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5 Eichenberg/ Dalton 1997.

6 Lipset, S.M./ Rokkan, S. (Eds.): *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives.* New York: The Free Pr. 1967, pp. 23-81.

7 Conway, M.: *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918-1945.* London, New York: Routledge 1997; Papini, R.: *The Christian Democrat International.* Transl. by R. Royal. Lanham/MD: Rowman & Littlefield 1997, pp. 68-90.

8 Lijphart, A.: Religious vs. linguistic vs. class voting: The «crucial experiment» of comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland. In: *American Political Science Review* 73 (1979), pp. 43-72.

The present success of European integration has provoked scholars to develop political and economic theories to explain it.¹ Theories of globalisation, international bargaining and institutional autonomy elucidate political decisions taken by the European partners, but do not explain how religious factors influenced the decision makers and also the public support of national implementation of supranational actions. For example, when scholars attempt to account for public attitudes in the EU, they usually resort to economic theories.² Indeed, as two leading scholars recently concluded, »the dominant theme of the literature is now the primacy of economic and utilitarian concerns«.³

I do not doubt the importance of economic influences, but think that cultural and religious factors may also contribute to public attitudes toward the European project.⁴ In fact, despite the primary focus on economics, many studies appeal to cultural forces using only »country« variables. Such measures are sometimes treated as simple statistical controls, without theoretical rationale, and are often labelled »national traditions«, representing the unique historical experience of each country – or some part of that experience, such as »foreign policy tradition«.⁵

Religion is also an important element in the equation of European identity shaping modern European politics in crucial ways. Official links between state and church in many European countries infuse political institutions with religious symbols and open governmental policy-making to clerical influence. Furthermore, modern European party systems still bear the marks of religious debates rooted in the Reformation and the French Revolution.⁶ Thus, confessional parties – many of which still include the word »Christian« in their names and pledge to pursue policies consistent with religious principles – square off against parties of both the left and the right wing that remain militantly secular.⁷ Finally, at the individual level, religious affiliation is still a powerful predictor of voters preference in Europe.⁸

Despite the importance of religion for politics in Europe, few scholars have considered religious variables in explaining elite and public support for integration. The classic theories of integration stressed the vital role that cross-national religious ties play in facilitating the process. Karl Deutsch, for example, noted that common Protestant affiliations eased the national unification, first that one of Great Britain and later of Britains former American colonies.⁹ Although Deutsch did not apply this insight to contemporary developments, other scholars have noted that European integration in the 1950s was largely a Christian Democratic project,¹⁰ led by devout Catholics such as Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman and Alcide de Gasperi. Indeed, post-war Christian Democratic leaders, with strong backing from their parties, the Vatican and national Catholic hierarchies, explicitly tied their vision of a united Europe – a »new Christendom« as Jacques Maritain put it – to Christian forgiveness and love of enemies.

One of the most pressing issues within international debate today is without doubt the question of national identities and the persistence of nationalism, in relation to cultural and religious particularities of different parts of Europe. This is of special importance to Europeans given the history of civil wars and wars between nation states on the European continent.

The simple attempt in understanding the overall process within the region and the complexity of inter-religious dialogue should not reveal us fundamental changed solutions for the last decade. The end of the Cold War and the disappearing of the Iron Block did not produce religious reverberations at a societal level, with notable exceptions, and in all these cases have been noted strange attempts within the ecumenical field. The notable political movement and the international effect at European level affected also the dialogue between churches at a national and an international level. Even there is a declared split between state and church, the churches in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe focused in the second instance on the national interest regarding the attitude towards European and regional integration.

Many see the European Union as an attempt to keep unrest between nation states in check. One objective of European founders has indeed been to build and maintain trust and stability with the aid of fair and common institutions, so that Europe cannot once again become the violent battleground that it happened to be twice in the 20th century. In sum there is no doubt that the dispute about the European Union, its shape, future and preconditions, offers instructive



9 Deutsch, K.W./ Burrell, S.A./ Kann, R.A./ Lee, Jr.M./ Lichterman, M./ Loewenheim, F.L./ Van Wageningen, R.W.: Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience. Westport/Conn.: Greenwood Pr. 1957, pp. 12-150.

10 Fogerty, M.: Christian Democracy in Western Europe, 1820-1953. South Bend/Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Pr. 1957, p. 78.

11 Hulbert, Alastair: A Soul for Europe: Ethics and Spirituality. In: Carrefours Newsletter, Forward Studies Unit – European Commission. No. 8 (November 1998), p.25.

12 Zemni, Sami: Is There a Place for Islam in Europe? Paper presented at International Management programme of Hogeschool Gent. In: C.I.E.-Newsletter. Vol. 1, no. 1 (Febr. 1999), pp. 28-56.

