German Professor: The EU is FINISHED. What's Next? | Dr. Ulrike Guérot

The European Union has become a complete bureaucratic and authoritarian monster, and it is impossible to fix. It must and will die. But what comes next? The continent will still be there. Professor Ulrike Guérot joins Pascal to discuss her new (German) book "Endlich Europa!" and a possible Europe beyond the European Union. She proposes a European republic combining equal citizenship, autonomous regions and limited shared institutions. Their conversation explores republicanism, democracy, infrastructure, sovereignty and the tensions within the single market and euro. Lottaz challenges her proposal with an ASEAN-style alternative, while Guérot argues that existing economic integration demands a different political framework. Together they consider Europe’s place in an emerging multipolar world. Ulrike's Links: Endlich Europa! — book and multilingual resources: https://endlich-europa.eu Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com Support Neutrality Studies: https://neutralitystudies.com /donate Neutrality Studies shop: https://neutralitystudies.com/shop Time Stamps 00:00 Ulrike Guérot: imagining Europe after the EU 04:12 What a republic means 12:47 The single market and Europe’s political deficit 17:51 Regions, identities and equal citizenship 24:30 Who makes the rules in a European republic 33:30 Subsidiarity, infrastructure and the rural divide 39:43 An ASEAN-style alternative for Europe 48:37 The euro, sovereignty and Europe’s future

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today, we have an update with the wonderful German academic Professor Ulrike Guérot. Ulrike, welcome back.

#Ulrike Guérot

Pascal, welcome. Happy to be here.

#Pascal

Very happy that we can talk online again. Last time, two weeks ago, you were in Kyoto. But today, we said we were going to talk about your new book. It has a German title, but translated, it means “Finally Europe: How the European Republic Will Become Reality,” or something along those lines. So the book is out in German. Anyone who speaks German can get it online or in bookstores in Germany or German-speaking Europe. But we're going to discuss it today in English so a few more people can get some information. And if there's an interested publisher, maybe somebody will

approach you about an English version. But for now, Ulrike, “Finally Europe”—at a time when we all trash-talk the European Union, including you, because I think you've also lost your belief in it. What do you mean by “Finally Europe”?

#Ulrike Guérot

Well, I mean, I have no problem admitting that perhaps I wrote this book only for myself, because I could see that Europe is looking into the abyss and is basically in a clash with its own civilization and culture. It is in very, very bad shape. I mean, we do not need to discuss on this channel the socioeconomic downturn of Europe, the geostrategic challenges, Europe being squeezed and basically instrumentalized in this war between Ukraine and Russia, you know? So I guess the people on this channel know all this. So why did I seize this moment in time, this sort of dark moment for Europe, to write a utopia?

Basically, the book is set in 2045, and it's a little book about how we can pull a Europe after the EU—that is the important point, a Europe after the EU—out of the ashes, like a phoenix out of the ashes, right? And perhaps I wrote it only for myself because I experienced better times in the 1990s. I worked for former EU Commission President Jacques Delors. I was deeply engaged in Franco-German relations in the time of Jean-Claude Juncker and Jacques Delors and Mitterrand and Kohl, who were all war children and who, in the '80s, had a heartfelt ambition to build a democratic, social, peaceful Europe, just because they were war children. I think I can say that because I knew most of these people.

So when I speak, obviously I have my memories of the '80s and the early '90s, before the European project was hijacked, distorted, and perverted into what it is today: a technocracy, a bureaucracy, and increasingly authoritarian. I think I need to say this up front. But the emotional part of it is: can we still create some hope? I mean, what I wanted to do with the book is—you know, there is a saying in German: when the night is darkest… What is “Dämmerung”? Dawn. Dawn.

#Ulrike Guérot

The dawn is near. And I'm deeply convinced that at some point you just need an image. I wouldn't even say a vision or a utopia, but just an image of how it could be. And that's what I wanted to deliver with the book: an image of what a different Europe could look like.

#Pascal

In the talk you gave here in Kyoto, you spoke very passionately about the need to build a European republic. The talk is online as well; you can find it in the video section of this channel. And I think it’s in the subtitle of this book here—the European Republic is there. How do you envision a working, functioning European republic that is not this EU bureaucratic monster, whatever it is, that’s currently putting out its tentacles and trying to suffocate everybody?

#Ulrike Guérot

Well, I mean, first I should say that I wrote another book in 2016, so 10 years ago: Why Europe Should Become a Republic: A Political Utopia. And this book is, by the way, still available in English on Amazon. It has been translated into, I guess, seven languages, including English, Polish, Dutch, and Italian. So it was quite a success 10 years ago. And that is important, because in 2016, we were experiencing the first term of Donald Trump. It was the end of the liberal order. Brexit happened. And there was already this sentiment that we cannot go on with the EU, which is this sort of monstrous political body.

But we do not want this sort of populist, nationalist regression. And with the utopia of a European republic, I wanted to offer something in between, you know—the tertium non datur, the supposedly excluded third option. So I'm coming back to this 10 years after 2016, in 2026, right? And first of all, I just wanted to remind everybody that the notion, the term "republic," right, is the word we use when it comes to constituting political order. Since Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, we haven't been talking about the nation-state or the sovereign state, or even about the state, but about the republic.

