

*Is the CDU still a Christian democratic party?
The debate on European Constitution*

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The CDU in hard times

The once very successful German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has lost several elections in the last years. However the decline has already started before the defeat of the last federal election in 1998 and the financial affairs in 1999/2000. The reduction of gaining votes was a phenomenon which was characteristic for the whole 1990s. In the same way as the Christian democrats had won influence and power in the provinces during the opposition years in the 1970s and had thus built the fundament of the transition of power in Bonn in 1982, the defeat in the last federal election clearly emerged because of the increasing reduction of its strength in the provinces and its bad performance in most the 'Länder' elections over the last ten years: The CDU was not only unpopular in opinion polls but also unsuccessful to maintain the power in the Länder. However, these 'Länder' elections do not only mean bad results in irrelevant mid-term elections for a federal political party. This reduction has had serious implications for the internal condition of the party because a federal party recruits a good part of its new political blood as well in personal as in programmatic respect from the Länder level.¹

The decline of the CDU at the Länder and at the federal level has been sown for a long time and -- the most remarkable point is -- that nobody within the leadership has started a turning shift to refurbish the party. „Not listening to the daily needs and trends any more, because you had all the power“ was the basic problem of the CDU in the late age of Kohl's chancellorship. Especially in the reforms of the period from 1994 to 1998 a clear vision was missing. The future was not seen as a desirable goal but as a threat to the social standards.

The CDU was big in underlining values and missed social goals with some utopian ideas, which would be more than technocratic means.² Hence, the debate about the party's basic programme in the election year of 1994 was -- in contrast to the Ludwigshafener programme in 1978 -- a slim copy of this deep debate about the right visions and goals for the future.³ After sixteen years in government, the party has fallen into a programmatic standstill, lacking clear ideas about the goals it wants to reach.

Thus, the debate about the future of the European discussion in 2001 has been one of the first basic debates about the basic ideas of the society, economy and the state in the time after Kohl. The commission which was lead by the former party leader Wolfgang Schäuble, was a shared commission of the CDU and CSU. Its concept was debated in both party executive boards and the common parliamentary party in the Deutsche Bundestag.

As a consequence, this developed paper is a good overview of the party's belief. With the help of its European long-term policy, it will analyse its concept of state, society and economy. Especially, the debate about a future constitution has two advantages in this

¹ Schmid (1990)

² Dürr und Walter (2000)

³ compare:

respect: Firstly, it is a debate about political values and goals. Secondly, it is much more constrained by realistic circumstances than basic party programmes. In contrast to the long-lasting programme debates, which have much more an integrative function within the party than being a clear-cut political decision, this debate implicated such decisions. Therefore, it is an ideal example to see the ideological stance of the party. Hence, this paper will firstly discuss the basic elements of the Christian democratic ideology, and then analyse how far these coining principles are realised in Schäuble's proposal.

Christian democracy as a „famille spirituelle“

Christian democracy has experienced two catharsis during its development. The first was the development of confessional parties in the 19th century. The other nucleus was the opening up strategy towards inter-confessional parties in the 1940s, which reflected a conviction the necessity to have a common Christian values orientated policy because of experiences with the totalitarian regimes in the first half of the 20th century in Europe.^{4 5}

The pre-war denominational parties were the reaction of political Catholicism towards the state-church cleavage, which occurred in the aftermath of the French Revolution and during the rise of the modern state during the 19th century.⁶ In the first place, Political Catholicism⁷ opposed not only state interventions in traditional church areas, such as education or wedding regulations, but it also demanded a general limitation of state omnipotence, especially in social and political sphere of life. Furthermore, it preferred the merits of traditional community over

⁴ Furthermore, the Christian democratic parties in the Lower lands have a different traditional development and a much closer linkage towards their pre- and interwar period. See: Nipperdey (1986, p. 138f.)

