



Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies  
and ISE-Center, Moscow

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Conference

### ***Homo Europaeus – East and West***

12 and 13 May 2006  
Castle of Schengen, Luxembourg

#### **Introduction**

In association with the ISE-Center, Moscow, the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS) convened a conference on '*Homo Europaeus – East and West*' on 12 and 13 May 2006 in Schengen, Luxembourg. Approximately 50 participants from over 15 countries discussed in the course of eight sessions the possible meaning of *homo europaeus* and the implications of a shared European identity for contemporary politics and culture.

The focus of the conference was on a lively exchange of ideas and intense debate on the main factors which determine the nature and evolution of the 'European man'. Three main conclusions emerged from the discussions. First, religion and spirituality can no longer be excluded from reflections on the present and future of Europe. Secondly, beyond the current convergence of state and market power, civic culture in general and social relations in particular are indispensable to a political and cultural revival of Europe. Third, there was profound disagreement on how to revive European politics and culture and whether a shared identity or consciousness is desirable and feasible.

In his introductory remarks, Andrey Kortunov, President of the ISE-Center, specified the objective of the conference as a whole. He argued that the aim was not to concentrate on whether Russia is part of Europe or whether European values are universal, but to emphasise the individual and the communal level and thus take into account particular perceptions, local socialisation and the change or permanence of values within specific communities.

This perspective is best suited to frame the analysis of the three levels which are central to the question of identity: first, the family and communities; secondly, the state and supranational institutions; thirdly, civil society. In addition, there are three perspectives which determine the nature and evolution of identity – core Europe (i.e. the EU), the periphery (those countries which aspire to be members and those which do not), as well as non-European cultures and their specific perceptions. Finally, three questions guided the reflections of ‘European man’: first, what constitutes European traditions and what determines their stability and change? Secondly, how do the challenges of modernisation affect these traditions? Thirdly, what differences do the challenges of globalisation make to European identity over time and across space?

## I. The concept of identity – past and present

The first session was devoted to a long discussion on what the term ‘identity’ exactly refers to and what its meaning might encompass. Some participants like Herman van Gunsteren questioned whether human beings have anything like a stable identity – after all, St. Paul changed his identity so profoundly that he is best described as a different person. Gerhard Ambrosi suggested the use of the term consciousness rather than identity. Other participants, above all Alexander Piatigorsky, questioned the very sense of the concept of identity. He argued that identity and cognate terms are artificial mental constructs which lack philosophical rigour – they reflect nothing more than the contemporary vulgar lingo. Likewise, the indiscriminate use of the notion ‘modernism’ ignores the fact that each period, however short, has its own variant of modernism. For instance, Tacitus called the Republicans conservatives, while the Imperialists for him were progressives or *moderni*. This highlights the need for a new vocabulary in order to overcome the loss of thinking which befell Europe in the twentieth century. Only a novel language and genuine thinking can enable us to attain diachronic self-awareness. Similarly, Sergey Serebryany said that by now the word “identity” has been used (even abused) so often and in so many different ways that it has become almost meaningless (like, for instance, the word “postmodernism”). But whatever this fashionable word might be taken to mean, it can hardly encompass the totality of a human being, at best only part of it.

Lothar Rühl shifted the debate to the contemporary question of the limits of Europe. He objected to Andrey Kortunov’s definition of core Europe in terms of the EU and argued instead that Europe has no clear-cut geographical borders. Rather, the EU as a legal, political and institutional entity requires a proper political identity which differs from the security identity provided by NATO. Such a political identity cannot be an all-encompassing union that includes Russia and Turkey but must be based on common values and norms which provide cohesion and stability. Phillip Blond to some extent echoed this view and argued that there is no doing away with identity if by this term we mean political identity – what people think about themselves and how they act. So defined, politics is threatened by capitalism

because aggressive markets erode identity and encourage equally aggressive moves to protect people from the consequences. Politics is – or ought to be – based around distinctions which are true of people and which need to be preserved. Thus we need a language that can reflect both the particularity of distinction and the universality of identity, both within and beyond Europe.

Andras Barsony contended that identity describes a relationship between the self and the other, between individuals, institutions and systems. So conceived, identity is traditionally predicated upon an enemy. For instance, Corsicans define themselves as neither French nor Italian; religions tend to define themselves against other religions. Moreover, there is no single identity, there are only different points of view. Similarly, capitalism never operates without institutions and practices; therefore it cannot *per se* be said to undermine individuals and their beliefs. In addition to multiple identities, there are nonetheless commonalities, at institutional and supranational levels, as evinced by Russia's membership in the Council of Europe. Beyond abstract questions of the meaning of identity, philosophers and politicians alike face challenges about what the goal of political and civic life is and how to achieve it. This raises questions about whether religious identity really is more important than political identity and whether human natural structures can be said to precede cultural and political structures.

Christopher Coker introduced different concepts into the discussions by drawing the distinction between being and becoming. To focus on being at the expense of becoming poses two potential risks: first, fixing identity for all times and 'essentialising' human beings; secondly, ignoring genuine change over time. This distinction matters to the question of *homo europaeus*. This is demonstrated by three different 'conversations' between Europe and the 'outside' world. The first is with the USA, which rejects the European model, as Alexis de Tocqueville already discovered in the 1830s, in the wake of the Enlightenment. The second is with Russia, Central and Eastern Europe or, more reductively, the Slavic world. The third is with the Islamic world, especially with young Muslims who live in Europe. The alternative to the essentialist vision is to engage in these conversations and to seek what Europe is becoming. Christopher Coker endorsed Denis de Rougemont's point in his book *The Idea of Europe*: there is no European identity and to go after such an identity is precisely to be European. To be European is not to have a fixed, determined identity but to become something different over time.

For William Pfaff, the Enlightenment did not so much inaugurate a new, shared European identity as it confirmed the division between Roman and Orthodox Christianity. This was the result of conflicts within medieval Christendom which go back to the tenth century. By contrast, the twentieth-century crisis in Europe produced an unprecedented phenomenon: societies hitherto divided by nationalism and utopianism threw their lot together and built the 'European man', not only amongst elites but also between the populations. Even though such projects almost inevitably end in bureaucracy, the new European sense of unification led to further integration and enlargement, a process which has now come to a temporary standstill after the French and Dutch referenda. The current situation is paradoxical. On the one hand, there is a positive feeling of 'European-ness' which continues to dominate the negative feeling of nationalism and paranoia. On the other hand, European elites are not acting and reacting with the same vitality and imagination as in the 1940s. American utopianism is concerned



with its own hegemony, but one of many unintended consequences of an attack on Iran might be to help regenerate a European project.

Mark Almond argued that the defining feature of European identity is neither geographical nor political but instead social. The mark of Europe is social division, which is an unexpected consequence of both deeper integration and further enlargement. The latter has brought populations into direct confrontation with one another and thus raised awareness and heightened tensions, e.g. the growing number of Polish workers in the UK whose superior skills and lower wage demands have resulted in the unemployment of native workers. This conflict within the white working-class has sparked popular reactions and increased support for political extremists such as the British National Party (BNP) which registered important gains in the British local elections in May 2006. The current situation is perhaps best described as a 'European social civil war', with the highest and the lowest classes secretly conspiring against the working class.

As H. van Gunsteren reported, research on the causes for the Dutch No in the referendum on the proposed EU Constitution has revealed that the opposition to the Treaty was grounded in a perceived threat to established standards as a result of EU enlargement. Peter Schulze claimed that the European Constitution sets limits to enlargement but does not define the Union in terms of an external enemy. Rather, the vision of Europe tends to be more functional than ideological. It is based on the sovereignty of national identities, which are the necessary building blocks for a common identity (though the European project also includes lower levels such as regional entities and local communities). Armand Clesse interjected that the nature of the EU Constitutional Treaty underlines the limits of Europe, not its potential. This is because the EU member-states barely agreed on a minimum catalogue of fundamental rights which at best are of secondary importance, since they leave undetermined the finality of the European integration process and the substance of what it is to be a European.