And so "republic" is the oldest word in European history, going back to Plato's Politeia, that we use when it comes to organizing citizens' lives together, right? The political life of citizens, right? And it has a really long political history, because, again, you come to Jean Bodin in the 16th century, with Les Six Livres de la République, The Six Books of the Republic. Then you go to Kant, who was always talking about the republic. You know, if you read Kant, the first paragraph of his Zum ewigen Frieden, his perpetual peace project, says that only a republican constitution is a good constitution, right? So there is a lot in this word, and I wanted to apply this word.

#Pascal

Let's talk about the word first, because I think it's worth distinguishing it from other words like democracy or federalism. Res publica, if I remember correctly, means the thing of the public, right? The public good, right? Why is it, then, that this concept has been with us for 2,400 years? And what exactly should we imagine when we talk about this concept in its purest form?

#Ulrike Guérot

I mean, first we should realize that most current states are republics, you know, be it the Chinese People's Republic, the Republic of Korea, the German Republic, or the French Republic. You know, most states have the word "republic" in their names. We don't call ourselves the German Democracy, Bundesdemokratie Deutschland, or the French Democracy. It's the French Republic and the Italian Republic. It's not trivial that we kept the notion of "republic" in our state names, right? Because what you are saying is the essence: it should be an order, a public order, which is good for the public, meaning res publica, meaning good for everybody, right?

And when the notion of republic was first translated, in, I think, 1647, through the Putney Papers, and came into the early English discussions about, you know, representative parliamentarism, John Locke, and so on, "republic" was, interestingly, translated as "commonwealth." Today, we understand the Commonwealth as the British Empire, but commonwealth is basically the wealth of everybody, the common wealth that we share. And from this, you can come up with phrases like "no taxation without representation," because it's our commonwealth. The people who form the republic—everything that they work for or create is their common wealth. And then: no taxation without representation. We own this, right?

#Pascal

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#Ulrike Guérot

And in essence—and that is important today, I think, when we talk a lot about, say, a post-liberal order—the republic is basically not compatible with, say, oligarchic structures, because oligarchic structures are squeezing people out. They are taking the surplus. They are taking it away from people. And this is a very current discussion. We have Pilkington's book, The End of the Global Liberal Order. And that is why I argue Europe must become a republic, because we need to go back to what is good for our people and the res publica europaea. So, create a political system that would be good for all European citizens, rather than an EU system that is not good for European citizens.

#Pascal

So what you mean is we need to create a political structure that is a political commonwealth, a public order that serves the people and everybody in it. And that basic idea should then inform the vision of how to create more concrete political structures inside that future Europe. Is that it?

#Ulrike Guérot

Yeah, I will answer with two points. The first, just to repeat, when we go back to Aristotle and look at the typology of governing systems from Aristotle to Kant, the typology is not that a monarchy is bad and a democracy is good because everybody participates. Rather, Aristotle distinguishes between public orders that are good for the people and those that are not good for the people. But whether one governs, a few govern, or all govern is not the decisive criterion for Aristotle. So that means Aristotle says if a king governs for the good of all the people, he is a good king.

If he doesn't govern for the good of all people, he's a tyrant. If an aristocracy does something good for all people, like, say, the Medicis, who built hospitals and financed art and Leonardo da Vinci, it's a

good aristocracy. If it's an oligarchy and the oligarchy is just squeezing the people, like today's oligarchy, then it's a bad oligarchy. It's not good for all the people. And then there's politeia in Plato, you know. If all govern, but for the good of the res publica, it's a republic, the republican order, which has within it an economic model that must be good for all people. But if it does not apply this, then it's a democracy. So, in Aristotelian typology, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy are the three bad types of government.

And in a way, monarchy, aristocracy, and republic are the three good types of government. And this is why I wanted to bring the word "republic" back into our consciousness, because today we are in a time when everybody wants to save democracy. And the essence is that democracy is, first and foremost, a method. We have elections, so it's democracy. Yeah. But a republic is more than elections. It's not only a form, but it also has content. And the content is res publica, which is a social order that is good for everybody. So "republic" is a normatively superior word to "democracy." And this is why states are constituted as republics. So that's what I wanted to say as one line of argument.

Now we come to the EU and why Europe should become a republic. And the essence of what I do in this book is to say that, stupidly enough, we created just a single market and just the euro, as if we could participate in a market as Europeans and use a currency as Europeans, but not be embedded in any form of state participation, democracy, social protection, and so on. So we, as European citizens—450 million European citizens—are in the most absurd sort of situation. We have a single market that is European. We have a currency that is European, based on the argument "one market, one currency." That is how it was done. But then we have 27 nation-states, 27 finance ministries, and 27 economic ministries. So we can't do infrastructure projects for the European Union.

