

LISBON: THE END OF UTOPIA?

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Abstract: The paper points out some features which brings near the European construction to the Utopian thought and practice (non-reality, fictionality, integrality, communitarian spirit). Starting from this similitude, this text estimates the momentary state of the European construction project. It is based on the last few years outstanding progresses, but also takes into account the recent period when the successive crises waves that decreased the certain confidence of European citizens so far as to doubt the very future of the European unification. The paper examines the meanings of the Lisbon Treaty, having the premise that one of its main aims is just to counteract the strong Euro-skepticism offensive.

Key words: European integration, utopian thought, Lisbon Treaty

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The last world crisis seems to be – for Europe, more than for other world areas – an ultimate inquiry for historical validation. The upheavals and side-slipping of several European Union members pays attention to the critical moment the European construction is. After the thundering successes of the extension – which had as symbols the futuristic arenas in Portugal or the Olympic Games mascot in 2004, in Greece – at present, after only 7 years, Portugal, Greece and Iceland seem to be a horror serial film pilot-episode.

To this day, the spectacular issues of the extension were looked upon as stating by themselves about a winning project (one-currency, acceptance of new members in two successive waves, optimistic expectations for new members acceptance). The mirage of such Euro-success dispersed as far as worse and worse news about the American house- deals invaded the world.

The apparent fanciful progresses – some few decades ago – were not able to stop the oppositions and criticism and did not disperse the increasing Euro-skepticism wave. The European architecture principles were extrapolated to a space extended to the Black Sea; so far, this process was considered at least hazardous (Judt, 2000). Europe – as was invented and set up last decades – makes its utmost to prove its viability and to get rid the utopian halo which envelops many endeavors to consolidate this unification.

The Lisbon Treaty seems to be the turning point in the historical setting of the European unification *Utopia*.

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EUROPE AND UTOPIA

The use of customary terms to talk over Europe's fate (illusion, fantasy, communitary, optimism, abstraction, chance etc.) proves the fact that abstract projects stage was not passed over yet in order to give a peremptory answer to a serious interrogation: is E.U. an ultimate entity in the world framework? This paper is intending to point out that this contemporary mega-project is drawn near the tradition of the utopian thought and practice. It is not meant to be useful for skeptical arguments, not even for considering European integration process as illusory and chanceless. Actually, the paper is intending to identify the most suitable standpoint to understand the recent Euro progresses.

Not so long ago the American town-planning image seemed to be the best largely shared vision on the future. Many times in the former decades, the U.S. image was our prospect upon the future as well. But the U.S. Utopia had to notice an increasingly important competitor: *The Utopia of European unification*.

The attempts to discover and to give etymological, historical or geographical explanations for the word-Europe were, for long, subject of many efforts and matters in dispute without coming to a present-day consensus on what means "Europe". We can take for granted Herodot's words: "As for Europe, nobody knows either the origin of this name, or the person who would have given to". However, it is to remind the meaningful interpretation of what "Europe" *does not* mean any more: the semite *ereb* (i.e. *twilight* – the supposed origin of the term for the old continent). The ancient peoples saw the West not only as the Sun set – a place of obscurity – but also as a place for utilitarianism, corporeality, reckless action, dark and confused knowledge. The East contrasted the former view: it was looked upon the realm of dawn, light, revelation, soul, initiation and wisdom, genuine knowledge, native land. Nowadays, such meanings were forgotten despite of some ones which are still used, accepted – with a critical stress purposely. Therefore, Europe – identified with the Western world, in spite of the modified etymology – is the most wanted space, the promised land, the most eastern inhabitants are aiming to. So, it is the Utopia at hand, especially after the Berlin Wall crash. As in Th. More's *Utopia*, the name Europe means a kingdom its own name denies: Utopia – unreachable place – means a better place: Europe – the West is the space of hope, of a new and sunny life.