According to Stefan Elbe, the origins of the current crisis must be seen in relation to the demise of the Christian identity of Europe. For centuries, it was Christianity that cultivated a common identity. However, the rise of secularity has not only shattered this shared sense of belonging but also produced different reactions in West and East. The West embraced a deeply secular form of materialism stripped of any spiritual or moral dimension. The East rejected Western materialism but did not formulate an alternative vision of 'European-ness'.

This triggered a debate on whether Central and Eastern Europe is an integral part of Europe. According to A. Barsony, the belonging of Central and Eastern European nations goes back not only to the interwar period but also to the Enlightenment. However, C. Coker referred to Hegel's description of the Poles as a 'people without history'. Moreover, as P. Schulze pointed out, if Central and Eastern Europe sees itself as a part of core Europe, why do its elites champion nationalism and Euro-scepticism and why are they much more pro-American than elites in Western Europe? Klaus Ziemer explained that the elites in Central and Eastern Europe are influenced by the memory of the Cold War and the weakness of the EU in the 1990s. They have a need for 'hard security', i.e. a fear of Russian aggression, which is why they turn to the USA for effective protection. By contrast, in the West political socialisation was shaped as much, if not more, by European integration as it was by American military presence. So even though Western, Central and Eastern Europe are part of NATO and the EU, they do not think in terms of the same geopolitical coordinates.

Furthermore, as K. Ziemer remarked, East and West are shaped not only by the legacy of the Cold War but also by the schism between Rome and Constantinople. The separation of power between the Pope and national monarchs sparked a reaction which led to the Orthodox Patriarchate. Subsequently, Orthodoxy split into national churches. One key difference between Roman and Orthodox Christianity is the status of the individual and the relations with the state. As a result of Roman law, the Western-Roman individual tends to be more central than the communities and is more fully protected against state power. In addition to these historical distinctions, the growing presence of Muslims across Europe and the demands by Catholic countries to include a reference to Christianity in the preamble of the European constitution underline the importance of religion and the potential for political conflict.

The role of religion in contemporary debates on the future of Europe led to a wider discussion on the foundations of European civilisation during the second conference session.

## II. The centrality of religion in the formation of European identities

The second session focused on religion in relation to European politics and culture. Adrian Pabst argued that the prevailing account of European unity is based on a series of secular myths, above all the idea that religions are synonymous with division and violence and that only secularity can ensure peace and prosperity. In order to enforce this view, this dominant narrative makes a number of questionable assumptions. First, it presupposes that the democratic tradition of Europe goes back to the legacy of the Greek city-states and the Roman Empire. However, this ignores the defence of slavery as natural by Plato, Aristotle and Roman philosophers and the violent practices of pagan cults in Rome and Athens. Secondly, it assumes that modern Europe emerged out of the so-called ‘wars of religions’ which confirmed the violent nature of religion and the need for a higher secular authority that can secure genuine tolerance. But the ‘wars of religion’ were profoundly secular events: princes co-opted confessions in order to defeat their secular enemies and extend their dominions. At the same time, Catholics and Protestants frequently fought on the same side. In making such and similar assumptions, the secular account of Europe not only rewrites history but also ignores the violence of the secular nation state and ‘free market’ capitalism. Instead of delivering universal peace and prosperity, the state and the market have joined forces and alienated citizens from their local communities. They have erased the religious inheritance and in its stead erected secular simulacra – the worship of power and pleasure.

P. Blond pursued this line of thinking and argued that Christianity was the first pan-European political movement, across and beyond class, gender and ethnic divisions. Prior to Constantine, the Christian religion was a non-state civil practising social movement which was universal and inclusive. The greatest disaster for Europe was the split of Christendom, which first led to the sanctification of national sovereignty by the Orthodox Church and subsequently abandoned politics to the secular powers that waged war against one another. The absence of a unified Christian vision is one of the reasons why materialism and nihilism are flourishing in contemporary Europe. This ideology is promoted by the decadent western middle classes who seek to make everyone like themselves and despise and exclude those who are genuinely different.



A. Barsony contended that to say this is to equate Catholicism with Christianity. This account also ignores the many conflicts in Europe which were fuelled by religion, most recently the civil war in Yugoslavia. Moreover, it is dangerous to mix up personal beliefs and wider institutions – an interesting example is Catholicism in Latin America which respects papal authority but is more communist than the USSR ever was. Likewise, S. Serebryany claimed that traditional religion(s) cannot possibly be considered a basis for European unity because the division between Roman Catholicism and Byzantine Orthodoxy would prevent any rapprochement between Western and Eastern Europe and Europe and Russia. History teaches us that it is wiser to keep to the ideals of the Enlightenment and keep (restrict) religion(s) to the private sphere. P. Schulze agreed with this position and asserted that one of the great achievements of modernity was the separation of State and Church and that in any case the past is not relevant to the present and the future. Instead, what matters nowadays is how to tame capitalism, avoid war and finance social security.

G. Ambrosi disagreed with this account, saying that the Enlightenment provided not only the liberation from religion (in the wake of the French Revolution) but also the liberation for religion (as a result of the American Revolution). The question is not whether religion is present in the public sphere but according to which mode it is. Then as now, the challenge is to define the proper delimitation or demarcation of the religious and the political realm. The history of Christianity offers two rival visions. On the one hand, Charlemagne's vision is divisive and exclusive, as it was limited approximately to the equivalent of the six founding members of the European Economic Community (EEC). On the other hand, Constantine's vision is more universal and inclusive because it encompassed the Latin and the Byzantine world, where Constantine is venerated as a saint.

As A. Pabst remarked, the secular view of Europe sets up the very problems which it purports to solve, namely the fight against fundamentalism which is in large part the result of privatising religion and denying it any political import. Such a public presence of religion mediates fanaticism and promotes engagement, along shared civic lines. This is how both secular extremism and religious fundamentalism can be avoided. History abounds with examples where the inclusion of religion in the political and civic culture enhanced peace and unity. For instance, in medieval Spain prior to 1492, there was peaceful interaction between the three faiths. Renaissance Italy witnessed the arbitration of conflicts by representatives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the basis of shared civic practices. And a vast array of European cities and regions were shaped by the complex blending of the three monotheistic traditions: not only Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople, but also from Andalusia via Syracuse to Salonica and from Marseille via Prague to Moscow.

In response to a question by H. van Gunsteren about what to do with people who neither are nor want to be religious, P. Blond said that the Enlightenment was in part a religious reaction to a religion already corrupted by its alliance with the secular forces of the state. Equally, the ideals of the French Revolution – liberty, equality and fraternity – have distinctly religious origins. Only the recovery of religion can take seriously questions about how to make those ideals real. A. Barsony disagreed, saying that the real question is whether European identity is a construct or whether it is real, and from which perspective we are looking at it. Religion has traditionally been very divisive, in countries as varied as France, Germany and Turkey. The only solution is to separate beliefs from institutions and to guarantee religious freedom and tolerance under a secular regime. However, W. Pfaff contended that in the name of freedom



and tolerance, the Calvinist Puritans fled Europe and sought to create a theocracy in America. This illustrates the point that a secular regime based on freedom and tolerance can give rise to fanatical extremes.

C. Coker described the EU as a failed liberal bourgeois experiment. For good or ill, the idea of Europe is associated with the Union, which – despite its Catholic legacy – is a deeply secular and nihilistic project. If there is to be any significant change, it will only come from Muslim communities. Their impact on the rest of Europe will not be so much religious as metaphysical – the primacy of God’s law over man’s law. Incidentally, Hans Jonas’ concept of a third categorical imperative – an ethics of responsibility – also underscores the limits of bourgeois liberalism. All this indicates that there are traditions which view the human person as more complex than the bourgeois liberal secular self. The predominance of nihilistic secularism in Europe constitutes a fundamental difference with the USA. In America, there is the ‘ethnic stranger’ who is not part of American society unless and until he embraces the ‘American dream’ and becomes like the average American consumer. However, in Europe there is the ‘ethical stranger’, who is alienated and estranged from the community to which he or she belongs. The core problem for the EU is that the metaphysical or moral basis was not part of the initial European project in the 1940s and 1950s.

