

Discussions on the EU's future

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By Stefan Wolff

Head of European Studies program at England's Bath University

There is a genuine confusion among different groups of Europeans about what it is they really want the European Union to be. They feel European - but Europe and the European Union are not emotionally the same thing. We might now get the two-speed Europe people have been talking about for a while. The EU is not about to be dismantled. It's a question of pragmatism that we cooperate on economic competitiveness, matters of immigration, environmental issues, energy security and terrorism. We won't go back, but there is a risk that we might not go forward that much more. It might be the end of the EU as we know it, but it is not the end of the EU.

Werner Weidenfeld

Director of the Center for Applied Policy Research in Munich

Today the old dream to cooperate on a different level has been realized to a large degree. The gigantic success of Europe no longer produces the warm glow people felt in times of need. Reality has overtaken the dream. I see in the new generation that it thinks European, it lives Europe on a daily basis and it has opportunities that the previous generation didn't have. But the European Union has no magnetism for them. What that will mean for the future is not yet clear. The Brits see the current evolution as confirmation of their basic stance on Europe, but history has shown that integration has its own dynamism. And previous big crises have created new impetus for integration.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing

Former French president and head of the convention that drafted the European constitution

The idea of Europe is in transition. You can't rouse people's passions for something that is 50 years old. The new motivation can only be one of size: As individual nations, we are too small to deal with the challenges of tomorrow. For our young people's sake, we need to become a continent, like China, India and the United States. People already understand the threat from other continents, but they don't yet see that Europe can help them face this challenge. To explain this we need a different generation of leaders. Today Europe is led by the generation of politicians who managed enlargement after the fall of the Iron Curtain. We need passionate leaders - almost a new leadership culture.

Ana Palacio

Head of the Spanish Parliament's joint committee on European affairs, former Spanish foreign minister

We need to market Europe as an answer to globalization. The fears of the Polish plumber will not go away with the no votes on the constitution because he is a reality and here to stay. Europe has nothing to do with it. But there is a big gap between leaders and voters today and we cannot go on with European integration as we always have: The motto of enlightened despotism - everything for the people but without the people - no longer works. Leaders need to communicate that Europe today is about having an influence in the world because the world is affecting Europe. The global environment has changed and the only answer is defending our interest and values in the world.

Charles Grant

Director of the Center for European Reform in London

Europe has always been a compromise between those who think of it as a political union and those who take a more instrumentalist view. As a result we've never agreed what the European Union is for. We've had to fudge it every time a new treaty was signed. Fudging is O.K. if you're moving forward. But if the bicycle wobbles you may find yourself in an existential crisis. Today the instrumentalist view seems to be gaining momentum. The emotion is gone. What people today want is a Europe that delivers useful benefits: jobs, a clean environment, a foreign policy success on Iran. It's a utilitarian Europe, a bean-counting Europe, a down-to-earth-Europe - a more boring Europe.

Martins Bondars

Chief of staff of the Latvian president

The idea of Europe is not dead, it is on hold. Our generation takes peace and stability for granted - you only really appreciate it when you don't have it. World War II is history, communism is history and we live in a completely different world today. Europe has to change with the world; it is a work in progress. Today there are too many goals and subgoals for Europe. The main challenge we face is the economy. How can we make sure that the engine of growth is revived? The ills are known and the infuriating thing is that the medicine is known as well. Leaders now need to have the courage to prescribe the right measures and explain it to the people. The problem is that there is a lack of leadership. The common values of Europe don't really have a convincing carrier today. National leaders need to step up.