⁵ Rauscher (1997, p.440)

⁶ Lipset and Rokkan (1963, p. 104) However, In accordance to Sartori's warning against what he called the sociology of politics, and thus against an approach which sees the political simply dependent of the social (Sartori, 1968: p.171), Stathis N. Kalyvas explains with the help of a rational choice approach, the formation of the early denominational parties were the contingent out-comes of strategic decisions by political actors, rather than the product of these actors' originally intentions and plans by the church hierarchy or by conservative elite (Kalyvas, 1997:p.294). As a consequence, even though there were doubtless salient and, for the formation process, important state-church cleavages, confessional parties were creations of lay people who wanted to protect their Catholic identity once beliefs in all social, political and cultural dimension and at the same time be open to the emergence of democratic ideals. Even because they wanted the church to be the source of the spiritual values that could be come the foundation of a democratic modern society, these movements undermined the traditional role of the church hierarchy. (Baum and Coleman, 1993: p.XIX) Therefore, although the intellectual ecclesiastical contributions, such as papal 'encyclicas rerum novarum', 'quadragesimo anno' and 'pacem in terra', as well as their organisational support and help should not be neglected and underestimated, these movements once emancipated from the church hierarchy were able to adopt as a mass party new issues, such as social policy and constitutional reforms, e.g. republicanism. The leader of the Zentrum, Ludwig Windhorst, and Don Sturz, leader of PPI, were excellent example for this emancipation.

⁷ the Political Catholicism, which is also known under the label 'Ultramontanism' (Nipperdey) and 'Catholic movement' (Frühwald), arose in the first half of the 19th century and tried to established a new Catholic self-identity within the Church (stronger hierarchy orientation towards Rome) opposed the ideas of Reformation and enlightenment -especially the idea of subjectivity- and tried to re-open the church towards mass appeals and popular forms of devotions. Compare: Nipperdey [1986^b, p. 406-427]. Prominent representatives of this (trans-national) movement were Joseph Görres, Adam Müller and Daniel O'Donell. See: Frühwald (1977); Grogan (1991)

an atomised society in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. Although it did not neglect the benefits of progressive change as such, it was sceptical that this process has to go hand in hand with secularisation, liberalisation and individualisation.⁸

In accordance, the early Christian democratic thought was coined not only the defence of the ecclesiastical position, rights and privileges in the society vis-a-vis the demands of the modern state in the 19th century, but also by ideas which tried to integrate traditional notions of communities and values within a modern society with the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution and its social implications.⁹ Prominent Christian democratic thinkers, such as Jacques Maritain, Wilhelm Emanuel von Ketteler, Georg von Hertling, Heinrich Pesch and later Romano Guardini, suspected the idea of absolute omnipotence of the human being with a capacity for subjectivity in all sphere of life, instead favouring the idea of a 'Christliches Menschenbild' (idea about a Christian person). The human being would not only need liberal, negative rights of freedom for the individual development of each person, but also an awareness of the limitations on omnipotence and its infirmities as well as communitarian and spiritual encouragement. Therefore, a pluralism, which was based on social links and small communities, especially the civil family, as well as moral values as a guideline and clear responsibility for the whole community were seen as important for personal development. As a consequence, 'freedom' possessed a slightly different meaning than it did for the liberals, because it did not advocate the individual as an absolute quantity, but pronounced the freedom for different communities.¹⁰

From these thoughts, Emanuel Mounier developed a 'Christianised' version of individualism -- personalism -- in the 1930s,¹¹ which has become the corner stone for Christian democracy's ethos.¹² The essence of personalism lays in its strong emphasis on the importance of the development of each human personality in each dimension of its life, social, individual, spiritual, and material. Thus, in contrast to the secular social democratic and liberal theories, personalism as a theologically based concept set great store on the spiritual and moral side of life. Because the individual can only reach fulfilment within the 'natural structures' of society, such as the family, the community or the place of work, it tries to emphasise and strengthen these 'communities structures' within a modern, industrialised society. As a consequence, the accent in solidarity lays in the solidarity between and in small communities, such as the family, rather than in one class.

This concept grants some competencies and rights to the state to protect and support such structures, although the state should find its limitation in the interaction between these autonomous groups in pluralism. Hence, one aspect of the state role to contribute to the full development of all members of society has been to guarantee the natural rights of each individual's freedom. However, in contrast to the original liberal ideology, Christian democrats also expressed some sympathy in the concept of social justice as a desirable goal, based on the conviction that a community has to stand together and help needy people. Hence, the overall guideline has been a combination of freedom and justice to provide a united, pluralistic society within the traditional Romantic ideal of order and harmony.¹³

⁸ Becker (1988, p. 18-21)

⁹ Dierichx (1994, p.18)

¹⁰ Becker (1990, p.20f.)