S. Elbe followed up on some of these ideas and argued that the founding fathers of the EEC had implicitly conceded that if they could start all over again with the process of European integration, they would begin with culture, not functionalism. Likewise, A. Kortunov related the concepts of ‘ethnic’ and ‘ethical stranger’ to contemporary Europe and raised the question of how inclusive or exclusive the European project is. What are the boundaries of Europe at present, and what will they be in future? Is the ‘absorption capacity’ of Europe – a term which has been promoted by a number of member-states, above all Austria – shrinking or expanding?

Vladimir Suprun suggested to focus on self-identification rather than on identity defined negatively, e.g. against an enemy within and without. Questions such as ‘who are we?’, ‘what is the purpose of my actions?’ are perennial but have been more central to some cultures and historical periods than others, e.g. the nineteenth-century writings of Lev Tolstoy and other representatives of “classical” Russian literature. Traditionally, cultural instability and change generate insecurity and anxiety. Thus, they tend to produce a turn towards self-identification. History can provide a source of meaning and stability, especially when conjoined with the belief in a transcendent God who is the beginning and end of everything. As the nineteenth-century Russian philosopher and theologian Vladimir Soloviev said, ‘it doesn’t matter what you think of history, the only thing that matters is how God views it’. A. Kortunov mentioned the distinction between the ‘Old Believers’ (*staroobriadtsy* – lit.: “the keepers of the old rituals”) and the official Orthodox Church in the wake of the reforms instigated by Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century. The former sought to cling to a more traditional Church, while the latter promoted reforms. Interestingly, 80% of Russian entrepreneurs used to belong to the first category.

Vladimir Bryushinkin claimed that neither metaphysics nor religion are central to European identity because they are not universal. Metaphysics is a Western project and religion tends to be local and particular. The only universal foundation for a common European future is ethics.

The only genuinely universal ethics which is available to Europe is Kantian ethics. This is because Kant dismissed classical metaphysics and classical theism and instead built an alternative system based on practical reason, not faith. P. Blond contended that the current crisis of Europe marks the failure of an essentially modern secular project which goes back to the Enlightenment critique of religion already corrupted by its alliance with the state. What is required is a vision which imagines a shared public space that is neither purely religious nor exclusively secular. Because liberalism is hegemonic and tends to destroy all systems of beliefs other than itself, the only alternative is a post-secular Europe organised around a non-liberal contest for universal values, not unlike Aristotle's idea of the quest for the good life.

A. Clesse argued that Europe is characterised by nihilism and thus by the absence of any coherent and sound moral and spiritual basis. In part, this is the result of excluding religion from the public sphere, for example in France. The question is what the long-term consequences of this exclusion will be. On the one hand, religion does not seem to be compatible with freedom. On the other hand, religion is a powerful force against the dominant culture of nihilism. In turn, this raises further questions: is Islamophobia in Europe, independently of the events of 11 September 2001, an expression of jealousy vis-à-vis Muslims who reject Europe's spiritual emptiness and show genuine profound devotion? Are we seeing a lasting religious revival or simply a transitory phenomenon? Is not religion, above all Islam, a form of resistance against Western hegemony and the Americanisation of the world? A. Clesse also criticised the prevailing rhetoric by a number of liberal figures like Ralf Dahrendorf who refer to Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper and Raymond Aron in order to defend a conception of Europe based on reason. This approach misses the point because it refers to values of secondary importance. What is paramount is a genuine debate on primary values and on the first principles and final ends of the European integration process. Neither nihilism nor secularity can provide the necessary common ground for such reflections and discussions.

A. Piatigorsky objected to the use of the term secularisation. He explained that secularisation is associated exclusively with the works of Max Weber. However, we owe the real meaning of secularisation to C. S. Lewis, who attributed secularity first and foremost to religion itself, in particular religious institutions which distort beliefs and practices. Thus secularisation cannot be blamed primarily on the state or the individual. For instance, Immanuel Kant promised not to mention religious beliefs in his seminars because his understanding of Protestantism led him to separate reason from faith. Moreover, in the twentieth century, virtually all religions betrayed their own beliefs, Protestantism as well as Catholicism, Buddhism as well as Hinduism. This is because they became utterly politicised and entered unholy alliances with secular state powers. V. Bryushinkin objected that secularisation concerns institutions, not religions. But A. Pabst replied that secularity extends to religious beliefs and practices themselves, for instance the separation of reason from faith and nature from the supernatural. Indeed, some genealogies of secularisation in Europe trace the process of secularisation back to the late eleventh and the twelfth century when theology embraced secular – abstract, formal, disembodied – categories and grounded the truth of revelation exclusively on the book of scripture, not the book of nature. Concomitantly, there was a shift from local and regional self-governing communities towards more centralised state authority and control. This period marked the beginning of something like a 'secular religion' which separated God's creative action from the operation of the world. Over time, this led to the elimination of God from nature (in fourteenth-century nominalism) and the Renaissance elevation of man into the 'measure of all things'.



S. Elbe drew the distinction between two rather different notions of secularity. First, Max Weber's idea of disenchantment and, secondly, the critique of essentialist fixed meaning and thus the rejection of Christianity as a universal metaphysics and ethics. A. Piatigorsky rejected this whole approach and said that disenchantment or enchantment are just clichés. Likewise, the Marxist mythologies about oppressors and oppressed are all un-philosophical terms which reflect the demise of genuine thinking. By contrast, H. van Gunsteren defended secular liberalism by arguing that the current crisis of the dominant secular model reflects the failure of liberal institutions to discipline society and prevent the worst excesses of liberalism such as crime, drugs and social breakdown. However, this does not represent the demise of the liberal tradition as a whole.

The discussion then turned to the Soviet experiment and contemporary Russia. For Yury Shevtsov, there is a hierarchy of European cultures which is structured according to the relative contribution of individual cultures to European identity. Amongst the main achievements of European civilisation was the abolition of slavery and the defeat of Nazism. Especially the common fight against the Nazi aggression was a defining moment in the history of the European consciousness. Likewise, the peaceful end of the Cold War by Gorbachev's Perestroika also constitutes a significant legacy. Both events underline the importance of Eastern Europe for a shared European project. By contrast, neither the expansion of the Soviet experience towards Central Europe nor the imposition of Western-style shock therapy and radical economic reform in the East were beneficial but instead generated non-democratic tendencies.

Irina Chechel argued that our conceptualisation and understanding of the making and the evolution of identity are of primary importance. For Russia, the European experiment raises two fundamental questions: what does Russia want from Europe and what does Europe want from Russia? In turn, both questions relate to the wider problem of the grounds and foundations of European values such as mutual solidarity and a shared cultural heritage. Unlike the vision of the European Commission and other official institutions, the development of new values is not a purely bureaucratic or technological matter but a philosophical and contemplative task. The collapse and ruin of the USSR has had an ambiguous impact on Russian consciousness. On the one hand, the experience of Western-imposed reforms has revived the idealisation of Soviet times and the rejection of Perestroika as a hidden Western agenda to undermine and destroy the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Perestroika was a profoundly Eastern European reflex which was not supported by the West but instead was abandoned in favour of the Western model. There is thus excessive idealisation of both sides of the divide. Nowadays, the greatest challenge is to preserve and enhance values and practices that can embody them.