We do not have a monetary policy–fiscal policy mix. So we have a market and a currency, and we have the state here. It's totally dysfunctional, and it is the essence of the so-called democratic deficit. And this is why we are living in the times of the monsters, especially in the European Union system. And that is Thomas Piketty. I guess everybody knows Thomas Piketty, the very renowned French economist who wrote years ago, "We created a monster." He said this about the EU. So now we have two discussions. Because this is not working, the EU itself—the EU single market—destroyed, through libertarian or neoliberal policies, the social fabric of all the republics that constitute the European Union, right? So it destroyed the social fabric of France, of Italy, of Austria, and so on and so forth.

Therefore, we now have populists. Therefore, we now have polarization. Therefore, we now have social discrepancies. Therefore, we now have dysfunctional political systems. Therefore, we now have a clear divide between rural and urban areas, and so on and so forth. And now we have a huge discussion: go back to the sovereign nation-state. And I agree that we need to abolish the EU. My only question, where I wanted to open up some leeway, is: Is going back to the nation-state in the 21st century the only option? Or is there the option—my suggestion—that, in a fictional but plausible narrative, we create, by 2045, a social, democratic, neutral Europe that embeds the single market

and the currency in a functioning European democracy that would be instituted as a European republic? That's the proposal of my book.

#Pascal

The big question to me is whether, in a tight space like Europe—because Europe is a small continent with a large population, but at the same time, there's such huge geographic variety, right? And very, very diverse cultural backgrounds in all of these places—they can all be put inside one single framework. Or are the nation-states, the way they are today, necessary? And some would say that maybe we even need more. I mean, if you ask people in the Basque Country, they would rather have a new configuration for themselves, right? They would carve themselves out of France and Spain and create their own nation-state. We have a couple of others who long for independence, or at least some people there long for independence. At the same time, there is a need to cooperate, right?

None of these entities can survive on their own, but there needs to be a larger framework. The EU idea in the beginning was, of course, to kind of create an economic framework and leave it at that. And then it metastasized into something very strange, in between a state and a customs union, that then also, again, got captured by these elite interests and group interests. By now, it's like a very, very bizarre being. But in your conception, would this be a state, a republic, a European republic that has a legislature, an executive, a judiciary, and so on? Or are you looking at a way of collecting the different republics and putting them into a meta-republic on top, where they then somehow share this sovereignty among each other, but without a primus inter pares, with everybody actually being equal in that framework? How do you envision it?

#Ulrike Guérot

Well, I mean, thanks for the question. You are feeding precisely into my argument. So perhaps I should tell the spectators, those who are watching us, that I created a website that goes along with the book. And the website is www.endlich.com. So perhaps you can put it under the video. Yeah. The website is multilingual, and I put teasers of the book—I mean, pages of the book—on it. I think the website is designed so that people can grasp the basic content of the book. Yeah. And there is a library, for instance. In the library, there are the first 15 pages, and I did it in 10 languages.

And most of the website is in English and French. So if you want to take a glance, just to get the idea in the first place, feel free to go to the website and look around at my little fantasy of a better Europe. But now, to your question. Yes, indeed. I mean, I was totally driven by the question: what is the nation-state? People say France, Germany, Italy. But then the real question is: what about Liguria? What about Apulia? What about Brittany? What about the Basque Country, like you said? What about Tyrol, you know? So basically, what I was trying to do was to go back to, say, you know, 240 years ago, in the late 18th century.

And it's very interesting to see, because I did a lot of research for this book, that the first use of the term “European Republic” dates to 1787, basically a year before the French Revolution. People like Rousseau and Kant were all saying, “We need a grand European Republic. We need a European Senate. We need a European Diet,” you know, like an assembly in French, and so on. So it's very interesting. I'm not inventing this, yeah? I describe in the book how, from roughly 1780 until roughly 1860, we had a huge discussion in Europe about the European Republic as a structure that unites the European continent. This is not trivial, yeah?

And you have Rousseau, Kant—I'm quoting all of them—Johann Joseph Görres, Schlegel, whoever, yeah? Then we have another 80 years, between 1860 and roughly 1940, in which we have nationalism, war, the First World War, the Second World War. And then, from 1940 up to today, we have another 80 years in which we say, “Okay, that national period of Europe wasn't really good. We ended up in two world wars. Now we do Europe.” And we invented that European Union, which, another 80 years later—so today—is not pleasing us because we realize we wanted Europe, but we got the construction wrong. So first, there is this 80-80-80 sort of periodization, which I try to cover and which I think is interesting in itself. But if you do so, you realize that Europe is more than a nation-state.

I mean, the first question is: is Malta a nation-state? Would you say Estonia is a nation-state? Would you say Luxembourg is a nation-state? And what would the sovereign nation-state of Luxembourg do in a multipolar world? So, take Estonia. In former times, Estonia was part of what we called Courland. And Courland was part of the Habsburg Empire. And in Courland, there were Jews, there were Germans, there were Estonians. But it was Courland, yeah? So the first thing I want to make people understand is that the current composition of the so-called European nation-states is—I wouldn't say random. Obviously, there is a historical process behind it. But in a way, remember that 30 years back, in '89, we still had a nation-state called Czechoslovakia.

