

Anthony Giddens: *Turbulent and Mighty Continent. What Future for Europe?*
Cambridge 2014: Polity Press, 242 pp.

This is a well-written book and a worthwhile contribution to the ongoing discussion about the sources of the present problems of the European Union and about potential solutions for them. The history and fate of the EU are unique. For the first time, a number of independent large nation states have decided to transfer significant elements of their authority and sovereignty to common institutions and bodies. The two main rationales given by its promoters were the securing of peace and the fostering of economic growth and prosperity. The continuous enlargement of the Union from its original six founding members to 28 members today, all of which entered the Union by their free decision, seems to testify to the success of this endeavour. One of the last and most decisive steps was the introduction of the Euro as a common currency in 1999/2002 in ten member states. In continuation with earlier steps of integration, this significant economic integration was explicitly conceived by its promoters, German chancellor Kohl and French president Mitterand, also as a step toward deeper political integration. From the global perspective, the Euro can be considered a success. Aside from simplifying economic exchanges within the eighteen member countries of the Euro-zone, it became a currency able to compete with the US dollar as a currency used worldwide. However, the Euro has also opened up—corresponding to the predictions of many economists—a deep split within the EU. While the northern countries, which also had a stable national currency before—especially Germany with its DM—profited from the new currency and were able to overcome the deep economic crisis in 2008/2009 rather well—the South European countries slithered into a deep depression with an explosion of public deficits and unemployment.

Greece had to be rescued from bankruptcy by massive foreign help. Since then, the Euro itself has been ‘saved’ but the deep new internal EU-split persists and overall economic growth in the EU could not recover in the same way it did in the United States.

Against this backdrop, Anthony Giddens proposes a solution which he denotes as a highly ambitious, new concept, radically divergent from conventional perspectives, a major rethinking (pp. 5, 8, 122, 138, 161). The solution is to supplement the common currency with a banking and fiscal union and to move it forward to a true Federal Union, that is, a politically integrated and effective political community. Only in this way, so he argues, can the present simultaneous lack of democracy, legitimacy, and effective leadership be overcome. As a starting point of his analysis, Giddens introduces an accurate distinction between three governance structures: *EU1*, which includes the formal institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) and operates along the Monnet method, that is, as an elite cooperation without much public discussion and citizen’s involvement; *EU2* as the de facto ‘governing’ body, which includes the German chancellor and French president (now mainly the former of the two, Angela Merkel), as well as the heads of the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (the famous *Troika*); and *paper Europe*, an apt term used to denominate ‘a host of future plans, roadmaps, and so forth, drawn up the Commission and other EU agencies’, which form ambitious schemes and proposals that mostly remain empty and not realised. These three institutional levels resp. actors have not been able, and will not be able in the future, to solve the central problems of the EU, outlined before. What could or should an alternative system look like?

According to Giddens, a central element of the new political system of the EU would be the direct election of a European president. He could provide an answer to

Kissinger's famous question: 'Who do I call if I want to call Europe?' The further institutional reforms proposed remain somewhat vague (pp. 35ff.): A fiscal union with a common budget within the Eurozone; some funding for trans-European welfare, health and education projects (the 'European social model', however, should remain in national hands); a more deep involvement of citizens and attempts at identity-building, such as the strengthening the Erasmus programs, the European Voluntary Service Scheme, the inclusion of electronic forms of direct democracy, and a strengthening of the rule of transparency, including a 'need' for political leaders to adhere to higher standards in their private and public lives. Giddens also presents interesting ideas on how the EU could use new developments in manufacture and services (where he argues that digital technology may be an important source of new jobs), and develop a new model of the welfare state (a 'social investment state') and strategies to come to terms with climate change. For reasons of space, I can focus here only on the discussion of the ideas about the institutional reform of the EU. I see two problems with these proposals and think that there exists also another vision of the mission and future of the EU.

First, let us consider the direct election of a president of the EU, which for Giddens would be the best strategy to combine leadership with popular legitimacy. However, the question is: How could a candidate from a certain country carry out his election campaign in countries with other languages than his or her own? What would be the turnout in such an election if, say, a Portuguese social democrat and a German conservative candidate ran for office? Certainly, many left-oriented Germans would vote for the Portuguese candidate, but many of them would vote for the German candidate from the conservative party. The outcome—considering only these two cases—can easily be seen, given

that Portugal had about ten million and Germany about 61 million eligible voters in the European elections. Similar constellations would occur with a candidate from any other country—not to speak of a Turkish candidate, a country whose EU-membership Giddens strongly advocates. How could the outcome of such an election provide the winner and the EU as a whole with high legitimacy? Maybe, candidates from small, polyglot countries (like Luxembourg) would be favoured by parties as candidates; but then again, is it imaginable that the German (or French, British, Italian, etc.) chancellor or prime minister would accept decisions made by him? EC/EU history shows that only Commission presidents from large member countries (e.g., Walter Hallstein, Robert Jenkins, Jacques Delors) had real influence and power. A partial solution would be to make English the official language of the Union (as Giddens proposes). But again one could ask here: Is it imaginable that the French, with their high level of cultural-linguistic self-consciousness, would agree? Or speakers of German, which is the native language of about 90 million people in the EU, compared with, maybe, 60 million native English speakers? It seems questionable to me also in the present-day era of 'super-diversity' as (Giddens calls it) that a real new form of 'interculturalism' will develop among the European populations at large. Experiences in old, well-established multicultural societies like Canada or Switzerland show that the members of the different linguistic groups live by and large side by side but do not really form a new socio-culturally integrated society.

