

In a September **2017** speech in **Athens**, **French president Emmanuel Macron** warned that ‘sovereignty, democracy and trust are in danger’ and called for greater a more integrated Eurozone based on solidarity. **Solidarity is needed to solve the crisis in Europe, but what does this entail?**

Some think of solidarity in instrumental terms. It is needed, hence it should be established. If all stood for one, all would be better off. The borrowing costs of debt-ridden countries decrease when the European Central Bank declares its liability. The crisis makes the need for solidarity evident. But if this is so, why hasn’t the crisis been solved?

Others conceive of solidarity as an organic or ethical category; that is, as a question of civic virtues, of collective identity and pre-existing values. A European identity has usually been held to be in short supply in Europe but this has not prevented the EU from growing in size and competence over time. Solidarity is neither an ethical nor an administrative category. What is it then, and why has the European integration process brought it to the fore?

The problem of dominance

The financial crisis of 2008 and the debt crisis that followed revealed major flaws in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The crisis made it evident that the EMU has uneven distributive effects. The financial crisis hit the EU far more profoundly than for instance the U.S., where it originated. **The Eurozone is not an optimal currency area** partly because of the large differences between the economies, and partly because there are no efficient mechanisms to provide economic transfers from economies that fare well to those that fare less well – which essentially gives way to procyclical fiscal policies. While the Union holds exclusive competencies in monetary policy, the member states are sovereign in fiscal and economic policy. Counter-cyclical (**Keynesian**) fiscal policies are however constrained because of the rules of the **Stability and Growth Pact**, and the constitutionalisation of market integration.

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Member states responded to the crisis by creating rescue funds and stability mechanisms, the Fiscal Compact in particular, outside of the Lisbon treaty. The *conditionality* requirement of these arrangements entails that crisis-ridden countries have to trade aid packages for domestic reforms (related for example to public debt levels or balanced budgets). Heads of government who lack a European mandate in these matters have agreed to a series of financial, economic, social, and wage policies that affect the well-being of many European citizens.

The crisis-ridden member states have little space for overspending in order to recover from recession. Additionally, because they have adopted the euro, they cannot devalue. Consequently, the instruments for national fiscal policy are largely abolished in crisis-ridden countries, and the debtors are essentially subject to the rule of members of the creditor club. Hence, there is *dominance*, viz., subjection to arbitrary forms of rule. There are thus not only claims to corrective justice, to compensation and redress, but also to a rightful, non-dominating order. Dominance is in breach of the idea of equal citizenship. **Arbitrary rule is wrong, but is the Eurozone crisis arrangements also unjust in the sense that it is the responsibility of others? If so, who is to blame for what?**

Structural injustice

First, **what kind of obligations do the ‘winners’ have towards the ‘losers’ in the Eurozone?** One could argue that since Germany – Europe’s biggest country and largest and export driven economy – has profited from the single market and therefore have specific obligations. Germany has also profited from the crisis itself, due to lower borrowing costs. However, Germany was not the sole instigator of the EMU in the first place. Moreover, the problems of the Eurozone were not common knowledge, the crisis struck in many countries due to domestic policies, banking failures add fiscal imprudence, and the crisis can be seen as an unintended consequence of the financial crisis in the U.S. Additionally, **the EMU is a collective undertaking of which all have profited.** In this sense, everybody who has benefited from the unjust regime have obligations and duties towards the wronged. As a

collective, these states are responsible. They established the consequential EMU, but **a monetary union without a political union is instable and undemocratic**. Some decision-makers, if not all, acknowledged EMU's deficiency but calculated that it would spill over into a political union with a treasury, as if there is the cunning of reason in history.

When persons are systematically treated differently due to the way institutions operate, when the consequences are severe and moral responsibility is significant, there is a case for structural injustice and hence for political action

The identification of injustice, of benefiting from injustice, including wrongs committed by others, involves a duty to act and to compensate for wrongdoing.

However, what we are dealing with in the Eurozone is not merely episodic or transactional injustices, which could easily be mended, as the perpetrators and beneficiaries would then be traceable. Rather, what we are faced with is an instance of *structural injustice*, that is injustices that harm some, and where no one in particular is liable to pay damages. When persons are systematically treated differently due to the way institutions operate, when the consequences are severe and moral responsibility is significant, there is a case for structural injustice and hence for political action.