13 Hulbert 1998, p. 25.

contributions to a broad range of normative discussions about the future of nation states and even more about the legitimacy of belonging to a common space.

The President of the *European Commission*, Mr. Romani Prodi, is on a quest for Europe's »soul«. In an eloquent speech to the *European Parliament* in 1999, he insisted that the further development of Union institutions must gradually build up »a shared feeling of belonging to Europe«. The developments he has in mind include strengthening the *European Parliament*, regulating the right of *Member State Veto* in exceptional cases, and changes in the Commissions power.

In December 1997 the *European Parliament* adopted a budget that includes an explicit reference to *A Soul for Europe*. This comes under the grants for projects organized by associations and federations of European interest and bears the following commentary:

This credit is intended to support activities in the framework of reflection at the European level on the ethical and spiritual sources of European construction.

The program *A Soul for Europe* has the aim of bringing together Humanist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other traditions to reflect about the ethical and spiritual implications of European integration. The objective of this financial support is thus summed up:

We are at a crossroads of European history where the debate about meaning has become a major consideration. The building of Europe is not just an economic and political exercise but also has a spiritual and ethical dimension. The objective of this initiative is to encourage those who are aware of this to bring their specific contribution to the unification of Europe.¹¹

Even if the decision of building the European Union with its institutions was a major political one, behind all this ground conditions and the intercultural and interreligious elements had an important impact as well. The statistics, figures showing economic, geographical development and circumstances, do not explain at all, how the people react when facing common fears and concerns about their future. In the same vein, the religious and cultural impact is one of the most important in a society.

In the framework of inter-religious diversity, there is an increasing concern today about the need to develop a European Muslim identity. There is a constant trend among young Muslims towards an Islamic affirmation of their identity and a profound revival of its spirituality and practice. This phenomenon is not exclusively the expression of an opposition to the Western European Muslims. They must face their new reality with a constructive and determined state of mind in order to provide themselves with both a clear direction and a set of plain Islamic rulings allowing them to promote a balanced Islamic identity in the West,¹² confident and part of the future of these societies. The questions of identity, values and religion posed by Muslims are by no means limited in their relevance to Islam. Cooperation with other faiths and with secular humanism in this field is fruitful for the development of a broad front for European self-awareness. Moreover, the growth of a self-confident European Islamic identity may help serve as a bridge between Europe and the Arab world.

Furthermore, the Christian-Jewish dialogue in Europe since the Second World War has arguably been sterile and unsuccessful. Founded in many cases on guilt and silence, it has shown itself to be more concerned with form than with substance. Some aspects have been fundamentally dishonest. Mark Ellis, an American Jewish theologian, has called it »not an ecumenical dialogue, but an ecumenical deal: you (Christians) say nothing about the state of Israel and we (Jews) will say nothing about the Holocaust«. ¹³ Although in its first years *A Soul for Europe: Ethics and Spirituality* has had little impact in this field, since it offers a scope for a fresh start in Christian-Jewish dialogue: first, by supplying a new, socially relevant agenda related to what Jews (sometimes and with reason called »the first Europeans«) and Christians see as the meaning of Europe and the purpose of the European Union today, and secondly, by extending the dialogue to include Muslims, Humanists and others; thirdly, it may also serve to develop the trust which is necessary for that other urgent dialogue, so vital to the EU's stalled Foreign and Security Policy, about Europe's contribution to peace in the Middle East?

A short display on religious Western European development may illustrate that many elements have their origin in the evolution of Eastern Europe. The famous Roman law, known as fundament of the present European law, has not remained and perfected in its birthplace, but in By-



14 Staniloae, Rev. Dumitru: Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe [Romanian language]. Orthodox Church Doctrine. Bucharest 1978, pp. 78-123.

15 Bria, Rev. Ion: Ortodoxia în Europa. Locul spiritualității române, [Romanian language]. Orthodox Church in Europe. The Place of Romanian Spirituality. Iași 1995, p. 45.

16 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Decree on Ecumenism. Unitatis Redintegratio, November 21, 1965; Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint of the Holy Father John Paul II on Commitment to Ecumenism, May 25, 1995.

17 Popescu, Rev. Dumitru Gh.: Integrarea europeană în lumina teologiei ortodoxe [Romanian language]. European Integration from Orthodox Theology Point of View. In: Almanah Bisericesc [Romanian language]. Church Paper 1996, pp. 45-67.

18 Homeyer, Joseph: Bishop of Hildesheim, president of COMECE. Interv. by Elisabeta Constantin and Rev. Aurel Nae în Ortodoxia și integrarea europeană [Romanian language]. Orthodox Church and European Integration. In: Vestitorul Ortodoxiei [Romanian language]. Orthodox Church News. No. 23 (February 2000), p. 14.

19 Fryer, Jonathan: Romania Struggles to Escape Past. August 11, 2001, BBC News. In: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/from_our_own_correspondent/newsid_1484000/1484943.stm.