According to Anna Trakhtenberg, the Soviet project was secular and anti-liberal but metaphysical in the extreme. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, societies which had been both individualist and collectivised opted for the most basic ethnic and tribal basis of identity and meaning. Aleksei Chadayev argued that neither the current so-called religious revival nor the European integration process can be monopolised by the West. This is because the ideology and the operation of the EU can in some sense be compared to that of the Soviet Union, insofar as the dominant elites lack legitimacy in the eyes of the population and popular distrust and alienation are growing. Moreover, a certain Europeanisation is taking place



outside the formal framework of the EU. Europe cannot be equated with the Union and there are numerous parts of Europe which do not wish to join the EU and see it as inimical to a proper European culture and politics. The problem with religions is that they argue almost exclusively about who is right and not what a better future can look like for countries and traditions. This is why a genuine European project cannot be organised around the EU and religion.

A. Kortunov advocated civil society as the most appropriate framework to include religion into the wider European integration process. Unlike the state and the market, civil society is neither purely secular nor exclusively religious. And unlike the official, first-track contact between governments and bureaucracies, civil society can offer a closer and more dynamic engagement which is mutually transformative. In this sense, European civil society is very different from the USA and Asia where it is predominantly structured by joint state and market forces.

Viacheslav Glazychev argued that nihilism and anarchism are not linked, as evinced by Kropotkin's main ideas of solidarity and cooperation, which are both secular and unifying. Moreover, the rising number of converts to Islam in Russia is not strictly speaking a religious phenomenon but can be explained in terms of the desire for a communal spirit of help and support and the need for psychological stability and certainty. S. Serebryany said that the Russian historical experience (both before and after 1917, as well as after 1991) rather makes one consider religion as a manipulative tool for controlling the populace and imposing chains on the freedom of human beings. For many Russians Europe stands for (is a symbol of) freedom (political, intellectual etc.), while "religion" is a synonym of fraud, unfreedom and oppression (ideological, if not outright political). Samir Amin concurred and said that in countries where religion is important, it is enforced by power. For example, sociological surveys have revealed that in Islamic countries, the veil is imposed by fathers, brothers and husbands onto daughters, sisters and wives. It is used as a means to restrict the rights of women and prevent any emancipation. Rather than viewing religion as the basis for an alternative politics, it is much more accurate first to examine the links between state and market, politics and economics, and then to situate religion in the opposition between Left and Right.

In response to this debate, A. Clesse described these criticisms of religion as stereotypical and ideological. Such and similar interpretations lack any intellectual content and constitute little more than propaganda. Unlike many Christians in the West who are bourgeois liberals, Muslims defend their values and communities against materialism and nihilism. As such they are the target of discrimination and Islamophobia. A. Pabst noted that the opposition between Left and Right is closely associated with the modern history of the West and that as a result it does not capture the specificity and complexity of the Muslim world. There is no evidence that Muslims want to become like western secular liberals or atheistic socialists. The veil and other practices are part of religious beliefs and cannot be reduced to instruments of suppression. No ideology in the West can arrogate the right to decide what a proper Muslim is or ought to be. The Islamic world seeks a non-liberal non-socialist model of development and does not want to become developed or emancipated along western secular lines.

### III. The individual and the community

The question of religion prompted a wider discussion on the core idea of the conference. S. Amin declared that the title ‘*Homo Europaeus* – East and West’ is problematic. At best, *homo europaeus* is simply a specificity of the commonality of *homo universalis*. At worst, it indicates an essentialist vision which excludes the rest of the world, in particular the idea of *homo islamicus*, which is a popular notion in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. More fundamentally, the discourse that Europe is Christian, liberal, capitalistic and democratic is a set of platitudes. Instead, a much more accurate description is in terms of the historical and contemporary opposition between the Left and the Right. The political culture which this confrontation generates can be distinguished according to four stages: the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the workers’ movement and socialism, and Marxism and the Russian Revolution. Beyond Euro-centrism, the Left-Right divide represents a set of positive values with a universal content. As such, it reflects political and cultural preferences much better than religion ever could. Indeed, it was leftwing ideals which informed the rejection of liberalism and Atlanticism (especially NATO) by the French in the referendum last year. The Left-Right dichotomy also enables us to draw the distinction between political issues (European project, relations with other countries etc.) and conflictual political cultures (class, nations, gender). By contrast, in the USA, there is no equivalent because there is no genuine leftwing tradition.

Beyond ideology and institutions, A. Clesse suggested that there is perhaps something like a European way of life, or ways of life, which provide a better indication of what is distinct about Europe. The advantage of such a ‘praxological’ approach is that it is not defined against any internal or external enemy, that it is different from any set of abstract principles and that it focuses on values embodied in practices. One question which follows from this idea is whether commonality at the level of people’s way of life privileges integration or whether more cooperation might lead to harmonisation and the gradual erasure of genuine diversity. In turn, this leads to two other questions: does deeper integration and further enlargement generate a sense of ‘we-feeling’ or a sense of alienation, uncertainty, perhaps even anxiety? How can we distinguish between what is feasible in Europe and what is desirable?

A. Kortunov pursued this line of thinking and argued that all existing institutions are at present under pressure. Both the extended and the nuclear family have been destroyed and there is little more than the broken family, single parents and social breakdown. Education has declined in the sense that high cultures are undermined and the quality of standards is falling. Most, if not all, European countries are facing a skills shortage and many traditional sectors can no longer afford the rising social benefits associated with regular employment. Moreover, the dominant consumption model is non-sustainable, as evinced by the dependence on oil and the volatility caused by the soaring prices of primary resources.

Moreover, even if the concepts of modernity and post-modernity are flawed and lack any philosophical purchase, the consequences of modernisation and globalisation are real. Both affect European societies not only at the systemic level but also in everyday life. The challenge is to analyse how specific traditions which confront these processes address the causes and cope with the effects. What matters is not so much the evolution of general trends at the level of European or national institutions but the impact on individual and communal

consciousness. If this is true, then what is the potential role of metaphysics in contemporary Europe in understanding and conceptualising the current predicament? How might metaphysics affect the European man, if such a creature is indeed emerging? In relation to the USA, two further questions can be posed. First, is Europe simply lagging behind the USA or is it already taking a different path? Secondly, is there a specific set of European answers to some of these common challenges?

W. Pfaff responded that we tend to make heavy weather of modernisation and globalisation. Current responses to globalisation and to the oil crisis are non-essential to discussions on the identity of Europe. Likewise, it is untrue to say that everyone and everything is converging towards the American model. US domination has been the mark of international relations for no more than seventy years and it is already facing serious opposition from every corner of the globe. There is indeed growing resentment vis-à-vis the USA. However, this does not make Europe an obvious or exclusive alternative. On the contrary, America is still viewed as a more innovative model, compared with the static models in Europe. European politics and culture is perceived to be in decline, void of values, secularised and suffering economic stagnation and recession. The question is whether this is indicative of a longer-term process of drifting apart or whether current attempts to reform Europe along American lines constitute the beginning of a renewed convergence. What is clear is that the scientific and political revolutions in the eighteenth, the nineteenth and the twentieth century created secular religions like Marxism and Fascism and continue to have important reverberations, both in Europe and across the Atlantic.

According to M. Almond, the 2004 Eastern enlargement is portrayed by the EU as one-way traffic: 'we give, they take'. Hardly anyone in the 'old' member-states is considering how this process might positively transform the West. More importantly, the expansion of the EU has done little to overcome the Cold War divide and the differences between East and West. Instead, it is seen by many in Central and Eastern Europe as a belated victory of the defeated countries in the Second World War and shortly thereafter, especially those states which were allied to Nazi Germany and subsequently conquered by the Soviet Union. For instance, Latvia has not only neglected a memorial to the Partisans to the point of decay but, more worryingly, has recently erected a memorial to the Latvian members of the *Waffen SS*.