Any group of individuals whose acts regularly affect one another's rights and who do not currently have a proper set of legal and political institutions are obliged to create them. **All European states now has a duty to come together to fix this broken system.** Rather than demanding compensation from a specific actor, solidarity demands that we join in collective action for justice.

Building the republic

Solidarity is the building block of every democratic community. It expresses a norm of equal membership. Solidarity in one reading is a question of the will of and the onus of compatriots to pay for each other's misfortune, a will which depends on a common vision – a conception of the common good. However, there is a difference between feeling responsible

and being responsible.

The Eurozone has brought the members into a community of fate, not merely in the sense that the principle of ‘one for all and all for one’ applies, but a community in which some are profiting and some are suffering from the same economic regime. European solidarity is not beyond the demand of duty. The Eurozone generates not merely imperfect duties of charity, but duties of justice, where there are corresponding rights. Abstract rights should be specified, operationalized, legally codified and institutionalized so that they become effective in real life.

A true political Union would allow for macroeconomic adjustment, redistribution and hence forms of socio-economic justice, and put an end to forms of dominance caused by a lopsided political system

Solidarity is barely an ethical category, resting on natural duties and pre-existing civic virtues. It is made possible by legal rights and is politically created. Solidarity is not discovered or given, it is created. It is a political category revolving on redeeming the unredeemed moral claim of equal citizenship. It refers to righting wrongs and harms through collective action. Acts based on solidarity are, then, not presupposing primordial values, but a political context of struggles for the democratic republic, one that includes all subjected parties in a rightful order.

Solidarity cannot be administratively enforced, as it springs from commitments to care for affected parties; from the common interests that can be articulated; from the virtues of co-operation and relief that can be mobilised. In solidarity discourses, actors are called upon to help others in need through the establishment of a better political regime, a more just economic system or a policy that is in the common interest. By helping the ones in need now, you can also be expected to be helped out yourself at a later point in time. There is a dimension of reciprocity involved in the sense that actors who succeed in establishing a more robust political and economic regime will themselves profit from it in the long run.

Solidarity sustains the value of the victims and repudiates injustice. It invites a common struggle against injustice – to end the misery, hardship and disparity created by committed wrongs, dire conditions or natural catastrophes. It involves a specific moral motive of ensuring social cohesion and mutual recognition. In this context, the actor understands her action as help, which she believes she is obligated to provide.

A project under construction

European integration is the French Revolution of our time. Just as the French Revolution set the agenda for modern political thought by bringing human rights and popular sovereignty onto the historical stage, so now European integration trans-nationalises sovereignty and reorganizes the legitimacy basis of political institutions. **The European Union has domesticated international relations in Europe and has protected the individual from the abuse of power and dominance by external forces or their own state.** The EU has protected against discrimination based on nationality, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability or age. By raising elements of constitutional democracy to the European level, the EU has contributed to the abolition of arbitrary rule. **A Europe united on the principles of equality, freedom and solidarity are built into the integration project itself.** Of these three famous principles of the French revolution, fraternity or *solidarity* (as we would say today) is in short supply. Its demands are clear: end the dominance relations of the crisis-arrangements and the structural injustices of the Eurozone arrangement.

The debate on the future of Europe should be a rallying cry for redeeming the promise of fraternity, which under conditions of economic globalisation can be realized only by politically catching up with it at the supranational level

The point is thus not merely deeper fiscal integration, but rather political integration based on a new constitutional arrangement, which do away with the temporary crisis-arrangements, democratic deficits as well as the problem of over-

constitutionalisation, which is favouring market-making over market-correcting measures. A true political framework would abolish today's problem of inadequate solidarity and risk-sharing, stemming from the perceived danger of encouraging budgetary indiscipline in fiscally unsound countries as well as allowing for freeloading on the back of taxpayers' money in fiscally sound countries. **Deeper fiscal integration with an empowered European Parliament, a Eurozone budget, a treasury and a finance minister would constitute a political structure that has authority to rule in the name of all.** A true political Union would allow for macroeconomic adjustment, redistribution and hence forms of socio-economic justice, and put an end to forms of dominance caused by a lopsided political system.

The debate on the future of Europe should be a rallying cry for redeeming the promise of fraternite, which under conditions of economic globalisation can be realized only by politically catching up with it at the supranational level.

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