Conclusion

This book's chapters have explored the main dimensions of the concept of Europe, all of which emphasise Europe as a unity, but one marked by borders and divisions. In certain respects, Europe is obviously a unifying concept that has made it possible to think beyond divisions and transcend borders. Europe has been associated with pleadings for a political unity that could undo the legacy of war, and with pledges to uphold a common culture. As a unifying concept, it can be associated with idealism, at times with humankind's higher goals, but also with the pragmatism of putting social organisation into practice.

The chapters have also offered much evidence that the concept of Europe is associated with hierarchies, exclusion and borders, confirming historical differences and stressing current divisions. From certain perspectives, Europe can be seen as a dividing concept, highlighting political borders and cultural differences. This is related to differences between regions and nations within Europe, however geographically defined, and there is a long history of associating these differences with hierarchies. For instance, in Victor Hugo's imagined European Parliament, French would be spoken: 'The United States of Europe speaking German would mean a delay of three hundred years. A delay, that is to say, a step backward'.[1] In the economic crises of the 2010s, we heard arguments that the countries of Southern Europe were less well organised, and that their people worked too little in comparison with those in Northern Europe.

From the early 1800s until the present, the concept of Europe has appealed to different visions. Romantics and conservatives, market-oriented

Notes for this section begin on page 307.

liberals and revolutionary socialists have all articulated political visions of European unity. So too have experts who turned to technical measures for unification. Some wanted to restore Europe to its previous glory or reacted to a perceived decline, while others looked for a Europe entering a new stage of development. Europe has been associated with threats and with hopes, with superiority and inferiority. Sometimes, the visions represented idealistic dreams and sometimes mere exercises of the will. As a unifying and dividing concept, Europe is contested and an object of disputes.

New Interpretations of Old Themes: Notes on the Debate of the 2010s

As previous chapters have demonstrated, there has been no consensus regarding the definitions of European civilisation, European culture, the European spirit, European integration or European identity. Whatever definition was applied to Europe, it was contested, and contemporary debate continues this pattern. Despite the considerable talk about European unity and disunity in recent decades, a common definition remains out of reach.

Notably, with the introduction of the euro and the enlargement of the European Union (EU) to encompass the Baltic States and Central Europe, some books have presented extremely hopeful views of the future of Europe and the EU – for example: Jeremy Rifken's *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (2004) and Mark Leonard's *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* (2005). By the 2010s, economic crises brought back the key theme from the first half of the twentieth century regarding Europe's general decline and weakened position in global competition. Titles from this period instead centred on the crises facing Europe, including keywords such as 'death', 'deadlock', 'decline' and 'doomed'.[2] In the aftermath of the financial crisis, much of the discussion concerned the malaise facing Europe, including both the way the union worked and the standards of the continent in general. Such a dramatic turn in the debate on Europe had not been seen in decades, possibly not since the aftermath of the Second World War. Remarkably, the book titles from this time made no distinction between Europe and the EU, using the terms interchangeably. Let us take a closer look at the arguments behind these titles.

Much of this literature addresses the theme of European decline – falling birth rates, technological inferiority to the United States and China, economic policy misconduct, and a widespread culture based on consuming beyond one's means were all topics that garnered attention.[3] According to *The*

Decline and Fall of Europe (2012) by Francesco Bongiovanni, several aspects fed into the decline, including many laws and decrees emanating from the elites and bureaucrats in Brussels.[4] He noted the widespread exploitation of the system in Europe, allowing values such as egoism and hedonism to take root, especially in Southern Europe; however Britain, Ireland and France were part of this culture too, mortgaging the future of their children and grandchildren in exchange for current pleasures.[5] Bongiovanni concluded that growth was no longer part of the culture, and that Europeans had settled for mediocrity: 'It is a crisis of the entire European model, construct and philosophy of life'. However, he hoped that the crisis would serve as a wake-up call.[6] David Marsh, a writer with expertise in European monetary affairs, predicted in 2012 that Europe would likely lose its position on the world stage. The EU's negligence in establishing the euro and shortcomings in handling the crisis gave him little hope for the future, unless the EU could radically transform itself into a political union.[7] David Marquand – a former British MP, an EU official, and the principal of Mansfield College, Oxford – called for a European federation in a world where the West had begun to shrink in importance.[8]