20 Spence, Jaqueline M.: The European Union: A View from the Top. Top Decision Makers and the European Union. Report prepared for EOS Gallup Europe 1998. In: www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb-top/en/top.pdf.

zantium of Justinian through the elaboration of the *Corpus Juris Civilis* in a Christian manner. Without the Orthodox Church, the history of Christianity would not be complete. The Orthodox Church made a real vocation in maintaining the apostolic tradition from the beginning of the Christendom. Eastern Christianity has always protected the polyphonic system in which every local Church maintains its ethnic and cultural identity, being autonomous and autocephalous, proving in this way that every Church is a prototype in the middle of the universal communion.¹⁴

Attaining a historical retrospective, we may stress first that the primary unity of Christian belief was achieved in Rome and Constantinople. The unity of faith is best expressed in the participation of bishops at the ecumenical Synods from the entire Roman Empire. In addition, Saint John Cassian, born in Dobrudja (at present Romanian territory) and in the service of seven popes in Rome, was of great importance for both parts of Europe, for he established the present calculation of the Christian era.¹⁵ The complements of both parts of Europe prove to be important for the entire continent because all Christian Churches have something to offer each other. A papal encyclical asserts:

[F]rom their very origins, Churches of the East have had a treasury from which the Church of the West has amply drawn for its liturgy, spiritual tradition and jurisprudence.¹⁶

The Orthodox spirituality brings in its inner foundation not only common European values but also the mark of its own particular history.¹⁷

Even if there are at present not official declarations showing the approach to the religious dimension in the European Union, the Roman-Catholic Church considers in the construction of European institutions an important element: the symbol of the Saint Virgin as the emblem on the European Union flag (even if the number of states in the European Union are fifteen, the number of stars remains twelve).¹⁸ The Saint Virgin plays an important role in the Roman-Catholic theology, represented as the virgin having a diadem with 12 stars. (Apocalypse 12, 1) It is interesting to see how some Catholic bishops vividly assert that a religious symbol as being part of their theological perception onto the society is also a starting point in creating the European communities. This proves nevertheless the Catholic commitment for the European Union but also a stronger possible responsibility that the Roman Catholic Church should play in its enlargement and stability.

Differences between regions, separated by history and principles, will simply remain due to our human nature, but if we want to understand them, we should not judge them with our own values. To show the latest example of this kind of misperception and misunderstanding: on August 2001 Jonathan Fryer, a correspondent of *BBC News*, in an editorial entitled *Romania struggles to escape past* and presented on the BBC web page,¹⁹ pictured his impressions made on a northern Romania trip in the monastery region. As maybe is known, all these monasteries were painted in the 15th-16th century with biblical scenes and are today under UNESCO patronage. What did this journalist see during his visit of this part of Europe? Despite the economic divergences and critical attitude of his comment, he insisted, referring to religious and cultural differences within his own value systems, that he simply condemned all painted scenes of these monasteries comparing them to cartoon-like fresco illustrations of biblical stories. Religious figures compared with animated cartoon, transformed thereby into spiritual worthlessness and childishness.

Moreover, an opinion poll on how Western Europeans see the future risks for their countries in the next ten years, emphasizes above all the possibility of rising religious fundamentalism and extremism, followed by the possible development of other countries than China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the USA into nuclear powers, the outbreak of extreme nationalist movements outside the borders of the EU, heavy immigration from non-European Union countries, an increase of ethnic and/or territorial conflicts inside the European countries and the remaining military might of Russia. The possible progression of religious fundamentalism is rated as the greatest threat in five countries (Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Denmark) and in all other countries being ranked at least within the top four concerns. In my opinion, this survey proves explicitly the need for a European cultural and religious identification as being stronger than ever before.²⁰

To create an accord among the members of the European Union with regard to major important issues is to realize that the European Union is not only an economic union but also has a common cultural and religious identity in which problems have to be solved jointly.



In conclusion, I want to emphasize the necessity of dialogue between scholars and politicians also on a cultural and religious level. A direct application of the EU's cultural policies on human rights could be a fine opportunity to increase trust and firmness in this kind of dialogue. This kind of support would lead to a better comprehension of other nations and EU-candidates, with their own experience and value systems.



Mag. Lucian Nicolae Leustean studied theology, Law and Policy/Economicx in Bucharest, Prague and Thessaloniki. Currently he is *Assistant Researcher* at the *Institute for Political Sciences of Defence and Military History* as well as a *Civilian Expert* at the *Division for Security and Defence Policies, the Department of Euro-Atlantic Integration and Defence Policy, the Romanian Ministry of National Defence*. He is also a *Research Student* at the Univ. of Fribourg.
Phd-project: *International Security and Human Rights. The Kosovo Case*.
Contact: lucianleus@yahoo.com