A. Clesse also set out a critique of the logic and the modalities of EU expansion. He argued that the EU member-states and institutions in general and the Commission in particular equate *homo europaeus* with *homo bruxellensis*. They seek to enforce an aggressive strategy of standardisation and homogenisation which erases difference and diversity. They also sponsor a certain vision of citizenship which emphasises uniform abstract principles over distinct civic practices. Do Russia and those countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Balkans, who are not yet members, want to emulate this model and become like the EU countries? Indeed, the recent waves of enlargement have ignored the specific traditions and experiences of the East and instead pushed through a hidden agenda that will eventually lead to the creation of a dull and mediocre 'European man'. A. Pabst said that the disillusionment about the EU was widespread across the East and the Balkans and that the only rationale for undergoing the painful and costly process of adopting the *acquis communautaire* was to reap the benefits of access to the common market. No country in the East or the Balkans genuinely believes in the political clout of the EU. This is why NATO membership is seen as more decisive in terms of geo-strategic influence. The USA is perceived to be the only guarantor of

effective protection against Russia and the last remaining bulwark against Muslim fundamentalism.

#### IV. The state and the market

The framing of the European political integration process by the functionalism of economic cooperation provided the link to the fourth conference theme – the relations between the state and the market. S. Amin wondered whether there are any specificities in Europe's responses to the challenges of the contemporary world. Those challenges include the growing economic weight of China and India in terms of global production and trade, the stagnation or decline of Europe's share and the blind self-projection of the US elite. Traditionally, Europe has been a key part of the Western project of so-called globalisation, liberalism and the pro-Atlantic militarism of NATO. This project is neither desirable nor sustainable but the inevitable decline will in time spark disastrous consequences for the rest of the world. The liberal utopia of permanent capitalism is undesirable and unsustainable because it seeks to subject everything to the logic of dominant capital and ignores rather than addresses the real problems of social relations, the condition of workers and the needs of populations. Western European Pro-Atlanticism supports the collective imperialism of the triad composed of the USA and Canada, Europe and Japan (as well some other allies scattered across the globe). The privileged tools to enforce Western hegemony over the world are the US military establishment, the G8, NATO, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank. Even though there is a European dimension of the global project of American dominance, there is nothing specifically European about the EU's contribution to it. The absence of any alternative was reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of the social-democratic compromise between capital and labour, as virtually all social-democrats have become social-liberals. Only the global social movements embody a non-liberal (but not as yet non-capitalist) alternative. For Europe to abandon liberalism and Atlanticism would be important not only for the European countries themselves but also for the global system as a whole. One question is whether Europeans prefer to be socialised by the market or by genuine democracy. So far the EU functions much like NAFTA, rejected by the whole of Central and Latin America (with the exception of Mexico and Columbia).

G. Ambrosi sharply disagreed with this analysis. He contended that NAFTA is merely a free trade area, whereas the Common Market is a customs union which also includes an increasingly strong social dimension (including workers' rights, working hours and a number of health and safety provisions that strengthen the right of employees and workers). As such, the European variant of liberalism is much more sustainable than the American version. Moreover, it was the confrontation with Communism which led to the historic compromise between capital and labour and the introduction of workers' co-determination. Now that the socialist utopia has disappeared, it is not clear where the immediate danger to liberalism will come from. Historically, every system collapses by itself: what are the elements of self-destruction of the liberal model? The 1973 crisis shook the foundations of the system but we are still stuck with the institutions created at Bretton Woods in 1944.

S. Amin defended his position, saying that the EU and NAFTA share important similarities and that liberalism is unsustainable because the compromise between labour and capital tends





to be national and will not resist international global capital. Likewise, Atlanticism will not collapse under the weight of ‘imperial overstretch’ but must be overthrown by popular resistance. Only then can there be an end to the project of global hegemony, as stated in official documents and the doctrine of pre-emptive and unilateral warfare. As for the financial dimension of Western imperialism, the current woes are perhaps not like the 1929 crisis, but the rest of the world, particularly China and Europe, will refuse to finance American trade and fiscal deficits.

W. Pfaff rejected Amin’s analysis as a naïve conceptualisation and a superficial understanding of country-specific experiences. A more accurate account is in terms of rival utopian visions, namely liberal and non-liberal utopias. The last surviving utopianism of the twentieth century is the liberal fixation upon absolute progress. Its failure is most clearly evinced by the growing pauperisation of the working class and even of the lower middle class, both in the USA and Europe. This outcome is not inevitable, but instead is the result of a certain economic model which privileges the concentration of wealth at the top and the blind belief in some trickle-down effect. What this model has in effect produced is a ‘flattening of the world’ (Thomas Friedman). However, Atlanticism is not as permanent as assumed by its opponents. NATO has been in terminal crisis since the Soviet threat disappeared. It is today a mere toolbox for the US military, winning acquiescence from the ‘New Europe’, in response to the perceived threat allegedly posed by terrorism. One reason why NATO persists is that Europe is failing to offer a credible alternative. American actions in Afghanistan and Iraq are not necessarily and exclusively malign but reflect naïve and stupid reactions to 9/11. The USA does not impose civilisation on backward societies as the Roman Empire was able to do. Rather, the American project faces growing resistance from nationalism, political opposition and also its own inherent weakness.

A. Clesse urged the participants not to examine world systems at different levels of analysis but to reflect on the following two questions: first, the contours of *homo europaeus*, including the personal and communal dimension, and, secondly, the kind of man European society or societies want. What are popular preferences and perceptions? How can we characterise the relations with fellow citizens, within and across nations? In what way is ‘European man’ different from ‘Asian man’, ‘African man’ and ‘American man’? Welfare and protection of rights, fundamental dignity and integrity, as well as the relationship with nature seem to be distinct marks of *homo europaeus*. But what are the key differences with other cultures and ‘civilisations’? What about ‘Russian man’? Twenty years after the beginning of Perestroika, are Russians closer to the USA or to Europe? In the face of American individualism and the crumbling foundations of Europe’s social and cultural model, the focus of the discussions should be on the individual and the communal level, not general systems.

P. Blond sought to respond to this by addressing the question about what threatens the ordinary European today. He argued that previously, the central state had protected its citizens against the free market by granting welfare, including specific support for families. But nowadays the state has become virtually synonymous with the market – a project which is sponsored by the EU. In this sense, the Union is a right-wing enterprise which has created a ‘market state’. What is left after hiving off all functions to the market is an illiberal state, bureaucratic, authoritarian, a control state, long before the events of 11 September 2001 and the implementation of anti-terrorist legislation. The failure to deal with immigration is one such example. More fundamentally, all kinds of intermediary institutions like trade unions,



friendly societies and associations have been destroyed. Except for Scandinavia, the British model is becoming the norm across continental Europe. Coupled with global ‘free-market’ capitalism, Europe is moving towards a uniquely totalitarian situation. Neither the Left nor the Right can offer any alternatives to this *status quo*. A wider collectivity like the nation will not be able to cope with this predicament because people tend to form coalitions around single issues like the opposition to the war in Iraq. The state is so hopelessly centralised and bureaucratic that it is vain to attempt to rescue it. Only a revival of micro-structures like the family and the workplace can produce a real transformation of the relations between state and market.

Two sets of questions emerged from the discussions. First, how to combine liberty and freedom with protection and security? Secondly, how to strike a balance between rebuilding social fabric and achieving economic efficiency? These questions raise problems related to politics and civil society, which constituted the penultimate conference theme.