And now we have the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. So if you go through European history, states and borders have basically always changed. Yeah. And when they changed, the interesting thing is that what we think of as sources of identity—say, Alsace, Silesia, Tyrol, the Basque Country, Catalonia, or Scotland—are not today's nation-states. But, as you say, they are entities that perceive themselves as nations, like the Scots. They have a Scottish National Party, right? But they're within the U.K. The Catalans, in a way, want a republic, by the way. They want to sneak out of Spain, you know, with Puigdemont and all these protests. But they conceive of themselves as a nation, like the Basques do.

But today's Basque Country is divided by the border between France and Spain. And Tyrol is also divided by a border. You know, you go to Tyrol and you ask Tyroleans, "Are you Italian or are you Austrian?" They would answer, "I'm Tyrolean." So, in a way, I take this tendency—it's just like a meta-trend—and I say, look, in my imagined, plausible, better Europe, I give all the attributes of statehood back to these regions and their distinct identities. If you consider, for instance, today's French Republic, you have Corsicans and you have Bretons. You would even say they don't speak

the same language. And they don't. And they don't have the same identity, the Corsicans and the Bretons.

But they're living together in the French Republic. Why? Because they have equal rights. That is the essence of the definition of a republic: people who live under equal laws, regardless of their origin or background. And so I just imagined that instead of the Corsicans and the Bretons living together in the French Republic, and the Ligurians and the Apulians living together in the Italian Republic, and the Saxons and the Rhinelanders living in the Federal Republic, we all keep our identity and our small entities. We just create a little roof over us—a common European republic—to defend us better in the multipolar world and to protect us better in the multipolar world.

#Pascal

Yes, yes. And that is a very worthwhile vision. But to me, the single most important question when it comes to this political configuration is: who makes the rules? Where is the power to define the rules that will then govern the territory? And just one thing: I think what we've seen ever since 1648 is the victory, you know, of the geographical paradigm. Before 1648, we had another paradigm: the only rival to the nation-state, or the nation, that we knew in Europe was religion. Every single prophet always brings new law, right?

And the common religion is the common law, and everybody follows that law. Those laws then create the ability to trade with each other economically because they create the structure and whatnot. But then, in 1648, this question was decided: no, the ruler of the place decides the law of the place, and everybody has to follow that. And we only made that stronger and stronger. You know, during colonialism, the Europeans brought their law to their colonies, and they even made sure that they had colonial jurisdiction and whatnot. And today, the big question is: who makes the local laws, right? For the Europeans, is it the national parliaments? Yes.

#Ulrike Guérot

Or is it the EU structure?

#Pascal

And we are in the middle of that fight. Now, within a republic, what is the vision for who makes the law for the entire republic?

#Ulrike Guérot

Thank you for the question. First, I should say I wrote a book that is both fictional and plausible. I take current trends and project them forward to develop a plausible but still fictional idea of how Europe could be reconstituted by 2045. For me, the idea was to say: can we start a discussion about

Europe after the EU? For me, this is it. I mean, I'm not dogmatic. I'm not standing here saying, "I want my European Republic." I'm not saying, "I have the best idea." I'm not saying, "This must be like this, and I will defend it with arms." That's not the case. I just wanted to open up a space for thinking beyond the EU, which is becoming increasingly authoritarian. So I think we are in real danger if we let this EU carry on with the Digital Services Act, militarization, and the fusion of the EU and NATO. I think European citizens are in danger if they stick with this institution.

And I think a return to the sovereign nation-state will not work because it's basically a national regression, going back to the solutions of the last century. And also, if we want to be an entity in the multipolar world that is taking shape on the horizon, I think Europe should be a political entity in that world. So I wrote my book with the thought that I needed to answer two questions: What kind of Europe after the EU? And what kind of Europe for a multipolar world? These are the guiding questions. Yeah. And again, it's about opening a space. It's like architecture, you know, painting. And if you say, "This room is too big and needs to be smaller. I need three more balconies," or whatever, I want to start that discussion. Yeah.

And I'm very happy to start it here with you because it's a multilingual channel, and my website is multilingual, because we will need to do this thinking together as Europeans. I'm convinced of that. Yeah. So, how is it governed? Well, I open page 206, and it's also on the internet. You'll find it in color, but this is my governing model of the European Republic. And basically, it says: here are all the citizens, and there is a perfect two-chamber system, which we do not have in the EU. Yeah. So there is a European Senate. There is the European Citizens' Assembly. Then there is co-decision, the regions, you know, all the regions: the Catalans with the Tyroleans, with the Rhineland, with Saxony, with Bohemia. I mean, all these identities, yeah. But it's, you know, in color on the website.