These responses to the crisis are representative in that few of the critics wanted to give up on European integration. Early in this heated discussion, Fernando Savater expressed the widely held opinion that 'European countries have no alternative to sticking together in many essential social, cultural and economic respects', but were deficient in their ability to aspire to the more ambitious goals that the crisis required: 'They lack significant joint projects and shared democratic values and convictions'.[9] However, the debate continued with plenty of suggestions regarding common projects and grand visions for the future of integration.

Some rejected this notion of decline, maintaining that Europe was doing fine and that things were much better than they appeared, in both Europe and the EU.[10] They noted the use of soft power to resolve disputes peacefully through extended negotiations, and that European laws mostly concerned international trade. They said that the EU was no more elitist than its member states and was more transparent, with relatively efficient institutions and a limited number of bureaucrats. The remarkable amount of public support for the union and the euro, even during the crisis, was also cited as an argument in favour of the EU. The defenders stressed that the EU had achieved much worth protecting.[11] However, some considered the union inefficient, and many argued that it should be reformed, made more flexible, and have its decision-making processes sped up in the interest of more clearly defined leadership and greater democratic participation.[12] Political scientist Jan Zielonka suggested that European integration should develop in a new direction. Noting that the growing

interdependence between member states 'no longer generates integration but instead prompts disintegration', he warned of the impending dissolution of the union. In alignment with Alan Milward, Zielonka stated that post-war integration had rescued and strengthened the nation states of Europe. However, he pointed out that with local government, regions, large cities, and transnational NGOs acting in networks beyond the nation states and on the European stage to implement their own agendas, integration was a factor that could affect the member states' varying levels of support for the EU. To deal with this, integration should embark on a new vision that would exchange the one-size-fits-all model for one of plurality and hybridity: 'Integration recognizing local conditions and rejecting rigid hierarchical blueprints may prove more effective in coping with problems of complex interdependence'. This, he argued, would lead to a revival of integration.[13]

Disputes continued regarding the division between the economically successful Northern countries, with Germany at their core, and the less successful Southern countries.[14] The growing gap caused many public intellectuals to dispute current economic policies and favour a European politics emphasising social responsibility, often coupled with proposals for a federal EU. The Berlin sociologist Claus Offe saw the divide between the centre and periphery as widened by neoliberal politics and social injustices. He wanted Europe/the EU to refocus on 'improving social justice through social security redistribution across Member States and social classes'.[15] For the Ljubljana philosopher Slavoj Žižek, Europe was a necessary alternative to American-driven global capitalism and Chinese authoritarianism, but it would have to be redefined beyond technocratic pragmatism and selected aspects of its heritage. Srećko Horvat, a philosopher from Zagreb, wanted to refine the European idea to align more with an economic path going beyond neoliberal austerity.[16] Luis Moreno, a Spanish social scientist, found a way out of the crisis by politically unifying and defending the welfare state model as an alternative to economic globalisation.[17] The political philosopher Sami Naïr proposed common European social policies to address the inequalities created by globalisation and national interests, which would require a European federation and a common consciousness and identity.[18] The Munich sociologist Ulrich Beck warned that the present discontent arising from the widening gap between the powerless masses and the mighty elites would diminish people's expectations of freedom and equity. He proposed a social contract for Europe that would define integration as a project for social welfare and democracy, healing the division and gaining legitimacy for the EU.[19] The literature offers us a range of voices critical of the EU that simultaneously continue to argue in favour of integration, suggesting a perspective of strong European awareness.

