

EUROPEAN INTERESTS IN THE IOR: WHAT KIND OF HISTORICAL SUBJECT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The title of my presentation might sound a bit enigmatic.

Therefore, it is probably helpful if I tell you right in the beginning what I would like to discuss.

In a nutshell I would like to mainly try to comment on the following questions:

1.: Does it make sense at all to speak of “Europe” as of an identifiable entity or would it make more sense to look at single countries which are summarized under the geographic concept of “Europe”?

2.: How will Europe develop in the middle and long term? Which trend will prevail? – The one towards integration or the one towards disintegration? Or will Europe possibly see saw between those two extremes for a long time to come?

3.: Depending on which conclusion we will arrive at: How important will the IOR be for that – however we picture it – integrating, disintegrating or even fragmented “Europe”?

4.: What will the relationship look like between a future Europe and the main players in the IOR?

A few remarks on my first question:

When after the two world wars of the 20th century the idea of the United States of Europe, a vision which to the best of my knowledge George Washington had sketched already in 1776 was advocated by eminent persons such as a.o. Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer and the French foreign minister Robert Schumann, the majority of Europeans, at least of Europeans to the West of the Soviet realm of influence, strongly believed that history will sooner or later result in the creation of the United States of Europe. When in 1957 the treaty of Rome was signed which constituted the so called European Economic Community a clear majority of Europeans still strongly believed that the creation of the European Economic Community was only a first step towards the final goal of a new entity called the United States of Europe.

To cut a long story short: This vision did not come true and today that framework of identification which is called the EU has very little in common with that idea of the United States of Europe which was so strong during the 50ies and the first half of the 60ies, has lost a great part of its fascination and also of its power to unite Europeans in a common political entity.

Today it has become rather obvious that economic integration must not necessarily lead towards political integration as was held at the time when the treaty of Rome was signed. What is called today the EU is a far cry from what the advocates of a common Europe have tried to promote after World War Two.

Today's EU is a strange conglomerate of different types of so called "nation states" which are based on very diverse concepts of nationhood, whereby the common institutions of that conglomerate from the political point of view are often not much more than the stage on which irreconcilable interests are colliding with each other.

As a consequence, EU – Europe is very much unable to arrive at consensus on global affairs and is thereby condemned to remain politically introvert to a degree which is in no proportion to the economic weight of EU – Europe.

When I am speaking in the following of "Europe" I am referring to EU – Europe but would like to suggest that we keep in mind that we are talking about a deeply split entity with very little chance to make progress towards a political entity able to act in a common way.

This brings me to my second question, namely to ask in which way, - more in the direction of integration or disintegration Europe will develop:

My hypothesis which I would like to offer to you is that for a long time to come, Europe will oscillate between these two extremes without a final decision on which way finally to go being anywhere near.

Regarding the question why EU – Europe finds it so difficult to constitute itself as that integrated historical subject which the visions of the 50ies and 60ies of the last century anticipated as the United States of Europe and which was expected to become an independent pole within the emerging multipolar system of international relations I would like to offer to you the following explanations:

EU – Europe as we have it today has been put together by states which differ in two important aspects: First: The level of economic development and the resulting different attitudes towards globalization and second: the different types of nationalism on which European concepts of the “nation state” rest. Political historiography differentiates in this context between so called “political nationalism” which originated in France during the times of absolutism and which was basically the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie which demanded to become part of the “nacion”, the name given to the kings advisory body which until the French revolution was only composed of nobility and clergy. In this sense “political nationalism” was basically the quest for political codetermination. Western European concepts of “nationalism” and “Nation State” are to a great degree based on what is called “political nationalism” whereas the new Eastern European members of the EU take their understanding of the “nation state” from 19th century so called “romantic nationalism” which is based on the myth of a glorious “national” past which should be re - established in the present.

What is important to stress is that EU – Europe is composed of states with different concepts of “nation” and “nation state” and this difference is also intertwined with different levels of economic development.

Roughly speaking, the states the base ideology of which is greatly influenced by “romantic nationalism” are at the same time more or less those which have a clearly lower level of economic development.