So if you want to look at it, it's just a proposal, I should say. But the idea is that the regions are as autonomous as can be. No more European agricultural policy, no more regulations about our plastic bottles, you know? No more regulation. I mean, all this is basically wiped off the table and handed back to the regions. Everybody can do their own business and decide. So every region can also decide autonomously about its own governance. The basic idea is that we should look at ancient maps of Europe and think about, as you say, the geographical dispositions of the European continent. Because what we can see already today—and, you know, I also did research on this when I was at Danube University…

I mean, just to say, if people think she's totally crazy, no, no. I had a multimillion research project at Danube University in which I studied regions and Europe. And the interesting thing is, just to give you one example, that a nation-state-building process comes through the economy first. People who then understand that they're living in a similar economic context develop the idea of being represented in a political entity, and then a nation-building process starts. And we can see today that this new nation-building process is crossing current state borders anyway. Take the Alps: southern Germany, Switzerland, and Austria form an Alpenraum, an Alpine region.

You have the Black Sea region, you have the Baltic Sea region, and you have the northern parts of Germany and Poland, which have more economic ties with Finland, Estonia, and the other Baltic countries than with, say, Munich. So you may ask, what does Munich have to do with the Baltics? Nothing. And so we already see—and this is where it gets interesting—cross-border cooperation coming into play, organized by the EU. But I say, why should we organize cross-border cooperation in such a heavy-handed way instead of giving everything back to these regions so they become totally autonomous? And what I would like to have is a very thin sort of European structure that protects these regions. Because if they are not protected by a European state entity, which I call a republic, then, basically, the question is: how do we organize the cooperation?

Because there would be a need for cooperation. And second, there are things that none of these regions, which would be more or less tiny entities, could do alone. There's a lot of research suggesting that the optimal size of political entities is somewhere between 10 and 15 million people, because then people feel at home. Leopold Kohr, Denis de Rougemont—all these thinkers were already talking about a Europe of the regions in the 1950s. So you take entities of 10 to 15 million people, and then you model a European map. And most of the, say, identity structures—I'm from Saxony, I'm from the Rhineland, I'm from Catalonia—feed into this thing. So the idea is that we build a political governance system around what we already find, and that is the regional structure. And then, just one sentence: the European level would do only what?

Foreign policy, trade policy—so linking the potential of all these regions into the global system—and obviously infrastructure. Because look at China. China built 10,000 kilometers of railway and is lifting all the regions up evenly and pulling them out of poverty. It comes through infrastructure. By the way, res publica: public goods. So I think we would need a Europe-wide infrastructure program that gives us, essentially, European AI. We are very weak in AI. And trains, high-speed trains, so that we can have trains from Paris to Budapest and from Copenhagen to Rome, and somebody basically organizing this. Because with cooperation among 27 countries, we saw that the single market was totally flawed when it came to building European infrastructure.

#Pascal

Yeah, but then stuff like, for instance, school curricula—we let the regions do that, right? So, in a sense, what you're describing is the principle of subsidiarity, the opposite of giving everything to the highest level, the opposite of the French model where everything is centralized. So whatever decision can be made at the next lower level must be made at the next lower level, right? Only the things that cannot be done at the lowest level do we escalate up and up. Well, in the case of foreign policy, that has to go to the top level, right? But everything else, anything that can be done at the next lower level, should be done there. That's more or less the vision, right?

#Ulrike Guérot

Look, I mean, my little vision of the European Republic is the opposite of the current EU. The current EU is an inverted pyramid, you know. Nothing here and everything there, yeah, and whatever. And I rebuild the pyramid the way a pyramid should be, you know. Almost nothing at the European level, everything at the regional level. And the European level, in essence, has the sole goal of protecting the European regions in a multipolar world so that they're not sucked up by other big entities, and leveraging their common potential on a global scale. Because again, if you have only the regions with no European roof, how do you organize European infrastructure?

How do you organize European high-speed train networks? How do you organize European AI, you know, the big stuff, foreign policy? And so, again, the guiding questions for me were: which Europe after the EU, and which Europe for a multipolar world? And so I see a dialectical process, or a double process, which is that Europe is sort of reorganizing internally into regions with a roof, and the roof faces out into the world. But within Europe, we have a totally democratic two-chamber system. All citizens are equal before the law—that's the definition of a republic. We have a two-chamber system like in any given democracy.

You know, everywhere you have a second chamber. There is co-decision. The regions decide everything. And what was the idea behind that? The idea was that today, look at France, look at the Yellow Vests, look at the protests in Spain against housing costs. You know, I mean, all this social polarization—rural-urban, rural-urban—is the socioeconomic sort of disaster that has been created through the EU single market, because the EU single market basically only kept European cities like Barcelona, Paris, and Warsaw in the global value chain, but neglected the regions. And the economic and social problems of the regions have become the political problem.

Because now, look at the electoral map of Germany, for instance: the regions are blue. Look at Austria: the regions are blue. We're talking about, you know, AfD, FPÖ. Look at France, Normandy. Marine Le Pen is very strong. So the so-called populists are right to criticize the EU. And by the way, the populists are not even against Europe. I mean, I have been talking to so-called populists in the ESN faction, which is the organization of some of these so-called populists in the Brussels structure. And the interesting thing is that some of them are starting to realize that Dexit, Frexit—leaving the EU—is just the first step.