My second reservation against the proposal to develop the EU further into a federal state is based both on knowledge about citizens' attitudes and the institutional development of the EU. For decades, surveys have shown that there exists a general acceptance of integration in most member countries, but no enthusiasm about it and,

most of all, a clear rejection of the idea of developing the EU into a true new federal state. This attitude came to the fore most openly in the popular referenda about the Constitution for Europe in 2005 in France and the Netherlands, when clear majorities of the citizens rejected its implementation. The elitist character of European integration also became apparent in the fact that EU leaders then implemented the Treaty of Lisbon, which de facto is the European constitution with only some minor modifications. The other fact is that institutional efforts to provide the EU with a real 'leader' so far have had contrary results. Today, there exist three or four positions competing for primacy: Three presidents (of the Commission, of the European Council and of the European Parliament) and the six-month presidency of the European Union.

I think that there exists a fourth Europe which Giddens neglects in his account of European integration: I call this *legal Europe*. European integration was to large degree integration by law; the European Court of Justice has been a very decisive and influential actor in this regard. This legal integration has had significant effects not only in the economic sphere of market liberalisation but also in regard to human rights. Classical and modern social theorists of law, including Max Weber, Hans Kelsen, the first EU-Commission president Walter Hallstein, and more recently Joseph Weiler, Alec Stone Sweet and others, agree that law has a strong integrative force even for large communities. Stone Sweet adds that the EC/EU is best seen as a community of law. The achievements and shortcomings of European integration can be seen much more clearly from such a perspective. Legal integration at once has more and less effects than institutional-organisational deepening. It has fewer effects because it cannot substitute necessary day-to-day decisions and policies. On the other side, it has also more long-lasting and pervasive effects.

If we consider the EU as a community of law, different conclusions emerge in regard to both the necessary reforms and the global role of the EU. Concerning the first, we would not ask for a further development toward a federal state. The achievements of the EU in terms of its 'governmental', directly redistributive functions have been modest. Its agrarian policy, the area where it still spends most of the money, is considered by most experts to be a failure. The EU's regional and structural policy supporting the development of delayed countries and regions can be considered as ineffective from a positive view, and even as negative in a critical view; Greece which received massive direct and indirect EU funding, is an outstanding example in this regard. Leading politicians throughout the EU, including German chancellor Merkel, have openly criticised the fact that many detailed EU interventions and regulations (tens of thousands of pages yearly) concerning economic life are counterproductive and inhibit innovation and economic entrepreneurship. Long-term economic growth in the EC/EU has not been stronger than in North America or Japan, and in terms of employment the EU has always lagged behind. The wish of political leaders in neighbouring states to join the EU can easily be explained as a strategy to show leadership and foresight; world-wide, there exist over two hundred similar regional associations [Haller 2011].

I agree with Giddens that the introduction of the Euro constituted a significant step toward further integration and toward making the Eurozone a 'community of fate'. However, I did not find convincing arguments for the necessity of a far-reaching fiscal and political integration. The internal split between the South and North emerged largely because the Southern countries were accustomed since decades to high inflation rates and their collective actors (unions, employers, governments) and individual economic actors

(consumers, money-lenders) did not adapt their behaviour to the new environment of a stable currency. In the meantime, however, they seem to have learned this lesson and, therefore, the prospects for the euro look much more positive. To see the EU as a community of law would also imply a role different from the one foreseen by Giddens, which is to be a new powerful actor on the global scene, on a par with the USA and China, and backed by military power. Rather, it would confirm the old idea of Europe as a 'Civil Power', focusing upon peaceful negotiations instead of military interventions and the strengthening of such methods and institutions (such as the United Nations) around the world. The EU has a world-wide positive image just because it limits itself (maybe willy-nilly) to such a role.

Thus, in my view there exist a series of objections against the vision that the EU should become a federal state. Nevertheless, the ideas proposed by Giddens have sharpened such a vision and they also force one to clarify the counter-arguments. In so doing, this book is an important contribution to an ongoing, pivotal question for Europe.

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References

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Wiemer Salverda, Brian Nolan, Daniele Checchi, Ive Marx, Abigail McKnight, István György Tóth and Herman van de Werfhorst (eds.): *Changing Inequalities in Rich Countries: Analytical and Comparative Perspectives*
Oxford 2014: Oxford University Press, 432 pp.

In his Gifford lectures (*If you're an egalitarian, how come you're so rich?* [Cohen 2000]), G.A. Cohen described a philosophical problem which polarised the philosophy departments at Harvard and Oxford. Members of those departments, headed by Quine and Ayer, prided themselves on their ability to think analytically and logically. Yet Cohen points out that what, without exception, determined their views of the issue was only which institution they belonged to. The book under review—*Changing Inequalities* (henceforth CI)—mentions a disagreement on trends in intergenerational mobility. Despite analysing exactly the same data from two UK birth cohort studies, economists and sociologists came to opposite conclusions as to whether social mobility had increased or decreased.

CI reports on a project funded by the European Commission. It analysed trends in income distribution, their causes, effects, and possible policy responses. Its contributors are predominantly economists but include a few sociologists. But over the last 30 years, research on the societal and health effects of wider or narrower income differences has come predominantly from specialists in public health and epidemiology. Disagreements between economists and epidemiologists on these issues have already attracted academic attention [Kawachi 2001]. Trained in economic history and epidemiology, I might claim impartiality, but because the damaging effects of inequality, which Kate Pickett and I showed in *The Spirit Level* (henceforth SL), are disputed in several chapters of CI, I am a protagonist.