The likeness of European construction to the utopian tradition and thought can be proved by pointing out some common features. The first feature of the utopian *topos* is the non-existence. This was the way present day Europe appeared. Before starting the European construction, Europe was sung by poets, was depicted in works of art, then, - kept apart mythology – was imagined and delivered in projects from Dante and Pierre Dubois, to Sully and William Penn, from abbot of Saint-Pierre, the philosopher Immanuel Kant and the Danish Heerfordt (with his brilliant essay *Europe Comunius*) to Alfred Nossia, Aristide Briand and count Coudenhove Kalergi (who pointed out in 1926 that "the problem of Europe is reduced to two words: unification or breakdown"). Before existing, the last Europe had to be invented. It proved to be so truthful that for its achievements there has been too expensive; so, it seems Europeans finally chose unification to avoid another possible fail or even catastrophic dangers in the case of unification – according to some pessimistic previsions.

Europe means an imaginary space. As any utopia, the European idea is, definitively, a fiction with the good society as subject. An utopia is to be considered a imaginary representation of ideal states of affairs or of an entire

society, conceived as a better alternative to the present day society. So, most models to reconsider Europe (Atlantic Europe, evolving Europe, partnership Europe, disintegrated Europe, homelands Europe, independent European Federation) (Marga, 1995, 144) seem to be outcomes of a utopian speculation. There are many writers and pro-European theorists which based their approaches on the so-called utopian method (R. Ruyer), i.e. to present a fictional state of affairs as actually achieved in order to evaluate and to infer the ultimate derivations and consequences. It means to take a gratuitous assumption as granted and a base for further higher fancies. *The Christian Republic* of P. Dubois or *Congregatio Concordiae* of G. Podiebrad, the *eternal peace* project of Kant are fictions and so are many other proposals in council boards, congregations, unions and associations which aimed to achieve the European unity.

Integrality is another dimension of the pro-European ideology: N. Berdiaev considered it as the main mark of the Utopia. "Utopia is meant to transcend what is crumbling down and to achieve the integrality" (Berdiaev, 1994, 217). This was also the premise for any European project: communitarianism was always the great continental dream. The first step to such a unity was the six founder states community. Then it has come to an agreement that building the Community is the result of the integration process. In the very time the Community was transformed into a Union they started to speak more and more about unification. Today authors oscillate between the two terms, trying to lay down the former or the latter.

In A. Plesu's view, a necessary distinction *integration vs. unification* is needed. Integration emphasizes the common background of the participants whereas unification supposes the idea of a dramatic separation. Whereas integration suggests an integer, unification supposes duality. The Romanian philosopher is pathetically pleading for "integration". "If Europe had a meaning, this meaning is just its organic integrity, its harmonic diversity of the geographical and spiritual frame (Plesu, 2003). Using the term "integration", the author means that Europe must not be "unified" but "deeply equalized, integrated in the natural parameters".

Andrei Marga (*The Philosophy of European Unification*) is pleading for the "rival" term (i.e. unification). Prof. Marga's standpoint is: *integration* is "a moderate option" whereas *unification* is "the radical outlook" and this latter meaning should be used from now on in approaching European issues. For "integration" offers a better cover to what happened in Western Europe after the Roma Treaty (1957), i.e. a coupling of economies and institutions, from the juridical ones - through educational ones - to the cultural ones; so the European Community works as a whole in as many standpoints as possible (Marga, 1995, 14). Concurrently with *Maastricht Treaty* the final aim of the whole project becomes a more extended and homogenous Europe than it was hoped before; so that the term "unification" was proper to carry on the European construction.