Leaving the EU, abolishing the EU. But we need to design the second step. What comes after? And we need to do this not by thinking in national terms, combining only Rome and Berlin and Paris and Madrid, as we did in the last European project. We need to find a structure that relates to all citizens and gives them all, basically, the advantages of having a Europe. And that is my idea: to give it back to the regions. This is not only politically important, but also important in social terms, because Europe can only survive economically if you bring back the economic structure to the regions, which are now basically hollowed out.

And to add another point to prove this, in the last chapter—and I also put this on the website if people want to check it out—I basically did an AI analysis. I asked the AI, "Look, if Europe goes on with the structure of the EU 27, with 27 finance ministries and blah, blah, blah, what will things be like in 2045? And what will the EU 27's relations with China, the US, and Russia be like?" Then I fed the AI my European Republic idea and said, "Okay, let it run until 2045. What will come out?" And to keep it short, the AI says, "EU 27? No chance at all. We will be polarized: socioeconomic downturn, the regions neglected, civil war, loss of democracy, economic downturn, the youth in despair, and so on."

With the European Republic, not everything would be good and ideal, no, but the AI says 50-50. And then I even asked the AI, "If we were to make a political project out of this, who would be in favor and who would not?" And I went country by country: who in Poland, who in Italy, who in France, who in Germany would be in favor of shifting from the EU to a European Republic, and who would not? And that is very interesting. And you see that, for instance, in Germany, all those who are connected to the territories, like DERK, small and medium-sized enterprises, or the Catholic Church, or whoever, would be the agents for promoting the European Republic. And those who are behind the CAC 40 and DAX—you know, big capital, big state-run institutions—are obviously in favor of keeping the inertia of the EU because they're benefiting from it. You know, it's a fun factor, but it's interesting.

#Pascal

It is interesting. And I mean, what we are doing here is an exercise in free thinking about what kind of structures we could imagine. I would just like to throw the following at you. What if we think about an alternative structure where we go back, basically, to the countries? Let's not call them nation-states, but the countries as we have them today, with the borders as they are today. And then we envision something like what the Southeast Asians are doing with their ASEAN, right? And ASEAN, to me, is a club that is actually very future-oriented and multipolarity-oriented because it is formed around the idea of independent countries, states that then meet and coordinate with each other. But they coordinate; they do not integrate, right?

And they require, for instance, unanimity in order to reach any kind of decision. ASEAN, for the longest time, has been criticized for that, with people saying, "Oh, but you guys can't really move." And it's true, they can't really move a lot. But when they do, when they agree on something, it then really works. And it's this kind of multilateral framework—something like that for the European Union or for Europe. So you're proposing the European Republic, the ER. An ASEAN-style model would be a European Association, an EA. Why not the European Association? Why a republic?

#Ulrike Guérot

First, again, both in the book and on the website, I have a questionnaire because I just wanted to sketch out a vision and then open a discussion. And for me, the questionnaire is very important. It's about which questions we would need to answer when we think about the future structure of the EU, right? And that questionnaire is also on the internet. So that is what I wanted. I'm not being dogmatic, but these are the right questions to pose. Yeah, that's the website. Can you scroll down and then go to the library? Okay, go into the library, the yellow one. No, the yellow one above "All documents." Yeah, now go there. And then you see that I've put the beginning of my book there in many languages.

And then there is a Q&A section below, you know. I have it in English, French, and German. And this is basically a guide to the questions we would need for future discussions about Europe. I distinguish between questions on geostrategy, politics, the economic system, and so forth. Everybody can print it out. You know, it's really for talks around the table over a glass of wine. Because with the book, I just wanted to get beyond the dichotomy between the EU as it is currently and a return to the so-called nation-state. Just be inventive. And now, association.

I mean, again, I said that when I was at university, I did research on this regionalization. And there's very interesting stuff here. I also did, by the way, semantic and linguistic research on the term "republic." And I did polling in six European countries: Poland, Austria, Germany, Italy, I think Spain, and France. You ask people, "What kind of political body would you like to live in? A European Confederation, a European Union, a European Bundesstaat, a European Staatenbund, whatever?" We gave many examples—10, I think. "Association" was also included. "Republic" comes out at 90%, just because, apparently, we have a similar association with it.

#Pascal

So there's a progressive mental association with the word "republic."

#Ulrike Guérot

Because it's, again, 2,000 years old. Because we share the Latin Empire, the first republic of Rome. Then we share Politeia. We share Plato. We share Aristotle. I mean, there is the saying that the whole European history of thought is just a footnote to Plato. So if you go back to Plato, it is the Republic. I'm sorry, I need to move out of the sun. Okay, that's better. And then we are hanging around with this word "republic," which is also translatable into any European language. And out of the 27 EU member states, 21 are republics. So there is some interest in turning to this word because, intuitively, it has a meaning. With "association," you still need to define the association, the res publica: What is in it for me? What is the good for the people? Why this association?

