the European Union (we could see how the EU constitutional draft was rejected by the French and Dutch voters), more specifically the poor economic performance and the lack of a long term prospect.

In the economic field Europe and the eurozone suffers of slow growth compared with the USA and others emerging markets, a high rate of unemployment, public deficits, a lack of investments in R&D as well as of innovation and since 1995 poor productivity gains. The established strategy for speeding up the economy in Europe, the Lisbon Agenda, hasn't achieved the desired results due mainly to the slow pace to deploy the required changes which depends exclusively on national governments and haven't found a transnational, coordinated leadership.

The long term vision for the union is something that has not been present for quite a long time. Since the European Council took over the control of the unification process and committed to enlargement without the right policies to strengthen the intergovernmental EU's institutions every single country has developed its own vision of the EU itself, together with different economical and social policies and practices.

It's the EU's duty to seek for a strategy to leverage the union of these problem and that way, accomplish the economical and social promises that the union was created for.

The need of an ideological consolidation

Once again, let's take a look at all the issues identified as the causes for the problems the EU is facing nowadays:

- Different visions of the EU between the EU's countries.
- Divergence of national social and economical policies and practices.
- High levels of bureaucracy in the EU institutions.
- Slow pace to implement the required changes for the integration.
- A huge lack of leadership in the local and EU's institutions.

When you get to analyze each one of them, it's possible to see how each of these different issues are backed up for the difficulties to perform multinational activities, due to the cultural differences of the parts involved which lead to slow pace, bureaucracy, etc. For all of the just exposed cases its seen how the cultural gaps between the EU countries were determinant at last. Thereof, any European strategy proposal must address the shortening of the cultural gaps between countries.

But a people's culture is a broad item that goes far back to the people's roots, and people, most of the time, are not likely to change their own culture. But what matters for the EU is not an entire cultural unification. What is necessary to unify are those things of the culture about the labor culture, the vision of the EU, the social policies and practices and some alike. These things are what an ideology grabs together, preserves in time and multiply. Then we can say that a strategy for Europe must be focused on consolidating an European ideology, shared by every one of the EU's citizens and with all the means (institutions and policies) to grant it persistence in future.

The concept of ideology as understood in this text is defined as "Ideology is a representation of an imaginary reallion of the individuals and the real conditions of their existence" [7]. For the aim of these paper an european ideology is the representation (set of ideas) of the relations between the individuals and their enviroment at social, political, cultural and economical aspects and some others.

Current approaches to an European ideology consolidation

As the European union has been deployed, there have been at lot of integration approaches at the economical and political levels, but few is been thought about the integration at the social level. The Erasmus project is one of those few approaches. It was set up in 1987 in preparation for a single market via international education inside the borders of the union. There are also a lot of programs alike, which include working exchanges, summer camps and every kind of them that take advantage of the unions open borders. These programs have revealed very good results and already started creating what could be called an European Identity.

This European identity, despite still scores below the national identity of the people according to the surveys, could be described by being multicultural, multilingual, cosmopolitan, mobile and Europe centered (not nation centered) [2].

In the long run, these exchange programs together with the internal migration trends, will create that multicultural society at each one of the EU's nations. However the pace of this social transformation as it's focused only in young people is slow enough to accept it as the way the ideological consolidation process should follow, because, first if the conditions for some of the countries (ie France) don't get better in the medium term they could end up resigning from the union and second because the time this ad-hoc consolidation would take before it makes a noticeable difference in Europe is so long that the comparative competitiveness of Europe would had fallen far below the other nations in the world.

Thereof, it could be said that the current approaches lead to the needed society, but the pace they have is way slower than the one required by the union.

Strategy for the implementation of an European ideology

The ideology then is established and preserved through institutions [7]. They are union scope institutions which have to carry out with the set of union wide programs that could accelerate the ideological consolidation process. So, the strategy is to implement the institutions outlined here. They are not really new institutions for the social environment, but, as now their activities involve all of the EU's countries the social and thus ideological gap will be shortened.

The institutions are:

- The European Ministry of Education: There are really good education models in Europe, and there are some not that good. The aim of this ministry is to deploy the best of what Europe has concerning to education. Then the ministry could assure multilingual and flexibility centered education for everybody all across Europe. Concerning to the multicultural issue, it's necessary for this ministry to develop internal exchange programs, like Erasmus, but as part of the basic education for every student at its different levels (elementary, middle and high school).
- The European Labor Ministry: Beside all the policies, laws, regulations, etc, that such a ministry should care about, it's important now to include a function of "employment agency" as they are in the Scandinavian countries. Such an agency would be in charge of helping the employers and employees to get in touch as well as to promote the individual's job flexibility and to sense what profiles the labor market is requiring that at certain point would lead to European politics such as internal migrations, located investments, immigrants integration into society, etc. This ministry can then provide the mobility and multicultural skills the union is looking for.
- Union Broad Political Parties: This parties can endorse union broad politics, by getting down the ideas to the people locally and all over the union.
- European Workers Unions: In a very danish way, this institutions can act both as a leverage for specific unemployment problems and as service provider for professional improvement.
- Countries Associations: This is most controversial of all the institutions here proposed and still needs a lot of work on the idea itself. As a mean to integrate European nations with each other, targeting mainly the adult population, this work proposes to create couple of countries. Two countries would be a couple for some time period. During this time the population of the two of the countries will, by law, join special programs of cultural, economical, training, etc. The couples would be changed every 2 or 3 years. As in some countries the population has to go every single year during the entire life to give some few months military service, the European population sponsored by the government could do this as well. Indeed this is a proposal for the ideology consolidation among the older people.

These institutions however, must be backed up by many reforms, some of them are shown here:

- Enhancement of EU institutions: The union level institutions must be validated at national levels, with efficient means to implement programs and policies across all the union, with little deal with the local or national governments.
- Rightsizing of local governments: Having a strengthened EU government, requires low levels of bureaucracy at local governments. So the local institutions must be right sized to meet with the people's expectations as well as the efficiency needed to deploy the EU policies.
- Efficient decision making: It just takes so long to get something approved in most of the European countries due the high levels of bureaucracy and paper work, there should be found and implemented more efficient practices for the decision making process. This is the field where all the developments concerning eGovernment should be focused on via mechanisms like the "digital signatures" and "electronic office".

Conclusions

The European union is having a crisis as never before due the poor economic performance and lack of long term visions. The solution to this problem must be found by setting a strategy covering the economic, social and political aspects of the union. Although, the lack of an European common ideology could be identified as one of the causes of the current state of the union. There is an ideology already developed among the youth in the older countries of the union that is the desired one but doesn't have the means to spread all over the union in the required time. This ideology could be described as one of multilingual, multicultural, highly mobile and cosmopolitan people. So here it's proposed a set of activities that compound the strategy for consolidating an European ideology: the creation of an European ministry of education, the creation of an European ministry of labor, the creation of political parties with influence all over the union, the expansion of the Scandinavian like workers unions and the creations of associations between countries. All these policies however must be implemented along with other changes: enhancement of the EU institutions, the rightsizing of the local governments and the improvement of the decision making processes.

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