The U.E. constitutive Treaty is a straight outcome of the "thaw" the end of cold war has brought. The achievement of European unity was promoted covering an area which was forbidden for the East half of the continent; it arrived to the crucial moment in the strange 1989, and many ones considered that year the actual end of the XX-th century as well. The profound changes in that moment transformed solidly the image and the order of the world. The greater surprise was Soviet Union's permissive attitude: the unexpected behavior of the totalitarian colossus of the XX-th century made possible a peaceful transition to a period of

basic changes in the world order. This behavior was so astonishing as a such giving up to a first rank position among the powers of the world has no precedent in modern history (Levesque, 1997). The end of cold war became a real chance for the European unity for the first time in the history of the continent. Germany reunifying- natural in that frame - was the first major step made by the continental extension with high effort and price. 14 years later great discrepancies between the two parts of Germany are still present and various deficiencies are not ceasing yet to trouble the social life and mentalities (especially for the Eastern Germany). Such an evolution or progress was somehow natural and based on the cultural and national identity of both parts of the most powerful European state. Carrying on the European project in the ex-socialist countries of Europe is much more problematic and supposes huge efforts and costs the community states proved to be more or less willing to pay (e.g.: the so-called many-sided developed socialism which was experimented in Romania). The ghost communist society was promoted for 50 years in the frame of the social imaginary by the left-side totalitarianism ideologies; it was then substituted by a more attractive outlook to extend the European Community model to a continental area. The totalitarian integrationism - a doctrine of soviet origin - was overcome by its rival during the cold war: the liberal integration doctrine - based on the triumphant ideology of the advanced capitalism. However, many one advocate the idea the European Union cannot afford such ambitions. So, T. Judt (Judt, 2000, 131-240) - from an extravagant position - expressed doubts concerning the necessary nature of E.U. and termed the European unification as "a great illusion" of our present times. In his opinion, unifying project and the optimistic view it is generating, is not to be separated of the economical developing rate that was achieved by the Western states in the post-war age.

So, the success of the United Europe was kept by the economic progress which was assigned to the economic viability of an extended federation - by accepting new members - is decreasing by the slowing down of the economic development rate. In the course, historical evolutions refuted many authors skepticism: i.e. they did not believe in Union extending process for the post-totalitarian states. More over, we would like to believe in the E.U. success in a permanently avoiding of the war spectre as it had succeeded so far. The indisputable success of the integration process did not diminish yet debates and disputations concerning the future of the European project. There is not yet certainty on what could be happened further on: we do not know what kind of Europe would be worked out, neither what kind of unification would be (Kolakowski, 2003, 19).

Another feature of the European project was and still is the *insularity*: a traditional space background of utopian imaginary - meanwhile abandoned. Europe intends to be a peculiar space, untouched by alternative values, attitudes or ideologies so that European process is an extending one and supposes to give up the old habits and to impose the Brussels norms (e.g., from eggs size to education cycles term). Implementing the European model in new territories is neither integration (as A. Plesu would like), nor unification (as A. Marga would tried to persuade), but a "East-disjunction" process (P. Campeanu). Europe is no more conceived as a besieged fortress and its "autist" attitude - as it comes from the European members of European committees acts - could be seen as an attempt to achieve a double wish: defence and closing. It is interesting to estimate the effective function of the European fortress one to set up an autarchy where the inner ones are trying to build up a community with its own economy, ethics, language and even time. It was also an utopian wish

elsewhere to set up a new reality, to identify the happiness with a finite accessible and untouchable space.

Even the projects – already implemented and and which aim to well-outlined targets – preserve a halo to remind old nostalgia. Higher education reform has as final end the setting up a space named *The Europe of Knowledge* and it was stated in numerous documents and declaratioins proving a bombastic oratory that reminds old Eastern propaganda formulas. Let us take for instance some ones from *Bologna Declaration*: “astonishing achievements”, “unreplaceble factor”, “undispensable component”, “basic and capital importanmce”. It is obvious the main aim of the Union is to make Europe to be “the most competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy all over the world, able for an economic susteined growth, ready to supply better working places and a greater social cohesion”: this is a noble desideratum to deserve our agreement. It is – however – to notice the project has too high exigences and there are not instruments to evaluate the chances to achieve Bologna’s process desiderata till 2010: i.e. setting up the *European Higher Education Space* able to ensure “the most competitive and dynamic” European economy.