¹¹ Irving (1979, p.31); Durand (1995, p.119)

¹² Jansen (1998, p.125)

¹³ To the Christian democratic roots to the (German) romantic see: Nipperdey (1986^b) and Becker (1988, p. 8-18)

In sum, the view that a person rather than an atomised individual needs not only freedom, but also social linkages in small communities as well as guidelines through moral values, because a person is concerned as much with the individual as with human society and the national community as a whole, is the core ethos of Christian democratic theory.¹⁴ However, although this by itself is too vague to build up a precise ideology, scholars, such as Irving (1979), Kersbergen (1994/1995), Dierichx (1994); Kalyvas (1996/1998) and Huber/Ragin/Stephens (1993), have shown that there are some common characteristic principles, which have been developed from this Christian democratic ethos and characterise Christian Democracy, based on principles of horizontal and vertical pluralism, and social capitalism.

Pluralism is the second characteristic of Christian democracy. In accordance with personalism's emphasis on the natural structure of the society, pluralism builds in a pre-condition that the person can fulfil himself in the variety of the society.¹⁵ Vertical pluralism is recognition of tolerance to accept a variety of equal confessions, ethnic or ideas of life.

In addition horizontal pluralism is the having of equal rights and the co-existence of various social groups and public units. It wants to limit the omnipotence of the state in an atomised and masticated modern society. Therefore the promotion of communities, the transfer of common tasks, resources and privileges to civil society groups is desirable to avoid collective and individual egoism. The state should not be the only administrator of power, principles, and public resources, but its role should be large enough to enable it to define and enforce responsibilities of individuals or social groups with the help of the 'natural structures' of the society.¹⁶ Each person should have the necessary freedom and support to be able to develop his personality. Furthermore, the state should be encouraged to overtake responsibility for public goods, tasks and responsibilities.¹⁷

Furthermore, the early Christian democrats were sceptical of a completely powerful Westminster parliament in its liberal age, because it only emphasises the principles of individualism and subjectivity neglecting the important component of responsibility with its concentration on the individual, by solving the challenges of a mass society.¹⁸ In contrast to that, Christian democratic theory favours the idea that the citizen shall not only be involved in each election period by giving their votes, but also should be continually engaged through involvement in the community in civil society groups. These groups should act as intermediators between the state and its citizens, by being to the daily needs of the citizen as well as undertaking certain responsibilities and tasks for the community, such as education.

Besides, this subsidiarity towards civil society groups is complemented by subsidiarity to public units. Because personalism is reluctant to treat the nation state as the 'natural' political structure, Christian democracy promotes subsidiarity in both directions, by supporting decentralisation as well as supranational co-operation. Therefore Christian democrats has been

¹⁴ To personalism as a Christian democratic concept, see: Durand (1995, p. 118-127); Becker (1990, p. 19-21); Keesbergen (1995, p.184), Irving (1979, p.30f.); Jansen (1998, p.125-127)

¹⁵ Forgarty (1957, p.41)

¹⁶ Hahn (1990, p.40); Keesbergen (1995, p.181)

¹⁷ Irving (1979, p. 42)

¹⁸ It should be kept in mind that Christian democracy adopted parliamentary democracy as the finally successful order for freedom, but they did not founded this political order as their original goal and were sceptical towards an absolute principle based on subjectivity, such as direct democracy. See: Irving (1979, p. 35) Compare also Fraenkle's conception about pluralism and its sceptics towards pure liberalism. See: Fraenkle (1968, p.170)

--at least in theory¹⁹-- strong supporters of decentralised and federal state structures. Furthermore, they have been unanimously committed to the process of European Integration, arguing that this supranational unit would have been helpful in overcoming the circle of national conflicts and rebuilding western Europe.^{20 21} As the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty has recently shown, in contrast to some Conservative parties, all Christian democratic parties in the EU were in favour of the treaty.²²

The third Christian democratic characteristic is the idea of social capitalism or the social market economy. Although these concepts might vary quite widely in their out-puts, the key concept is always clearly based on the idea of the personalism of personal freedom as well as the individual's responsibility towards society. As Kees van Keersbergen (1995, p.179f.) points out, „Christian democracy nourishes an ideal concept of social citizenship that departs significantly from the individualist, yet solidarist connotations of the Marshallian notion. Christian democrats stress duties rather than rights, the family and social group rather than the individual, society rather than the state, and distributional justice rather than social justice. ... Direct state intervention in social and economic relations is permitted only to the extent that the organic and natural order of society is restored by providing relief for poverty or by recreating solidarity and harmony between various social groups.“ Hence, they recognise the importance of private property as well as the responsibility and necessity of the community to be able to help persons, who are not favoured by the driving market forces.