In the early 2010s, the catchphrase 'European identity' decreased in usage, though it was still used in several contexts – for example, in political programmes for integration (e.g. when the European Parliament sought to create a European identity), when advocating for solutions to European crises, and when analysing contemporary Europe.[20] Descriptive inquiries were often interspersed with normative proclamations in a way that made it difficult to distinguish one from the other. This dynamic was common in European Commission research initiatives that centred on European identity.[21] In the debate on identity, it was possible to find a common basis that incorporated a long heritage of shared European values such as rationalism and democracy, a basis that did not rely on group loyalty to any one political regime.[22] Others saw European identity as a necessary phenomenon that had actually arrived along with peace and freedom: a common identity was already in place, and all that remained was for it to acquire greater substance to become fully established in the collective consciousness. This was the standpoint of public intellectual Umberto Eco, who, during the European debt crisis in 2012, said that the current European identity remained shallow but was in the process of growing deeper, step by step. Eco was confident that 'we're now all culturally European' and that 'we will remain a federation'.[23]

Calls for a 'two-speed' process persisted, with the euro-zone countries integrating at a faster pace than the rest, perhaps under a single government.[24] Even British voices in favour of the EU, such as the Liberal Party leader David Owen, who argued for a 'two-speed' Europe, preferred that Britain stay outside the core group that was moving forward at a quicker pace.[25] Among Britain's hardcore EU critics, nationalism was salient. The writer and conservative MP Daniel Hannan compared the EU to the communist system, speaking of European *apparatchiks* and the gap between what was officially said and the actual truth, likening himself to a dissident in the former Eastern Europe. He believed that Britain's main reason to leave the EU was so that it could continue to build on its nationalism, leading to progress and entrepreneurship, and offering a refuge from totalitarian ideologies.[26] Of course, national sentiments were on the rise in places besides Britain. For Václav Klaus, former president of the Czech Republic, the parallels between European governance and the centralised communist system were remarkable, and he warned that the further development of integration might erase the nation state. He instead insisted on preserving the EU as collaboration among sovereign countries.[27]

The refugee crisis in 2015 and the Brexit referendum in 2016 contributed to the discourse of crisis, and intensified arguments about the disintegration of the EU. Still, developments were by no means one-dimensional, as European integration was simultaneously accelerating and being called into

question. In previous chapters we mentioned 'the border paradox' of European integration, which is relevant here and indicates that some borders between member states were weakening, while legal, economic and political integration persisted. On the other hand, certain older cultural borders continue to emphasise regional autonomy and minority rights. Other cultural borders have followed the migration of people who have brought religious and linguistic multiculturalism to Europe. As a result, the cultural borders of Europe have become more accentuated than before. The refugee crisis fuelled nationalist sentiments throughout Europe, leading to the establishment of border controls and rhetoric about defending national values; it also forced the member states to take collective action, strengthening integration in the affected policy areas. During the Brexit process following the referendum, opinions and political actions regarding Britain's departure from the EU became increasingly entrenched in the UK, and especially in England, while support for the EU grew within the union. The reasons for Brexit were certainly complex, but historians have stressed it as a mainly English phenomenon, undergirded by a 'strange sense of imaginary oppression' tangled up with nationalism and fantasies of a British empire.[28] The campaign for Brexit increased scepticism towards European integration, which had been expressed in the 1950s and continued following British admission to the EU. The mentality of British scepticism towards integration insinuated that Britain was a strong country, while the EU was strongly connected to Europe, which was regarded as a threat to Britain. Memories of German bombing and plans to invade Britain during the Second World War contributed to British concerns and were recounted as European attacks. British Eurosceptics conceived their country as an island separated from Europe by the Channel, with EU membership serving as a bridge by which (Eastern) Europeans could invade their country.[29] When viewed in this light, Europe was the same as the EU, and both were repudiated.

The responses to the second round of crisis were similar to those from the first half of the decade, contending that the EU was an elite project largely driven by the core countries, leaving those on the periphery behind. The proposed solutions included calls for social justice and utilising European social rights to overcome divisions. Proposals to both centralise and further regionalise were made, in attempts to move past the nation state; the options ranged from embracing a United States of Europe as a fully fledged federation, to further democratisation and the development of a transnational republic. These suggestions were often combined with observations that the crisis had infused more of a sense of European consciousness among its citizens.[30]

So, Where Do We Stand?

