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Is Federalism the Right Model for European Integration?

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Federalism is the Right Model for European Integration

The goals of European Integration

- Peace, the political goal
- Security, the geopolitical goal
- Prosperity, the economic goal
- Identity, the cultural goal. Continental Europe has an age-old tradition of federalism.

What is federalism?

Daniel J. Elazar: “federalism involves the **combination of self-rule and shared rule**, an arrangement where two or more peoples or polities find it necessary and desirable to live together within some kind of **constitutional framework** that will allow all the parties to **preserve their respective integrities** while securing peace and stability through power-sharing in those spheres **where it is necessary**”.

What Federalism for European Integration?

The four 'classical Europeanisms':

Different Visions of European Federalism

1. The vision of the Christian Democrats and the conservatives (Coudenhove, Churchill, De Gasperi, Adenauer, Schuman, De Gaulle)
2. The vision of the liberals (Robbins, Hayek, Einaudi)
3. The vision of the technocrats (Jean Monnet)
4. The vision of the progressives (Altiero Spinelli)

The EU as an upside-down confederation

- The contrasting logics of federalisation and neofunctionalist integration
- ‘Ever closer union’ vs. ‘as much union as necessary, as little union as possible’
- Emphasis on centralization, harmonization and regulation
- Co-management of national economies after the euro crisis: unthinkable in a real federation
- High diversity and heterogeneity coupled with limited legitimacy require the strict limitation of federal politics and powers

A healthy federalism for Europe

- Refocusing integration on core areas of traditional federal competence (e.g. foreign policy, defense, border control, four freedoms)
- Constitutionally protecting decentralization, competition and national and regional autonomy in other areas
- Strict subsidiarity on cultural issues
- Embracing the vision of a decentralised and competitive monetary union, as opposed to a 'one-currency-one-state vision'

Current political dangers

- East-West spat – federal model that bridges the gaps
- Macronism and the risk of permanent divisions from above – idem.
- National populism and the risk of defection from below (e.g. Brexit) – stronger national autonomy within a stronger federal framework
- Euro-centralisation

Conclusions

- Europe needs to evolve from an upside-down confederation to a federal union
- A limited, minimalist but strong union (federation? Confederation?) can be acceptable to everyone or at least most
- A wide-ranging and intrusive union will most likely prove unworkable
- The UEF can play a key in reinventing European federalism for the 21st century



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End of Presentation