"Republic," you understand, it's good for me: my res publica, my republic. "Vive la République," the French say. You don't say, "Vive la démocratie." It's important. And then, association—going back to

Asia, I was teaching at INSEAD in Singapore in 2003. And I was already invited back then to a project on Asian-European integration. Can Asia copy Europe? By the way, back then, there was also Mercosur. Mercosur wanted to copy Europe because in 2003—it's forgotten now, but in 2003—the EU was standing tall, you know? We're doing the euro. We're enlarging. We have a constitutional project. I mean, there was Jeremy Rifkin's book, How the European Dream Can Eclipse the American Dream. So Europe was sort of taking over American world dominance. It's totally forgotten 20 years later. We totally screwed it up. But imagine.

And in the INSEAD sort of teaching context, the most important difference is obviously that neither the Asians nor the Latin Americans in Mercosur have a single market and a currency union. So it gives you a very different sort of fabric into which you are drawn, depending on whether you are states that coordinate in an association or you have already passed the Rubicon. That's what we did. We passed the Rubicon. We passed the Rubicon of the single market and the euro. And money is an asset of sovereignty. And that is now, for me, the question. I mean, we tried to push out the Greeks through a banking crisis. The whole German discussion was about the lazy Greeks: push them out. And the lazy Italians: push them out. And we realized in the banking crisis that you can't make eggs out of scrambled eggs again. You know, the eggs are already scrambled.

You can't put the egg back together. This is why my thinking is now, okay, we need to move on. We need to finish the project and build the last bits and pieces, which are the republican structure, the participation of citizens, democracy, and the social fabric around what we already have. That's what the book offers, at least, right? And that is why you can't compare today's European Union with the level of cooperation and association in Asia, because, in a way, we crossed the Rubicon. Yeah. We already, in a way, smashed our states. That is the essential thing to understand. The EU single market has smashed the fabric of each and every EU member state. This is what we need to understand. And therefore, my book raises the question: can any of the current EU member states move out of that mess alone? My answer is no. It's no.

#Pascal

No, no, no, you would need to do it together. That's true. I mean, the only way, the only way to get rid of the European Union is if the current members of the EU came together at the nation-state level and said, "We'll abolish this thing, and now we'll make a treaty among the 27 of us to set up the next structure." But that next structure would then obviously have to take over what comes from the current mess of the EU, because it's a running system. So it would need to take over the system and go on, in a slightly more complex version of what happened when we transitioned from the League of Nations to the United Nations. Something had to happen with the stuff we had from the League, so it was folded into the UN. So you would need to make the new structure and then fold the old one into the new, but with a much better kind of theoretical setup to make sure that we don't create another beast.

#Ulrike Guérot

And still, there is obviously a large body of literature in political science about the difference between a supranational and an international institution. And again, Europe crossed the Rubicon. So if you say, "Back to the nation-state," the first question is—and I raise it in my questionnaire—do we give up the single market? Do we give up on the euro, right? And then, I mean, Brexit could happen because, although it was already a mess taking the Brits out of the single market, Brexit could never have happened had they been in the euro. Right. So when people talk about leaving the EU in continental Europe today, that means leaving the euro. And I am the last person to defend the current structure of the euro.

I was very emotional about the so-called euro crisis and the chauvinism—the "lazy Greeks" and so on. So that's not what I'm defending. But I am defending the idea that we should first think about whether it's wise today to leave the euro, because it is an instrument of emancipation. And we should remember the idea behind creating the euro, before it became perverted and neoliberal and so on. It was Kissinger, yes: "The dollar is our currency and your problem." That was in 1972. And then Giscard and Schmidt decided, "Okay, if the dollar is their currency and our problem, perhaps we should do something." And that is when it all took off, in 1970 already. Pierre Werner was the Luxembourg finance minister who wrote the first sort of draft for a common currency.

And then it came: the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and then, in 2002, the euro. So it needed 32 years to basically see the world, yeah. But now I would always argue that today, the euro as a currency—which, by the way, does not mean that, under my little European roof, all the little entities couldn't have their own currencies, you know? Today we have regional currencies, like the Chiemgauer in Germany. It's a real little local currency. So I think there would be ways to give the localities, the regions, their own little economic systems if they want to have a little regional currency. But the roof that basically translates from inner Europe to global Europe, yeah, I think must be a reformed euro. Reformed why? Because we obviously need to basically wipe out the debt.

I mean, all this Ukrainian debt is unbearable, so there should be a currency reform. But the real question I ask is: what if we were to give up the euro because we do Dexit, Frexit, and then we kill the monetary union? My argument is that the first currency we get is not the lira, escudo, guilder, or franc back. We get the dollar, because that is what is happening in a more geographic and geostrategic sort of game here. The U.S. is stabilizing the Western Hemisphere from Greenland, which they basically bought now, down to Argentina. And then there's the map I showed in my presentation in Kyoto, where the U.S. is trying to basically bring the western part of Europe into their Western Hemisphere.

Right. And that is the current NATO line from Finland and Sweden down to Turkey. So it means that there is a little western part of Europe today that is hanging into the U.S. hemisphere thing. I do not want this. Yeah. So the U.S. already has the GAFA complex, the dollar complex, and the NATO complex. What we are experiencing as we speak is a merger between the EU and NATO, an ever more authoritarian NATO-EU complex, the Digital Services Act, and so on. And if something happens

in Europe that creates a power vacuum—so, letting go of the currency, Brexit, and so on—my bet would be that the first currency we get in Europe is the dollar. And then there is no longer a way out for European emancipation. That is my point.