Assessing the development of European awareness during the 2010s, one could initially consider the unification concept to be in eclipse; upon closer examination, however, the concept can instead be regarded as reaching a new zenith, with the idea of European unification characterising the concept of Europe more than ever before. Here, I will reinforce this argument by making a few brief observations regarding the debates surrounding the concept of Europe. Considering the sentiments stirred up by the chain of crises in the 2010s and early 2020s, we can say that they have two sides. On the one hand, some believed that the sense of cooperation within the EU was threatened by these crises, while on the other, there were indications of increasing concern about European society. Even in 2012, Ulrich Beck concluded that the crisis had 'torn Europe apart but brought Europeans closer [together]'. Looking at the European community, he saw a renewed European consciousness as a common thread addressed in newspapers, in local discussions, and around dinner tables. In a noteworthy book about the consequences of the refugee crisis, the social scientist Ivan Krastev took a more radical stand: the prerequisites for democracy in the nation states had changed, and a revolt against the liberal elites had taken hold, leading to doubts regarding 'Europe's political, economic and social model'. Pessimistically, Krastev predicted the disintegration of Europe. The refugee crisis had bolstered national identity and solidarity, altering the dynamics of European integration and deepening the chasm between Brussels and the member states of Central and Eastern Europe. He found hope in the European public's increased confidence in the EU, and prescribed more compromise and conciliation as the key elements of integration. Even Krastev could observe a European awareness in the midst of crisis. His observation illustrates the close association of the concept of Europe with unification. In contemporary Europe, the EU and the various European integration measures constitute the concept of Europe, establishing its boundaries and prerequisites.

To make a fair assessment of the concept of Europe, both what is said and the act of its being said must be observed and considered. According to the performative perspective, identity is not an attribute that defines a community and moves it forward; rather, it is actively performed, for example, through defining an identity.[31] This is similar to the concept of Europe, which is performed by applying it and imprinting it with meaning. We must therefore ask why the concept of Europe has been used. In the nineteenth century, claiming the existence of European cultural unity was a way to ascertain it. On closer inspection, one can see that the concept of Europe includes performative aspects. Beethoven's cantata 'The Glorious Moment', Opus 136, does not simply describe Europe as something that exists, but also as something in

the making, even remaking itself. The performative aspect of the European idea became increasingly prominent over the course of the century; so did its normative dimension and its connection to the new way of understanding and narrating society, accompanied by changes in how the concepts of history, progress and development were understood. Previous eras had explored multiple histories and developments, but in the 1800s these concepts had begun to appear as so-called collective singulars. Europe had begun to be framed by and connected to *the* development, *the* progress, and *the* history.[32] By the end of the 1840s, the Swedish novelist Carl Johan Almqvist connected 'the European spirit' and demands for liberation from the old society. He articulated the upheavals of this period in his call for individual freedom. Almqvist believed that 'the European future is standing by us all in the entrance hall, and it wants to come in'.[33] Europe represented *the* future.

However, acts of unity often also include aspects of hierarchies, divisions and borders. François Guizot's notion of European civilisation identified France as the most advanced country, while Thomas Buckle's notion stressed England's leading role. In another example, the concept of Central Europe could be used as a way to define a region within Europe in contradiction to Russia and Western Europe. In 'Mitteleuropa', Friedrich Naumann envisioned a region dominated by German culture and political interests. By contrast, Tomaš Masaryk's Central Europe was a region of Hungarians and Slavic nations bordering on Germany and Russia. Moreover, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, visions of European unity repeatedly stressed Europe's cultural borders with Russia and the United States, and notions of a European world mission and European superiority were recurrent. Recent debates on European identity address divisions and hierarchies between Southern and Northern Europe, between Western 'core' member states and Central European countries.