## V. Politics and civil society

In his introductory presentation, Yury Rubinsky situated civil society in the wider European social context. According to Jürgen Habermas, civil society is outside the two main building blocks of politics. First, the political system, which includes the state, the administration, the government and the parliamentary opposition. Secondly, the market which is based on the twin principles of competition and profitability. However, civil society is a civic, moral and spiritual intermediary which is necessary to the proper functioning of both. There are three preconditions to this configuration: a legal framework, a material financial base (transparent, accountable and autonomous) and a common ground. In Russia, civil society is not able to develop due to two tendencies which are becoming increasingly manifest. First, the establishment and consolidation of the Public Chamber, selected according to political loyalty, i.e. contrary to the spirit of civil society. This institution contains even fewer specificities than the State Duma. Secondly, the recently adopted law on NGOs with international funding and international links. This law was voted against the backdrop of the so-called ‘Orange Revolution’ in the Ukraine, which was said to be the outcome of Western secret service infiltration and attempts to undermine the established constitutional order from within.

Beyond Russia, Y. Rubinsky also discussed a number of shared factors across Europe in relation to the third precondition for a properly functioning civil society – the common ground. First of all, the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church recently issued a declaration condemning and rejecting the Western conception of human rights and thus defined itself against a certain consensus. Secondly, in 2004 and 2005 there were respectively over 1,000 and about 800 attacks on synagogues and mosques in France alone. Coupled with phenomena such as the continuous support for Silvio Berlusconi, this underlines growing levels of populism and extremism. Thirdly, the divide within European civil society does not lie along geo-political lines but instead in terms of support for, or opposition to, populism and extremism. Finally, the challenge for European civil society is to make a genuine difference to politics in Europe, below and beyond the official level. There are two specific problems which complicate this task: the weakness of civil society structures in Europe and the legitimacy crisis of political structures as a result of low participation. Civil society can never hope to

replace the state because their respective *modus operandi* differ radically and require one another in order to function properly.

V. Glazychev disagreed with Rubinsky's account of Russian civil society in general and of the Public Chamber in particular. As a member of the Public Chamber with first-hand experience, he drew a rather different picture of the reality of civil society in Russia. Only one-third of the members of the Public Chamber are appointed by the President, two-thirds or 42 are elected from a list of about 240. This allows for a certain level of pluralism in terms of representation. There is also a wide range of magazines like 'Expert' which provide fora of discussion and critical debate. In addition, public expert hearings on crucial issues such as housing policy supplement the central decision-making process. More generally, Russia is not a homogeneous monolith but instead a diverse mosaic. There is tremendous change at the level of localities. This change is open-ended, not predetermined. The difficulty lies with the corporations, which in some sense unify the country but also act as colonisers, superseding all regional and local structures. So the main line of divide is between those who advocate the concentration in the hands of corporations and those who advocate municipally-based small- and medium-sized enterprises. In order to develop the latter, much more investment in the regions and localities is required. The current period represents a window of opportunity, as there is still a significant variety across regions. However, aspiration vary from nihilism among the youth to a more responsible generation. The country is in flux and there is ample scope to determine which direction it will take.

Following Rubinsky's remarks, A. Kortunov qualified the Habermasian vision and distinguished between American and European practices. The US system limits the state because civil society is considered to be self-sufficient and sustainable, whereas the state is identified with the evil of absolute power that encroaches upon individual freedom and liberty. In Europe, civil society is more closely associated with the state because it should shoulder the efforts to solve social problems. In contemporary Russia, civil society should be the state's junior partner in its mission of bringing stability and security to the country as a whole. Therefore, the Public Chamber acts as a kind of Praetorian Guard, i.e. helping the state reach out to people and activities which elude it. The specific problem is as follows: with increasing wealth from higher oil and gas prices comes self-assertion and arrogance. The state is tempted to impose the traditional European social contract, i.e. provide welfare and encourage the generation of wealth in exchange for paternalism, in particular legitimisation and loyalty towards central state authority. Thus, in some sense, Russia is witnessing the resurgence of *homo sovieticus*. Even though on the surface there are strong similarities with Europe, the differences remain significant: fewer start-ups than in Poland and generally fewer small- and medium-sized enterprise; greater reliance on the state for incomes and rents (i.e. corruption); tendencies towards moral conservatism, populism and xenophobia, wholly unlike the ideals of *homo europaeus*. Above all, we are seeing a growing value gap between Russia and the rest of Europe.

In response to this debate, P. Blond raised a specific question: the last state in Europe to embody Kortunov's description of contemporary Russia was the *Ancien Régime* – a legal bureaucratic office state which bought political power but was ultimately unsustainable in the face of corruption, inequality and poverty. Will or might the fate of Russia be that of pre-revolutionary France? A. Kortunov replied that the crucial difference between the two is that the vast natural resources enable the Russian regime to retain power. For that reason alone,

any large-scale systemic transformation is unlikely. M. Almond interjected that it was the large sugar plantations in the West Indies which saved Britain from a fate similar to that of France.

In her presentation, Galina Zvereva also focused on the paternalistic social contract ideas in contemporary Russia. She argued that the demarcation of the ‘self’ from the ‘other’ is at the heart of Russian politics and culture. This implies that citizenship is disconnected from ethnicity. However, ethnic identity is increasingly important in contemporary national and international politics. Self-identification at the level of civil society is also affected by the top-down approach in Russia: both the secular and the religious powers operate in this way and subject regional ethnic and cultural ties to central authority. They both construct and entertain the myth of ‘Russian national unity’, which provides a powerful instrument in order to foster patriotic self-consciousness. The Russian ethos and mentality which are derived from this conception of nation produce a multi-cultural citizenship but are opposed to European values and ideas which tend to be post-national.

V. Suprun argued that generally speaking freedom is connected with space, time and opportunities. The pioneering spirit is still alive in Siberia. The local and regional priorities in Siberian communities are as follows: increased protection and safety, preserving a feeling of togetherness, an existence of dignity and respect, leading a fulfilled and complex life (not unlike Aristotle’s idea of the ‘good life’) and a vibrant civic culture. Artem Rykun added that peripheral regions such as Siberia do not view themselves as Moscow-dominated colonies but rather as frontiers or ‘out-backs’ characterised by two elements: public space and symbolic values. The lack of symbolic values in Europe and Russia may perhaps be one of the main features of *homo europaeus*. A. Chadayev contended that the crucial question is not the present or the future of civil society but the nature and evolution of values in Europe. Any political or social system and all communities are based on values. Capitalism and democracy are underpinned by liberal values, in particular the universal value of capital. Europe started as an economic unity which also aspired towards a freedom of movement of persons, and Schengen embodies the abolition of internal border controls. At the same time, it has mutated into a fortress which is increasingly hostile to people from outside the EU. In this sense, it resembles the Soviet Union: whilst creating a pan-European project for the people within, it becomes more and more intolerant and illiberal towards people without.

Michel Lesage defended Russia’s membership in some pan-European institutions such as the Council of Europe (which it co-chairs since 19 May 2006). Russia may have a critique of Western liberal values, emphasised most recently by the Orthodox Church. However, in recent meetings with representatives of the Catholic Church, members of the Orthodox hierarchy have also highlighted the importance of universal principles such as responsibility. Concerning the Public Chamber, M. Lesage was hopeful, saying that it was not so much a matter of formal power but of informal influence. In this respect, it could turn out to be not unlike the French *Conseil économique et social* which is attached to the office of the Prime Minister. It has an advisory role and thereby a real impact on policy-making.

The discussion then turned from Russia to Central and Eastern Europe. M. Almond remarked that recent developments have confirmed the shift towards *homo euro-atlanticus*. Whether at the level of state security or at the level of control over civil society activities (the new Russian law on NGOs etc), both the East and the West have implemented similar policies.

The current paranoia goes as far as suspicions that a donation to the British Museum was intended to finance terrorism because of conservationists' work in Iraq. Both East and West have seen a dramatic demobilisation of the public, as a result of consumerism and shock therapy, which led to an unprecedented pauperisation of the working and lower middle classes, below the critical threshold of *zoon politicon*. Coupled with the decline of large-scale party membership, Europe (and the USA) has witnessed the rise of elitist groups (sponsored from above or outside). In the case of the East, democracy could hardly be expected to grow, as it has never been successfully orchestrated from outside (perhaps with the exception of Germany after the Second World War). For example, in Georgia, there is utter hypocrisy about the so-called Velvet Revolution: the West recognised the electoral success of the pro-Western President Mikhail Saakashvili, despite evidence of widespread fraud and instances of torture. The common challenge for both East and West is to recover self-governance while also securing economic security.