Another target in Bologna’s process is to create an European citizen (“consolidation and enrichment of the European citizen status”) which – by new educational system would be able to face new millenium challenges. Beyond utopian assertion, easy to be noticed in most declarations concerning the European process implementation, it is unfortunate that the higher education reform - out of propaganda – is not aiming to impose the culture as a pivot of the European unity creation. The European space of higher education has the aim to create more competent working-citizens, able to contribute to the economic efficiency increasing and not to a cultural space. Seeting up an European Community, starting from a cultural unity, is still illusory as well and perplexes many intellectuals in West and especially in East. Merchands’ Europe will not replace too soon the Europe of intellectuals’ Europe. Even after the universities leadership taking up, unification will rather remain an economical and institutional homogenizing.

On the other hand, to identify the historical category that corresponds to European space changes, means not to leave out the striking similitude between the European constructuion and what K. Popper called “utopian engineering” (Popper, 1993, 187). In Popper’s view, the concept of “social engineering” has a central place, as opposed to historism and as an alternative to *utopian engineering*. As a matter of actually, historism and social engineering interpenetrate in the case of many social and political philosophers which created utopian systems. So is – in Popper’s view – the case of Plato’s social philosophy. Plato’s program was a very dangerous approach, i.e. it supposed to have a final political end – the *Ideal State* - before any practical undertaking. The contemporary attempt to build up a new Europe makes use of a project of a community as a whole and needs a centralised gouvnerment of a minority (the main decisions took place in Brussels offices, the new candidates have to obey the criteria). There are already objections to such a strategy and to E.U. as a whole. There is also a certain irritation to the Brussel bureaucracy norms which are looked upon overloading and humiliating. These rules converge to an ideal world where all is identical, every historical diversity is discarded and anyone is forced to live in the same life standards (Kolakowski, 2003,19-27).

Nes shortcomings emerge from this undertaking pretentions to plan rationally a super-State system, despite it has no factual knowledge for such a

large social engineering. The rational aspect of the next era will be estimated depending on how further away the European unification, integration and political reconstruction will attain. One of main principle problems of the European construction is to manage and rule a such a large process without passing over the initial project. The problem is whether new invited countries to adhere would become equal to the founding states or would have only inferior status. There is not yet an official answer to this question and speculations are not in the position to clear up the state of affairs. Any case, the candidates seem ready to accept even the latter situation in order to be accepted into the new security structures and instruments; Europe, in its turn, is ready to accept this challenge and to assume such a huge responsibility in decisions as a price of reconsidering its place in the world affairs. The European construction could pass over the utopian engineering stage and become a feasible project; there is however one condition: to adopt *the gradualism* (in Popper's view) after new members coming and as manner to approach new problems which will stand in its way.

FROM UTOPIA TO REALITY

The decision to extend E.U. was certainly a political one and represents a historical chance for Europe to become more powerful, larger and more stable. So, a new development model has been started and it has been based not on one country potential, but on an entire very large geographical region. Europe passed from a heavily process to a heavily geographical one, imposed by contemporary realities. The geographical and geopolitical position of the invited countries had the greatest importance and this strategy-change was a chance for Romania too. Inclusion of new states will allow Romania to control Black Sea – with Bosphorus and the Dardanelles straits, Baltic Sea, so it will get the main commercial routes of the region and will extend its influence area. A first short-term advantage will be to extend the sale market, raw materials import and high technology goods export. The most important advantage will come on the long and will depend on the speed the Union will be able to eliminate the economical discrepancies among members and to set up institutions reform. It is not an easy task: it is the major challenge for E.U. to acquire supremacy as world power.