Beginning in the late twentieth century, it was alleged that European identity could promote the quest for further integration, certainly in the EU discourse striving to construct legitimacy, but also by public intellectuals. European identity was supposed to shift attention away from national sentiments and allegiances, as reflected in the EU's ambition to manifest European identity and 'unity in diversity' and as conveyed by public intellectuals articulating a European duality that both creates unity and protects diversity. However, it is uncertain what characteristics can be attributed to European identity in upcoming discussions about the future of Europe. It is important that these characteristics continue to relate to democracy, rule of law, individual rights and the welfare state. However, we also know that the concepts of Europe and European identity play an important role in xenophobic and Islamophobic political programmes to defend Europe against perceived threats. In fact, the concept of European identity might also contribute to

discourses that question the welfare state or promote national homogenisation. Neoliberal economic policies have defined Europe in significant ways since the 1980s, and although they have recently been called into question, they maintain a strong grip on Europe. Anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim discourses are prominent in the context of increasingly integrated EU responses to the crises of the 2010s. We can conclude that the various values and implications of European identity are also contested, as is the concept of Europe. There are good reasons to be aware of the competing political implications of references to European identity and to understand the discourse of European identity as a controversial space.

It is vital to acknowledge that an important performative component of definitions of Europe is to conceal some of Europe's exclusions and heritage. Many cases can be found in which Europe is described as a homogeneous Christian continent, which tends to omit the Muslim elements of European history and their presence in contemporary Europe. This is problematic, given the history of south-east and south-west Europe, the fact that Christianity and Islam share common roots, and the vital role of Arabic intellectual culture in medieval Europe.[34] We have also seen modern Europe as defined by the Enlightenment, which promotes secularism, individual freedom, rational thinking, and science. However, it is well known that modern European history includes colonialism and brutality towards both non-Europeans and Europeans. This is not something that has necessarily been hidden in the definitions of European identity. For example, Luisa Passerini, Jürgen Habermas and Gerard Delanty emphasise that an up-to-date consideration of the concept of Europe must include contemplation of the dark aspects of its modern incarnation. Yet, in the quest to unify Europe, such facets of the common identity tend to be subordinated.

Europe's history since 1800 is obviously connected to national histories, languages and identities. This book has presented a narrative of the intellectual discourses of the concept of Europe, illustrating a history entangled with the concept of the nation. This narrative emphasised major shifts around 1800, the two world wars, and the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, as well as responses to changing international relations, the development of the nation state, and demands for democracy and citizen rights. We see the contours of a narrative in which nationality and European unification may be aligned. However, it is also a narrative in which unification and nationalism are in sharp contrast to each other, with the latter stressing national independence, exclusive sovereignty, and strict borders.

It is plausible to argue that nationalist sentiments are appealing in contemporary Europe, and that a European integration in which the EU offers a stage for its many nationalities offers these nationalities room to grow rather than snuffing them out. We should not be surprised, because an 'ever

ongoing integration' implies the persistence of nation states, without which there would be nothing to integrate. In addition, many observations suggest that national and European sentiments do not contradict each other but are instead complementary. Edgar Morin and Mauro Ceruti have argued that we have, and should have, the right to develop a wide range of identities that encompass beliefs, political views, and relationships among local, national and European identities. They see – and I agree – that a belief in pure identities is brutalising, contributing to the European barbarism we see perpetrated against minorities, against colonial populations, and in situations where ethnic cleansing has occurred over the past century. They conclude that only a European political project offers us the possibility of resisting the brutality of nationalism, and they insist that there is no essential conflict between European identities and national ones.[35] However, our examinations of the concept of Europe and of the discourse of European identity show that a European project can be realised alongside multiple political visions. It is not enough simply to define the contemporary project of European integration if the aim is to avoid what Morin and Ceruti consider 'European barbarism'. European nationalism could also treat minorities and people defined as others in barbaric ways.