Janri Kachia agreed with Almond's depiction of Georgia in the 1990s but added that nowadays the population feels primarily Georgian and then European (rather than Caucasian or Soviet). The overriding popular feeling is neither anti-American nor anti-Russian but rather anti-reforms. This is because the Bolshevik mind is un-adapted to reforms and unsure how to cope with social upheaval. The so-called liberal reforms have made many people very poor and continue to make people ever poorer; as such they have caused profound social divisions. At the same time, the reforms have also enriched a few beyond any sense, creating some billionaires and hundreds of multi-millionaires. The system in place may be post-totalitarian but most Georgians still have a totalitarian mind-set.

According to K. Ziemer, civil society in Central and Eastern countries such as Poland developed in response to the atomisation and fragmentation of the social fabric by the Communist regimes. The experience of *Solidarność* and other such civic movements shows that their proper functioning requires a state-secured legal framework. The tension is between distrust towards political official institutions on the one hand, and successful institution-building, the rule of law, as well as municipal and local government, on the other hand. In reference to Amin's point about the universality of the divide between Left and Right, he argued that transgressions of this dualism occur throughout the post-Communist space: for example in Poland, former Communists are economically right-wing and Catholics are economically left-wing. The Catholic social teaching, especially by the late Jean Paul II, constitutes a non-liberal critique of capitalism and is shared by many Poles across the political spectrum.

P. Schulze claimed that civil society is a middle-class concept. Indeed, among the 'traditional enemies' of civil society there are not only business associations and corporations but also and above all trade unions, popular parties and new social movements. In recent decades, all these structures have lost influence, especially parties and trade unions. By contrast, business has continuously grown in power, both in Europe and in Russia. Moreover, there is a structural impossibility for NGOs to enter the political field, as the monopoly is held and defended by parties. Various movements constitute a reservoir for *cadre* formation in future but they tend to be weak and lack the necessary resources.

The debate shifted towards more fundamental reflections on the nature of contemporary politics. A. Pabst argued that the West and Russia share three fundamental characteristics.

First, the concentration of political power in the hands of a small elite which is increasingly disconnected from the populace. Secondly, the concentration of economic power by multinational corporations at the expense of small- and medium-sized enterprises. Thirdly, the loss of high culture and the decline of genuine standards of excellence in education and other areas of the public sector. Conjointly, these three tendencies have caused a protracted crisis of legitimacy which puts into question the Western model as a whole. Liberal democracy is failing on its own terms because it no longer defends the common good of the people which it purports to represent. Instead, it wages war at home and abroad in the name of freedom and liberty. Likewise, the market economy has expanded into all areas of life and all human activities. Even though it has extended ownership (in real estate or via shares in production), it has done so in favour of a small oligarchy and at the expense of a ‘new underclass’ – the working poor and those trapped in utter poverty. Increasingly, the lower middle class struggles to make ends meet and has no hope of becoming structurally better off because it is permanently priced out of assets and left with nothing other than wages which in real terms tend to be stagnant. Finally, the loss of professional ethos and the decline of standards of excellence is the result of substituting managerialism for politics and a trivial utilitarian ethics for a virtue culture. By elevating progress into the new arbitrary absolute, liberalism and socialism has abandoned traditions and made *tabula rasa* – enforcing what Michael Oakeshott called a ‘blank sheet of infinite possibilities’.

C. Coker argued it only makes sense to speak of a crisis in terms of the absence of criteria. This definition can be illustrated by the evolution of two inventions which we have inherited from the nineteenth-century: citizenship and professional vocation. Citizenship is grounded in some declaration of fundamental rights but such a vision is abstract, as evinced by the case of France. The French model insists on the three founding principles of the Revolution but cannot translate these into inclusive civic practices. Likewise, the European Charter of Human Rights and the fundamental rights catalogue in the proposed European Constitution operate without a proper European *demos* by simple incorporation into national law. The ensuing legal mess can only function by resorting to absurd opt-out clauses: recently, the ‘cultural ignorance’ of right and wrong led to the acquittal of a British Muslim for murdering her child. Concerning professional ethos, the rights-based politics and culture have precipitated the loss of a sense of duty, which is beyond rights and responsibilities. Unlike legal contracts, duty involves something like covenants – open-ended, non-enforceable, voluntary agreements which bind together people and entail action on the basis of honour and excellence. Instead, we are seeing the rise of ill-thought hybrids: according to New Labour public-private partnerships, the public sector is seen as a mere service-provider and citizens are reduced to customers and clients. All institutions and actors are forced to embrace the neo-liberalisation of ethos and to submit to an impoverished utilitarianism.

S. Amin developed some of the ideas formulated by Almond and Pabst. Plutocracies are emerging and expanding across the world: some exist with representative governments, others do so without and yet others are *de facto* autocracies as a result of the predominance of the market. At the moment, there are low-intensity democracies, as parliaments surrender to the power of the market. This causes the de-legitimation of the system and the growth of social movements which contest the authority of the elites. Responses and alternatives can be assessed according to two fundamental criteria: democratisation and social progress. The aim has to be high-intensity democracies which provide substantial welfare. In Latin America, this process of elite de-legitimation and popular contestation has reached a critical mass, in the



sense that the social movements are engaged in politics or are even influencing government policies, like in Brazil. Against Blond's suggestion that the civil society, not the state, will provide the only genuine alternative, S. Amin advocated the restoration of the state, which has not so much retreated as it has been privatised. Civil society is ambiguous because it includes forces which work at the service of the market. Moreover, many civil society institutions are in crisis, above all trade unions. There will be no real transformation unless and until the state changes direction and breaks away from the market.

This debate on politics led to the final conference theme – the future of Europe and *homo europaeus*.

## VI. The future of Europe and *Homo Europaeus*

L. Rühl described the 'European man' as a profoundly anxious man, fearful of the future due to growing insecurity and a continuing loss of individual independence – he will most likely live under constant pressure from the market and will enjoy less protection from the state. This configuration is the result of fundamental changes in the nature and operation of politics. Much of executive and legislative power is in the process of transfer from the states to the EU. Hence both civil society and the individual progressively lose the protection from, and the control over, their national constituency. The problem is and remains how the Union can be made safe and take over responsibility for the genuine welfare of its citizens. This change, which has been intensifying since the inception of the European integration process in Western Europe in the 1950s, is accompanied by the shrinking of the material base of European society. This base was expanding approximately from the fifteenth and the sixteenth century until the 1950s and early 1960s, even though growth was uneven and unequal over time and across space. Nowadays there is a tendency towards alienation and pauperisation compared with the period of sustained growth and the continuous accumulation of wealth.

The underlying reason for this evolution is the end of the colonial and immediate post-colonial terms of trade. Indeed, between the sixteenth and the second half of the twentieth century, the terms of trade, defined by the colonial dominion of European powers, gave a decisive economic advantage to Europe. The second major factor which accounted for European predominance was the superiority of skills and scientific and technological progress. However, this has gradually been lost to rival powers like the USA and South-East Asia. Moreover, with the exception of Russia, the reserves of natural resources have been declining in Europe to the point where they are no longer profitable, especially North Sea oil and gas assets. At the same time, the demand for energy supply has risen disproportionately, making Europe dependent on imports from abroad.

As a result, Europeans will have to support their families, finance their communities and preserve their social fabric by confronting international competition which is already penetrating their society through international corporations and 'free trade'. Coupled with enhanced pressures on the European labour markets due to immigration, this tendency will be a significant driving force for anxiety amongst Europeans. The disgruntled social base will become increasingly impatient vis-à-vis the discredited national political elite and the illegitimate European bureaucracy. The entire contemporary socio-economic order will be questioned. This is a revolutionary change, even if it seems to be happening progressively.