In contrast to the (traditional) social-democratic conception which seeks equality through single redistribution payments, Christian democrats see the ideal state at welfare state, but try to avoid the claimed ‘illusion of an omnipotent and omniscient state’. Its task rather consists in defining and enforcing the responsibility of others individuals or social group, rather than providing services itself.²³ As Huber, Rapin and Stephen (1993, p.717) point out, Christian Democrats favour only direct state intervention in social and economic relations only to the extent that the ‘organic and natural order’ of society is restored by providing relief for property or by recreating solidarity or rather harmony between various social groups. In a Christian democratic welfare state, transfer payments correct market failures, rather than shape social equality.

Furthermore, Christian democratic economic policy focuses on consensus and cross-class appeal. Although it recognises the importance of management knowledge to lead a business, it wants to see an involvement in or at least knowledge of the management decision process. Both employers and employees should bridge their different interests to seek the best possible consensus for the whole firm and community, rather than press through segmental interests. As a consequence, Christian democrats stress the importance of organised workers and employers, but also emphasise their responsibility to find agreements and not dissent in reaching their interests. Furthermore, both parts should respect each other, because each individual gains not only his material resources for living at the working place, but also gains self-reliance for his personal development in this social structure.

¹⁹ Although the Democrazia Christiana had demanded a strong regionalism in the constitutional assembly, as its parliamentarians won the 1948 election, they refused to decentralise the country, because they feared to lose power towards the socialist and communist parties in the 1950s and 1960s.

²⁰ Hix and Lord (1997, p.26)

²¹ EPP (1993, p.11)

²² Hix and Lord (1997, p.32)

²³ Forgarty (1957, p.91)

In sum, although Christian democracy emphasises solidarity as a basic element for a society in harmony and stability, it appreciates market based solutions and private property. Hence, the welfare state has to organise with the market, rather than to overcome it. Therefore, it tries to pursue a middle way between individualistic liberalism and collective socialist ideals.²⁴

²⁴ Dumoulin (1997, p. 370)

Proposal of the CDU and CSU for a European Constitution:

The working group „European Constitution (Verfassungsvertrag) between the CDU and CSU, which was lead by Wolfgang Schäuble and the Bavarian minister for European affairs, Reinhold Bocklet, had the target of strengthening the competence of the German Christian democrats in European affairs in the Post-Kohl era. In the time of Kohl's chancellorship, the predominant position of the head of the government guaranteed a strong position in the European integration project. By doing this, he stood in a good tradition of other Christian democratic leaders. Not only Konrad Adenauer, as one of the fathers of the European Community, but also Franz Josef Strauß and Reinhard Barzel were strongly in favour of a united Europe.

As the political scientist Klaus Goetz has shown, national German interests have merged with European interests in the last 50 years. However in recent years, some CDU/CSU politicians, such as Edmund Stoiber, have emphasised that the German government should emphasise national interests more. The European Union would have been regarded more as an intergovernmental political system than a functional multi level political system. In the same respect, the European People's Party (EPP) followed an open-up- strategy towards conservative allies, such as the Greek, Danish and Spanish conservatives as well as other right-wing parties, such as the Italian Forza Italia.²⁵ This political course, which was mainly pushed by the CDU, was a reflection of its own party history. After 1946, the CDU has collected different political orientations and traditions of the pre-war Weimar republic. Not only was the former confessional Catholic party wing, which was built up from the doomed Centre Party, connected with Protestant orientated Christian politicians but also with secular conservatives and liberals. As a consequence, this party has not had a closed Christian democratic party ideology, but it was more coined by a special integration process, which tried to integrate conservative, Christian democratic and liberal movements into one. They had four corner stones as common goals: German unity, west integration, anti- communism, and social capitalism with the protection of private ownership. Therefore, the CDU did more than just opening up its strategy of the Catholic tower, which characterised Christian democracy all over Europe.

Especially in its founding days in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the CDU was dominated by leaders who had been politically socialised by the Catholic Centre Party. The process of secularisation affected not only German society but also the CDU in the 1960s and 1970s. The dominating factor of socialisation has shifted from Christian youth organisations to the own organisations of the party, such as the Junge Union (the biggest party youth organisation) or the CDU's student organisation RCDS. As a consequence, the party youth has been socialised by its own members rather than by a distinct milieu or distinct civil society organisations. This shift in socialisation has had implications on the own party belief, because it has more and more become an autonomous process.

In ideological aspects, the difference between Conservatives and Christian democrats has been sympathy towards European Integration and the idea of the nation states.