#Pascal

That is very likely. I mean, I just want to ask you, though, because to me, the basic flaw of the euro is that you have a common currency across different jurisdictions, and you have a common market, but you have no way of actually compensating the different regions. You have no transfer of funds, right? This is the thing. If you had redistributive mechanisms, it could probably work. But what is happening right now is that everybody is tied to the same currency, which then gives an unfair competitive advantage to those that were already highly industrialized. They then suck resources out of the other regions, and they kill local industry in those regions.

What would happen if they had different currencies is that the currency over here would depreciate, and that would make the stuff over here cheaper and therefore more competitive. You could then build it up, and your industries could compete with each other. In the absence of that, in order not to lose industries in the regions, what you need is a redistributive mechanism, which every single nation-state actually has internally, because you need to have that. Even the United States has it. Switzerland has it. But the eurozone didn't have that, which then leads to this ever-increasing gulf between the industrialized part and the rural part. So in the republic, this would be part and parcel of it, I suppose.

#Ulrike Guérot

Yeah, obviously. I mean, thanks for saying that. This is the first part of the AI analysis. And second, my idea is that we need to lift the regions and bring them into the global value chain of Europe. And that's through infrastructure, essentially. And then we have a totally weird budget system in the European Union. I mean, first, the European budget is still 1.6 percent of European GDP. We always overestimate the European part of the budget. Most of the budget is still national budgets. It's 1.6 percent. But in essence, again, it enhanced the rural-urban divide through basically neoliberal policies and competition, and neglected the regions. And through the single market, we created the populist political problem we have.

And, you know, I was working for Jacques Delors. I've been writing about this for 30 years, you know. I'm going nuts about it, you know. So finally, we could understand it. But the thing is that Jacques Delors already said, "You can't fall in love with a single market." And in political science now, we've developed the term, or the notion, of "market citizens." We are told we are European citizens. The Commission President addresses us as European citizens. We are not European citizens. We are Finnish, Portuguese, whatever—French, German citizens. We are just sharing a market, an economy, and the euro, which means we are market citizens in political science terms.

And that, in a way, is insane. Because, you know, to put it in very simple terms, the single market is nothing other than the denationalization of goods. When we created the single market in the ’80s, we had the Reinheitsgebot for German beer, the Italians with their pasta with or without eggs, Greek feta cheese, and French cognac. Everybody had a national product, saying, “This is exclusively a national product.” And then we created the single market and said, “Look, every good in the single market has equal rights and can and must be sold in any given supermarket.” And since then, we have had cognac in Germany. So that was the single market.

Equality of goods. Then we created one market, one currency, the euro, which also moves without borders throughout the territory of the European Union, right? The only ones who do not have equal rights in the current EU territory are the citizens—us. Because at the end of the day, I'm still Finnish or French or Italian. And, for instance, I'll give you an example. You are a German woman married to a Dutch man, living in Amsterdam. He dies. You move back to Germany. You don't get the Dutch widow's pension, right? You move to France for a job, you become unemployed, and you don't get French unemployment benefits because you're still a German citizen.

There are dozens and dozens, thousands and millions of cases like this. So the only ones who are not benefiting from equal rights are the citizens, starting with voting equality, because all this European Parliament voting is, in a way, totally biased in the sense that it's not one person, one vote. We have this weighted voting between Malta and Germany. We have totally unfair representation. It's not proportional. So there's no legal equality for the citizens. There's no voting equality. At the end of the day, the system, which we call trilogue—you know, a Council with a Parliament with a Commission—cannot work by any democratic standard. So for me, the only question is: can we change this?

#Pascal

Yeah. And that's a big question we will have to work on and answer in the future. We are nearing the end of this interview, but I do think that you are opening very, very important discussions here. And again, for everybody who's watching, Ulrike has her beautiful homepage, Final Europe. You can find it at endlich—E-N-D-L-I-C-H—dash Europa dot EU. And I will put the link to this homepage in the description box below. Do have a look. Be inspired. Think about this. None of us is claiming that we have the magic recipe, but we do have ideas, right? And we share them. And the more we share, the closer we may get to something that might not only be nice, but might also work. Ulrike, the last word goes to you.

#Ulrike Guérot

I would just ask you for a favor. Go back to the website and look for the little jingle. And perhaps, as my parting words, you could play the first few seconds of this jingle, because it's music that a friend

of mine created. And what people will hear is, in 27 languages, “You are a European citizen.” And I like this music because it's funny, you know? And that's the mood I wish we could get back to in Europe.

#Pascal

Let's have a listen.

#Pascal

I'm a citizen of Europe.

#Ulrike Guérot

That's quite different from the EU, right?

#Pascal

Wouldn't it be nice if we had a common understanding? Ulrike Guérot, thank you so much for your time today.

#Ulrike Guérot

Thank you so much.