The question is whether it will lead to a revolutionary situation – something like anarchy or totalitarianism. In short, insecurity and lack of ‘embeddedness’ are the mark of the nascent *homo europaeus*.

A. Kortunov predicted that ‘European-ness’ is being progressively dissolved at the heart of the (Western) core. This is because the process of political, economic and cultural Americanisation will destroy all the major differences between Europe and the USA. Yet at the same time, Central and Eastern Europe (and the post-Soviet space in Central Asia) is characterised by widespread fragmentation: despite the EU Eastern enlargement, there are widespread geographical tensions and the emergence of new clusters, including a geopolitical grey area of countries which are neither part of NATO and the EU nor integrated into Russia’s ‘natural sphere of influence’. Moreover, the transition economies are also beset by a severe social crisis – extreme social polarisation between an elite oligarchy, growing poverty, a large working class living at subsistence level and a small middle class. This division has a direct impact on consciousness. The future of ‘European-ness’ could take two forms: either a defensive vision which consolidates the idea of ‘fortress Europe’ and focuses on the reduction of immigration and on the protection of Europe from global competition or an offensive vision which seeks to promote European expansion and envisions Europe as a global power.

P. Blond argued that there are two dominant problems which prevent the emergence of a European alternative to the current consensus. First, from the perspective of the Left, the consolidation of oligarchies, the rise of poverty and inequality, as well as a growing lack of democracy. Secondly, from the perspective of the Right, the loss of a high culture, the destruction of the family and social relations, as well as the obliteration of the social fabric. The result is a utilitarianism which produces debased and atomised people who only follow the desires of capitalism. This is a pan-European problem which extends across the dominion of Constantine and beyond. A leftwing project that promotes only democratisation and social progress is insufficient: for example, a vibrant local democracy in the USA has not resisted the utter commodification of social relations. Instead, what is required is real wealth and real power at the level of the individual and communities, through asset-based welfare which empowers those who depend exclusively on subsistent wages. Coupled with the revival of a high culture, economic and political empowerment can overcome the ‘market state’ and the impoverished utilitarian ethics which it aggressively promotes. The question therefore is who can deliver such a vision. Given the failure of the state and the market, only voluntary associative organisations can embody this alternative, with an element of compulsion because there is an urgent need for cooperation.

W. Pfaff contended that decentralisation and distributism were practices as recently as the 1970s. The main difference seems to be apathy and a lack of altruism. Only smaller communities rather than the larger urban communities manage to practice some degree of self-governance. Contrary to a widespread belief, there is no genuine convergence of societies at some supranational and global level: national specificities and conflicts persist and, if anything, have intensified since the end of the Cold War. The French might have been americanised but it has not changed their political culture, as evinced by the recent demonstrations against the new labour laws, especially the *Contrat de Première Embauche* (CPE). Likewise, British attitudes towards the continent in general and Euro-scepticism in particular are an integral part of the UK’s cultural and political fabric. Amongst the causes for this lack of convergence, there are linguistic differences, geographical division and cultural



diversity. By contrast, in the USA homogeneity has replaced genuinely diverse culture through radio and television networks. The absence of any mass communication across Europe preserves local, regional and national difference but also prevents the emergence of a common identity. Even if there were to be any real political and cultural convergence, it will certainly not be trans-Atlantic, as Anti-Americanism is deeply engrained and Atlanticism is not a unifying force. The messianic vision and self-perception of the USA, which is in large part an Evangelical and Pentecostal reaction to liberalism, will not be emulated by Europe, not least because wealth will not be seen as a sign of God's good grace and blessing and poverty as a punishment for sin.

A. Piatigorsky repeated his fundamental critique of the conference topic and argued that the term identity is part of an un-philosophical lingo which is utterly meaningless. In some sense, this very idiom reflects the predominant ignorance and common idiocy which characterise the 'European man'. Instead of searching in vain for absolute truths and certainties, *homo europaeus* – if he is to be a real man – must be anxious, perhaps even afraid. He cannot be a common average mediocre human being but must be engaged in the perpetual quest for truthful self-knowledge. In Europe in particular, this requires that Europeans be bilingual and proficient in ancient as well as modern languages, not unlike Thomas Jefferson who mastered Latin and ancient Greek (and possibly ancient Hebrew too).

In response to these ideas, C. Coker said that one hundred years ago European aristocrats were bilingual and viewed themselves as European cosmopolitans. Nowadays the dominant identities are more closely related to either national conceptions or utopian visions like the 'Soviet man' or the 'American man'. With reference to Fritz Stern, he explained that whole nations, like people, do not get a second chance and that Europe's inability to build a common identity might spell the end of the 'European dream'. By analogy with Richard Rorty's point that if America fails, other countries will learn from that experience, this might also be true for Europe: if European integration is a failure, other parts of the world such as Latin America and South-East Asia might not repeat the same mistakes.

A. Pabst argued that the mark of Europe as a whole is de-politicisation and atomisation. Unlike America where there is in many places township democracy and community solidarity, European society is utterly atomised – liberal individualism not only dictates the European mind but also determines European practices. As a result, politics has ceased to be a popular activity and become the monopoly of small, self-serving elites. In response to the complicit collusion of the state and the market, Europeans have retreated from the privatised public sphere and abandoned any collective action. Civil society is to a large extent a negative reaction to this configuration, but it lacks the intellectual and cultural vigour to challenge the primacy of market democracies, unilateralism and pre-emptive warfare. The only genuine alternative to the *status quo* is to re-energise European culture and politics by breaking the constricting shackles of centrism. Masquerading as consensus politics beyond ideological divisions, centrism imposes a uniform and homogenising system and silences its critics. Only a new ideology can defeat centrism and transform the state, the market and civil society alike.

M. Almond referred to the motto that pessimism is a sin and optimism merely an error. He expressed scepticism about the potential for a future common identity across Europe and said that the only universal language of *homo europaeus* (or perhaps even of *homo euro-asiaticus*) is graffiti.

### Concluding remarks

This conference brought together a group of eminent scholars from a wide range of European countries and academic disciplines. The conference discussions raised fundamental questions and sought to sketch the contours of a vision of Europe beyond the conventional ideas and policies of the political elite in the East and West. As such, the conference marked an attempt to make a decisive contribution to current debates on the future of the European integration process and the relations between EU member-states with countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Balkans. The main conclusion was that the current consensus amongst the elite on the primacy of the 'market state' over civil society must be challenged and that without the revival of a high civic culture Europe will not be able to compete with rival powers in terms of scientific innovation and geo-political influence.

This project on European identity could be developed in a number of directions. First, there is an urgent need to revisit some of the most fundamental concepts that dominate academic research and official policy-making alike: for example, modernisation, globalisation and secularisation. Beyond the established theories in economics, political science and international relations, what is required is to integrate ideas from disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies and theology in order to conceptualise the challenges and problems which face Europe. Secondly, more conceptual work is needed to understand the nature and role of religion in politics and culture. It would be important to convene a separate seminar which focuses on a number of conceptions that are prevalent in current reflections on religious fundamentalism and secular extremism: traditional religion, political religion (e.g. 'Political Islam'), civil religion (e.g. religion in the USA), 'secular religion' (fascism in various traditions). Finally, one question which this conference has raised is how to reconnect the political and economic elite with civil society and how to achieve systemic transformation away from the concentration and centralisation of power towards a more decentralised inclusive politics which is shaped not only centrally but also and above all locally and regionally.

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LIEIS  
June 2006

*Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies  
and ISE-Center, Moscow*

Conference

***Homo Europaeus – East and West***

*12 and 13 May 2006*

*Castle of Schengen, Luxembourg*

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