As it has been proved, the extending is almost a mechanical one and supposes compatibility of the legislation and macro-economical indicators (inflation rate, interest rate, budget deficit, manpower occupation rate...) with the community space tendencies. It means also to share the same values and principles is social policies, public institutions and in the relationship between them and the civil society. To be accepted in the Union means also to give up some traditional living together forms, to re-invent an identity, discarding a part of the own identity of Eastern inhabitants and "to learn" the European identity. The Western Europe does not take into account seriously the existence experience of the Eastern Europe after the "iron curtain" crash. This led to an artificial – but actual – split in mentalities and thought. Unification had to take into account the fact that there has been not a single Europe (from a spiritual standpoint), but two or three; there are more irreducible European identity types (e.g. the totalitarian experience was not homogenous in the ex-socialist countries. Carrying on unification needs pressing, prompt measures. So far, the main integration aims were successfully achieved (avoidance of bloody conflicts and ensuring a peaceful period, economy curbing by Common Market creation,

inclusion of Germany in the new post-war European order). For the future, a change in the community policies is needed: Europe has to avoid the danger to perceive political unification as “absorption”.

J. Habermas examined the last evolutions: so far, Europe was an economic market, now is tending to be a “social model” (Habermas, 2002, 58-62). The new European political project has a strong core “the European living standard” and aims to annual the discrepancy between the advanced economical integration and the hesitating steps of political integration. According to Habermas, the main direction for community policies should focus on: European civil society consolidation, public policies orientation to the European ensemble, setting up a cultural policy (Habermas, 2002, 60). To cover a deficit of democracy of the European actions a firm European policy is needed; it has to be based on the democratic process and the complex past experience. “The matchless riches of the cultural legacy – Habermas says – allows Europe to get the ability to adopt Janus as a face of its modernism. The egalitarian and individualistic universality – the feature of the common conception about ourselves – is not the smallest achievement of the European modernism” (Habermas, 2002, 62).

European construction is going to become emancipated from the Utopia spirit; as for the last extension candidates, integration seemed strongly to be something belonging to dreaming and unreal. For Romania, Europe could mean the end of the agony it has lived a half of a century, the hope to resume the natural course of the history. “Europe” is a word the deepest hopes and aspirations of Romanian people are connected to, is a faith in a better life, is the great dream but the great challenge as well.

Romania ardently desired to adhere to E.U. but hardly is agreeing to reform its behaviour; that is why Romania seems to be a space of contrasts, front facade reforms, political clientage, a quasi-generalized corruption. Despite these shortcomings, there are some progresses too: macro-stability, some monopoly public ownerships became private property, economic growth, harmonization between Romanian legislation and the European community one, progresses in adhering negotiations and so on. In spite of the slow rhythm of reforms and the fact Romania is “out the pocket” (Judt, 2002, 33-70), in spite of the great gaps by comparison with the neighbours – already accepted in the Union – in spite being the most precarious candidate, the community countries helped and encouraged constantly Romanian efforts to conform to adhering conditions. In 2007 Romania has been invited to adhere without a solid economic, civic or moral grounding. It was an encouragement to participate to a project that *is belonging to Europe*; Romania would not afford to fail in.

LISBON AND THE SKEPTICISM CHALLENGE

After the last two waves of extending (in 2004 and 2007) the Union seems to lose the optimism concerning its ability to integrate the whole Europe. Turkey became a candidate in 1999 but it had to wait for acceptance for more than 11 years. While the “old” Europe seems to feel regret regarding the recent extendings, even the “new” Europe does not seem to agree with new members’ admission. European states got over the crisis generated by the Constitutional Treaty ratification; very soon they had to face the successive waves of the global crisis as well. The latest recent crises troubled both markets and theoretical base of the integration philosophy. The economic crises made to come into power political forces which were less favourable to integration. This fact is

astonishing: as long as Euro-skepticism is increasing for vast masses of the people, Euro-optimism incites the elites (Parsons, 2003, 321).