Hence, it is a good example to have a look at how far the CDU's proposal follows the above outlined political beliefs in the proposal about the European constitution in the future.

The proposal is coined by three principles: European ideas about the human being, subsidy, and solidarity.

²⁵ EVP Buch

Europe is seen as a value in itself: *The European Integration has the big chance, to realise the European idea of human being [Menschenbild] and its founding community of values for the world of tomorrow. Hence, Europe can built up a better world.*²⁶ In this sense, Europe will be seen as a value in itself, which represents more than only a single market community or an intergovernmental alliance to protect a certain variety of national interests. The nation state is not the last political order and Europe more than an international platform. As a consequence, a common value platform shall be an integrated part of the European constitution.²⁷ *Europe can overcome the unnatural split across Europe, which was based on the Cold War. Europe can built up as the biggest zone of stability, security, wealth and social justice on earth.*²⁸

However, Europe is not seen as the most important political level. The capability of action has to be correlated with the protection of both national and regional identities. This point connects not only the merge between Christian democratic and conservative views, by connecting national and regional identity reasons. Furthermore, it will be outlined that Europe will still be constructed by nation states in the future. Nations and Europe will need each other.²⁹ The connection between the peoples and their nation states is seen as one of the most coining elements in European history. However, this is a very limited nation-orientated approach compared to the conservative counterparts, such as the British, Spanish and Danish conservatives. This view is much closer to the Christian democratic view, by accepting that a state is not built around the nation as such, but it is built in a multi-level connection between small communities and a supranational level. This point is underlined by the demand to protect the natural structures of society. All grown traditions in civilisation, culture and civil society should be secured.³⁰ This implies both national heritage as well as regional identities.

In the same way, the European constitution shall be created after the principle of subsidy. This principle, which arose from the Catholic social thought, shall be the leading principle of the distribution of power between the different levels of the EU. This principle shall be applied very strictly. The responsibilities of the EU vis-à-vis the national and regional level have to be positively described. In other words, all responsibilities and tasks which are not clearly declared as European ones shall be treated at a lower level.³¹ This rule shall counteract the iron law that the highest centre of power always becomes stronger and stronger by seeking new tasks and responsibilities all the time. Such a hybrid of an all-powerful European central state would undermine the Christian democratic belief of multi-level governance, which is coined by the natural structures of a society and would protect the society. This stance is not anti-European but rather influenced by federalism and scepticism against the centralisation of power.

Another corner stone of the proposal is the solidarity between the peoples of Europe. It is explicitly outspoken that a redistribution process between the different nations and regions is an important element of the EU. However, it is criticised that the EU has to prevent an overwhelming bureaucracy. In a Christian democratic sense, the principle of solidarity shall be connected with the principle of subsidy. Not a central, over regulated scheme of distribution shall be the guidance, but the member states shall be financially empowered to solve the social and economic challenges of the common market. Therefore, it is a clear Christian democratic

²⁶ CDU (2001, p. 2)

²⁷ CDU (2001, p. 13)

²⁸ CDU (2001, p. 3)

²⁹ CDU (2001, p.6)

³⁰ CDU (2001, p. 4)

³¹ CDU (2001, p. 8)

concept, which is a mixture between solidarity and the encouragement of lower levels to solve the problems according to their own concepts and ideas. The expression of this philosophy is the funds of solidarity which shall replace the too strongly regulated structure and cohesion funds.

The renewal of the EU institutions implies the Christian democratic system with the principle of federalism in the same way: a bicameralism shall be created for the budget as well as for other legislative processes. The European parliament shall be strengthened and become the first chamber. Furthermore, the European council shall be sitting in public during the legislative process. The European Parliament shall be empowered to collect taxes on its own.³² The European commission shall become the single executive power. The president of the commission shall be elected by the European Parliament, its choice has to be accepted by the Council.³³

Conclusion

The proposal for a new European constitution demonstrates that the CDU is still a Christian democratic party with some conservative elements. Especially its views on the nation state and European Integration show its membership to the European Christian democratic party family. Both traditional Christian democratic values – subsidy and solidarity – have coined the proposal in a strong way. Furthermore, the proposed parliamentary bicameralism implies the vision of Europe as a functional multi level governance instead of an intergovernmental and international political unit as well as its preference of the representation of the different levels within the legislative process. It reflects the constitutional reality of Germany, which was strongly coined by leading Christian democrats, such as Konrad Adenauer and Hans Ehard.

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³² CDU (2001, p. 28)

³³ CDU (2001, p. 11)

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