Certainly, the original ideas of establishing peace, stopping fascism, and resisting communism persist in the official presentation of the EU, which refers to a dark history of colonisation and the trauma of wartime. In the present, the overarching idea of the EU is one in which common European problems can only be solved together through further integration.[36] At its best, this idea incorporates ideals of tolerance, equality, and human rights. However, we know that considerations of a unified Europe and pleas for political unification have found support from both ends of the political spectrum, and that during the post-war period, integration was championed by conservatives, liberals and socialists – in both politics and intellectual life. We also know that integration has been, and continues to be, hotly debated and criticised. The European project, as such, is no guarantee that brutality, for example, towards refugees, will be avoided. The various means, measures, treaties, laws, and institutional bodies that together contribute to forming the EU are also an arena for contestations about differing visions, where pragmatism confronts economic interests and struggles for power.

Notes

1. Hugo, 'Letter to D'Alton Shee'.

2. Bongiovanni, *The Decline and Fall*; Gillingham, *The EU: An Obituary*; Laqueur, *The Last Days of Europe*; Lacqueur, *After the Fall*; Marsh, *Europe's Deadlock*; Murray, *Strange Death of Europe*; Simms and Zeeb, *Europa am Abgrund*.

3. Moyo, *How the West Was Lost*, 87–89.
4. Bongiovanni, *The Decline and Fall*, 39–40.
5. Ibid., 124–43.
6. Ibid., 206, 219, 278, quotation from 292.
7. Marsh, *Europe's Deadlock*, 117–20.
8. Marquand, *End of the West*.
9. Savater, 'EU Needs to Stand Up'.
10. Kundnani and Leonard, 'Think Again: European Decline'.
11. See, e.g., the political scientist McCormick, *Why Europe Matters*, 19–26, 146–82.
12. Giddens, *Turbulent and Mighty Continent*; McCormick, *Why Europe Matters*, 146–82; Piris, *The Future of Europe*, 146: Weidenfeld, *Europa: Eine Strategie*.
13. Zielonka, *Is the EU Doomed?*, 93.
14. Marsh, *Europe's Deadlock*, 18–26; Manolo Monereo (Podemos MP), *Por Europa y contra el systema euro*, 63.
15. Offe, *Europe Entrapped*, 122.
16. Žižek and Horvat, *What Does Europe Want?*, 56, 89–91.
17. Moreno, *Europa sin estados*, 14–16.
18. Naïr, *El desengaño europeo*.
19. Beck, *German Europe*, 12, 70–77.
20. 'We Need to Invest'; Darnstädt, Schult and Zuber, 'How to Forge'; Venet et al., *European Identity through Space*.
21. European Commission, 'Development of European Identity'.
22. Green, *The European Identity*.
23. Eco, 'It's Culture'.
24. Piris, *The Future of Europe*, 147.
25. Owen, *Europe Restructured*, 301–34.
26. Hannan, *A Doomed Marriage*, ix–x, 20, 73, 110–11.
27. Klaus, *Europe*.
28. O'Toole, *Heroic Failure*, xvi–xvii, 1–3. See also Dorling and Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia*.
29. Spiering, *History of British Euroscepticism*.
30. Fazi, *The Battle for Europe*; Guérot, *Warum Europa eine Republik*; Guérot, *Europa erneuern!*; Krastev, *After Europe*; Roll, *Wir sind Europa!*; Simms and Zeeb, *Europa am Abgrund*; Wirtén, *Är vi framme snart?*
31. Kuus, 'Ubiquitous Identities'. 'Performative approaches do not treat identity as an attribute or a property of the subject – something that subjects such as individuals or states express. It conceives subjectivity explicitly in processual terms, not as a source but as an effect of identity claims. Identity then is not something that states, groups or individuals have, but something that groups and individuals do'.
32. Koschorke, *Hegel und wir*, 82–92.
33. Almqvist, *Det europeiska missnöjets grunder*, 26.
34. Grinell, 'Ilm al-Huddiyya'.
35. Morin and Ceruti, *Nuestra Europa*.
36. Ighe, 'Never Mind Patriarchy'; Lähdesmäki, 'Narrative and Intertextuality'.