The Union tried to face all these threatenings by Lisbon Treaty. Lisbon underwent the most terrible disaster in Europe's history (the 1-st of November 1755 earthquake and tsunami); now Lisbon has the chance to stay in history as a place where it had been signed the Treaty to legitimate the historical achievement of the Europe project. The Treaty went into effect in the 1-st of December 2009: it modifies the main treaties of the Union, however without replacing them. Treaty declaration gives the frame and instruments – mainly the procedural ones – able for a proper answer to next challenges and citizens expectations. The Articles of the Document reveal the fear that the actual challenges could be the very disillusionments of the citizens of the most commercial power of the world. In 5 of 8 referendums – the European states citizens were consulted on various issues (2000-2006) – the answer was “no” (Sorensen, 2009).

The explicit challenges – as they were stated in the Treaty - are climatic changes, world recession, global transborder criminality. The Union feels the necessity to improve its performances and its working manners in order to counteract these shortcomings. So, the Treaty's final end is to build up a *more democratic, efficient and transparent Europe*. The main efforts of the officialdom from Brussels is focussing on taking action to stop the actual threatening propagation: skepticism (so far, only 37 members of the European Parliament are Euro-skeptical, but their number is increasing). Skepticism – as thought tradition - has a long history that connects pyrhonism to post-modernism: there are some authors to consider the *doubt* as the single original western contribution (Sardar, 2007). Should skepticism really change the historical evolution of the most ambitious project European unification? It has, however, a millenary tradition and was taken again succesively...

Euro-skepticism means an opinion and ideology trend which advances the doubt and distrust in the European integration policies, intitutions and principles. The distrust is very powerful in Northern Europe. Iceland never expressed its intention to become a member (its inhabitants are some of the happiest citizens all over the world), Norway was outside, Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden declined to participate to Euro- currency zone. Only 3% of the citizens of these mentioned countries believe in integration benefits. Czechia and Poland are Euro-skeptical leaders of the recent accepted countries. The group of the Euro-skepticals cannot be ignored any more: 32% of the total European citizens – where 14% are incorrigible (in the whole Union, the distrust varies from 46% - Great Britain to 10% - Luxemburg) (WeBels, 2007).

Is this situation really alarming ? The answer could be *yes*, as some of the Euro-skeptical veterans. The well-known *Financial Times's* journalist Gideon Rachman already have written: *Arguably, all my darkest suspicions about the European project are about to be vindicated. So it is an odd time to renounce euroscepticism*. What is the nature of the danger ? In G. Rachman's view there is a risk of disintegration and what we could regret is the lost of the values the E.U. promoted: the right to live anywhere in Europe, the unlimited undertaking initiative, the free circulation in the community space. What are the risks ? In Rachman's view: we shall be taken again under Big Brother's wing.

A notable investigation of the distrust cause in European unification shows how this trend becomes an important feature of all European political spectrum: this distrust has already succeeded in more attempts to re-theorize

the integration process. In this case, the isolated elites have no decisive role. Political competition, public opinion and mass-media are now the basic ingredients of integration; there are not so only for the opinions forming but also in decisions and policies substantiation (Hooghe & Marks, 2007). According these authors, the main Euroskepticism source is its wish for preserving natural values. Another authors consider mass-media institutions to get the main role in distrusting Europe (Vreese, 2007).

In the context of the decline of integration promotion there are more and more signals of the skepticism increasing. Euro-skepticism is a many-sided phenomenon of attitudes which involves many social and political levels: authorities, political regime and community. Recent studies proved that European identity works as strong buffer against Euro-skepticism (WeBels, 2007). Unaccidentally the Lisbon treaty offers the chance of a deeper implication of citizens and Parliaments in the decisions at the community level and also offers the promise for increasing protection of national interests.

No matter how many stumblings, inside and outside resisting forces will have to defeat, Europe – after Lisbon – will have to be a homogenous community, without conflicts among its components; so it will be world-wide competitive and genuine force to play an important role in the world order. In spite of many objections, resistances and obstacles, This *Europe* is going to be achieved: Europe is not living any more in its own Utopia sunset and dawn cannot linger.

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Submitted:
December 7, 2010

Revised:
March 17, 2011

Accepted:
May 11, 2011

Published online:
May 12, 2011