What I would like to point to with these remarks is that EU – Europe is from the viewpoint of political base – ideology as well as economic development a deeply split entity which for a long time to come will not really be able to act in a unified way. The idea of a so called “Europe of two speeds” (I am referring to “EU I” when I am talking about the states with a high level of development the state concept of which is based on “political nationalism” and EU II when I am talking about the states with comparatively low levels of development based on “romantic nationalism”) that idea which is trying to do justice to the great divide which in the last analysis stops Europe from really becoming a global player.

I now at long last would like to discuss what all this means concerning European presence in the IOR and the IOR’s significance to Europe.

The following “megatrend” has to be taken cognizance of when we try to say something about the future development of European presence in the IOR and European dependence on the IOR:

Until the beginning of the 80ies of the 20ies century intra – European trade grew with an average of 8%. Then we find a period of stagnation starting around 1990 which lasted until the beginning of the 21st century. After that there is a clear reduction of intra – European trade and an increase of trade with countries outside the EU with the lion’s share going to IOR – rim countries or to countries the trade with which has to go through the IOR.

Today approximately 35% of EU trade go to IOR – rim countries or have to cross the IOR and ca. 45% of EU imports come from IOR countries or go through the IOR. This trend is going to remain for the foreseeable future and within the next 10 – 15 years we can expect that extra – EU trade will become much more important than intra – EU trade.

Now: A closer look at this trend shows that the states which I am calling “EU I” become so to speak “extravert” or “extraverted” at a much higher speed than the “EU II” – states.

This is to say that for “EU I” the IOR will have a much greater significance than for “EU II” both as the region where increasingly important trading partners are placed as well as the region through which imports to “EU I” have to be transacted.

If this is correct the following consequences are obvious:

Countries of “EU I” will to the degree to which the IOR becomes more and more important economically for them, have to become more and more interested to increase their presence in the IOR also in terms of foreign politics and not at least in terms of security politics.

This is quite interesting a development because it will force us to modify the paradigm which we are used to employ when we try to identify and analyze main determinants of developments in and around the IOR.

The paradigm which we are used to so far could be roughly described as follows:

The importance of the IOR as both, - a factor and at the same time a medium of globalization-, is further going to increase in the foreseeable future. Because of this, major established powers as well as major rising powers, compete for maximum influence and control in the IOR. Particularly the unfolding dualism between India and China demands great attention if one would like to gain sufficient understanding of future developments in and around the IOR. If we want to understand what is going on in the IOR, - so the paradigm -, we should in first place watch the degree to which visions such as the maritime silk road and possibly the Asia – Africa Growth Corridor, become reality.

This paradigm has its merits and it can be refined and be made more helpful from the heuristic point of view by including additional players such as the USA, Japan and others but it will remain incomplete to a large degree if it does not factor in the increasing presence of what I have called “EU I” in the IOR.

This presence will not remain limited to increasing economic activity alone. Sooner or later that economic activity and presence will have to be complemented with security politics which will be supposed to protect “EU I” economic interests in the IOR. European contributions to anti piracy – measures are a first indication that a respective learning process has begun already, a learning process the result of which will be the realization that the pursuit of economic interests cannot be accomplished without complete security politics.

This brings me to an important hypothesis: “EU I” will not attempt to develop a security presence in the IOR single handedly; it will try to achieve this with the support and in cooperation with a suitable partner.

And there is little doubt that the best possible partner for this, would be India.

“EU I” and India have no serious political problems with each other and their societies share basic democratic values. Moreover: “EU I” could become for India a much more valuable partner when it comes to technology transfer as is the case today, while India with its rising service industry could become an extremely valuable factor for the stimulation of “EU I” – economy, - to name just a few examples which point to the possibility of a clear win win – situation between the two.

And last but not least: India as well as “EU I” have both a vital interest in enlarging respective footprints in the IOR in a way which carries no danger whatsoever of a zero sum – game.

If we presume that - looking at India and “EU I” - by and large politics is a business which is enacted by rational players, there is hardly any doubt that rather sooner than later India and “EU I” will find themselves as close partners in the IOR. Then a new paradigm regarding at developments in the IOR will establish itself and cards in that IOR - great game will be dealt anew.

On footnote: Accordingly, it would make a lot of sense to also think of research programs dealing with aspects of Indian – European partnership in the IOR and possibly also institutionalize respective research

The train of thoughts I have tried to sketch had of course to be of a fragmentary nature and have certainly provoked more questions than answers.

In any case I am looking forward to your comments and for now thank you for your attention.