



## THEME 3: Transformation processes

### Teaching and learning aids

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#### Transnational change

##### The European Union, a community for peace

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When young people are asked in Europe today what the EU has to do with values, the answer is frequently: “You can move freely everywhere in the EU and even pay with the same currency in many cases.”

Few European citizens are aware today that this freedom of movement and the introduction of a common currency required a struggle that took half a century and gave Europe a period of peace it had never known before. Unfortunately too few Europeans think about what changes will be necessary to guarantee the values we have acquired so that they will continue to be preserved in the future, for today as much as ever before national state egoism still survives.

##### The nation state and its disadvantages

In order to understand the huge achievement of transformation of the European Union, one must first describe the starting conditions, which to a large extent were the same for nearly all European states up to the Second World War.

In western, southern and central Europe so-called nation states had come into existence in the course of the nineteenth century which

1. commanded a precise territory
2. with clearly defined borders.
3. Within these borders most of the population belonged to a single people or – as in the case of France – to one nation.
4. There were sovereign governments that were able to impose their laws and regulations right up to the borders of their states.

These sovereign nation states had two decisive disadvantages:

Firstly: the aims and measures taken by these states, which were directed inwards, usually had greater importance than the needs of the citizens. In the last two centuries, and sometimes right up to very recent times, almost all European nations had had painful experiences with the prerogatives of the state – a collective. This will find confirmation particularly with all the nations that were forced for a time to live under the dictatorships of single individuals or of the party.

The second disadvantage of the nation state is seen in its foreign relations. By overrating their own qualities and needs, European nation states, especially in the nineteenth century, found themselves in dangerous competition for power and wealth. The struggle for hegemony over other nations and the aspirations of peoples straining against oppression to obtain full sovereignty for themselves led to the First World War.

Yet the opportunity to learn from the bloodshed of the battlefields was missed after 1918. The Treaty of Versailles paved the way for the rise of National Socialism in Germany, the Treaty of St. Germain made relations difficult between Austria and France to some extent up to the present day. The Treaty of Trianon, too, had a traumatic effect on Hungary and brought no enduring peace to the Balkans right up to today. The settlements regarding Turkey and the Middle East in the Treaty of Sèvres have left a trail of blood through wars and acts of terror right into our own times.

The years following the First World War were too strongly marked by nationalism, envy, desire for revenge, hatred, distrust and greed for new ideas to be able to create a better order of peace.

The economic depression – as a consequence of the First World War – shattered the political set-up in the whole of Europe and paved the way in many countries for dictatorships. In Germany the dictatorship took first its own country and then all of Europe into the catastrophe of the Second World War with some 55 million dead, 35 million wounded, 3 million missing and more than 12 million refugees and displaced persons.

The mood in Europe after the Second World War was at first no better than after the first one. In 1948 – even before the Federal Republic of Germany had come into existence – France, Britain and the Benelux countries signed the “Brussels Pact”, which among other things was directed against a resumption of a German policy of aggression. That is, until the end of the 1940’s the nation states continued to follow the centuries-old model of behaviour based on the balance of power.

In the 1950’s, however, circumstances in western Europe changed and brought hope, but in the east they were depressing, if we only think of the year 1956 in Hungary.

### **The Community establishes peace within its own borders.**

It was the Frenchman Jean Monnet who developed the plan to take out the economic potential for a new rearmaments policy - that is, coal and steel production – from the sovereign power of France and Germany and to put them under the joint administration of a new transnational authority.

The French foreign minister Robert Schuman expounded this idea publicly on 9<sup>th</sup>. May, 1950 - exactly 5 years after the end of the Second World War - and it was immediately received positively by the German Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. (T 302/1)

The idea of sharing sovereignty over economic goods with the help of a new European administration laid the foundation stone for a new policy that would be in a position to banish striving after revenge and domination from western and central Europe. The “European Community for Coal and Steel” of the year 1950 was the foundation stone for a fresh way of thinking and for lasting peace in Europe, a value that cannot be appreciated highly enough when we think of the bloodiest wars in the history of the world, which people suffered in the first half of the twentieth century.

By further Europeanization (merging under the authority of the Community) of large areas of economic policy the member countries of the EU have been able to maintain peace among themselves up to the present. (T 302/2)

The EU is certainly no new nation state in the sense of the four characteristics mentioned at the beginning. Although it has a precise territory with clearly defined borders, it is based on different states. Their governments share legislation with the community organs of the Union.

### **The nation state and external security**

Even if there no longer exists an immediate threat to Europe from the Soviet Union after its collapse, there have arisen other kinds of threat that originate from various sources outside Europe, but which could well seriously disturb the peace inside Europe. One only has to think in this connection for example of the 2003 war in Iraq and the act of terrorism in Madrid on 11<sup>th</sup>. March, 2004.

In the field of external security the nation state thinking of European governments seems to live on uninterrupted, although millions of EU citizens have long since understood that this way of thinking will no longer suffice to solve global problems.

The question is whether Europe should submit to a unipolar world policy that is made in the USA, or whether we should strive towards a multipolar world order where the European Union can also bring in its own ideas.

Unfortunately the possibility of policy-making in a globalized world, i.e. of making one’s own ideas count, depends also on military potential. That can be regretted, as any form of over-arming is wasteful and only provokes counter-measures, but an uncompromising pacifism does not change anything in the facts in the

world around us. Or does anyone believe that a man like Milošević would have listened to the pleas of the pacifists?

So far Europeans have not succeeded in repeating the recipe for success of merging together within the community in the field of security and defence policy. NATO is a defence alliance and not a community-integrated organization in the way that the EU is, as it is dependent from case to case on the approval of the sovereign governments of its member countries.

### **How did Europe arrive at a weak position in security policy?**

To find an answer to this question one must go back again to the period after the Second World War. If the Brussels Pact showed that in 1948 people still believed that Western Europe must protect itself against renewed aggression from Germany, then the situation underwent a fundamental change after the beginning of the Korea War in 1950. The communist threat from the east was now seen as the greater threat to Western Europe.

In 1950 the French premier Pleven expounded the idea of a European Defence Community (EDC) before the French National Assembly. This was to bring together all the armed forces of the member countries in a combined army with a joint command under one European Minister of Defence. (T 302/3)

A treaty on these lines was signed by France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries in 1952 and ratified by five states by 1954. Only the French National Assembly rejected it on 30<sup>th</sup>. August, 1954.

This was a decision with far-reaching consequences. The security of Western Europe now became the sole responsibility of NATO under the leadership of the USA. It is significant that after the break-up of the Soviet Union the new EU countries of central Eastern Europe first wanted to become members of NATO and only after that member of the European Union.

After the disastrous wrong decision by the French National Assembly in 1954 it took 50 years for the EU countries to make a new attempt to organize a common security and defence policy in the European Constitution signed in 2004. Sovereignty in this field, though, remains just as before in the hands of the single member countries of the EU, who have to approve all decisions unanimously before this security policy can be realized. (T 302/4)

The vehement discussions which flared up in Europe over the reasons for the war in Iraq show that we are still a long way from a common assessment of the security situation in Europe and in the world. The relationship of the EU to NATO and to the USA also leaves many questions still unanswered.

It is an important task in teaching to provide information in school on the transformation processes in progress. For one thing is certain: unless large numbers of European citizens are involved in joining in thinking, the political decision-makers will go on acting according to old models of behaviour and so distrust, hegemony and national vanity will call the tune.

### **Summary**

After the hegemonic politics among European nation states had led to catastrophic wars twice within half a century, European politicians tried to join together in administering the economic resources of their countries by means of new transnational institutions. This was first of all intended to remove the basis for a renewed rearmament race. At the same time a larger buying and selling market was growing for the production of goods that could increase the prosperity of the population of the EU considerably.

- Every kind of war preparation was prevented this way and the EU has become a community of peace
- The EU member countries did hand over sovereign rights to a certain extent to transnational institutions, but in return they received greater constitutional security in an ever increasing European area.
- The recipe for joint administration in the economic field has in the last 50 years become a magnet for other countries both inside and, more recently, outside Europe.
- In the region of security and defence policy many governments in EU member countries do still insist on a nation state way of thinking, which is , however, no longer in a position to exert decisive influence in the face of global challenges, for example in the Balkans, in the Middle East, in Iraq, or in parts of Asia and Africa.

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