



New
Direction

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CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN CONSERVATISM



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Summary

This document analyses the ideological relationship between Christian democracy and conservatism, emphasizing their philosophical underpinnings, historical development, and influence on European political dynamics. This analysis delves into the German model of Christian democracy represented by the CDU/CSU, examining its influence on European integration as well as its constraints when considered as a framework

for other countries. The research assesses the adaptation of conservatism to global challenges, highlighting its focus on tradition and order, as well as its regional differences across Europe. Policy areas such as social and economic frameworks, family values, and European integration reveal both similarities and differences among these ideologies, highlighting potential opportunities and challenges for collaboration.

THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY AND CONSERVATISM

Among the fundamental ideological currents that influenced post-war Europe were Christian democracy and conservatism, which still greatly influence European politics today. Their intellectual and historical underpinnings stem from a social heritage prioritizing solidarity and subsidiarity, preserving cultural values, and defending human dignity. Nevertheless, the Christian Democratic and conservative parties in the

European Parliament are divided into different factions, and, for example, the People's Party, with the dominant German Christian Democrats and the ECR faction, do not always necessarily cooperate. Contradictions can also be found in the actual manifestations of Christian conservative and democratic parties. Their ideological compatibility, difficulties, and policy manifestations will all be covered in this paper.

1.1. Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Christian Democracy and Conservatism

1.1.1. Christian Democracy: A Pillar of Post-War Reconstruction

Christian democracy originates from Catholic social teaching and emerged as a reaction to the difficulties posed by modernity, including industrialization, secularization, and escalating social tensions. The fundamental ideals of solidarity, subsidiarity, populism (the endeavor to preserve social equilibrium within society as an organic entity), and personalism originated during the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries. The principles were delineated in the encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* by Pope Pius XI (1931), which confronted the issues of industrialization and capitalism while repudiating both Marxist collectivism and liberal individualism (Accetti 2019; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

In post-war Europe, Christian democracy emerged as a primary architect of democratic revitalization. Political entities such as Germany's CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union), Italy's Democrazia Cristiana, and France's MRP (Mouvement Républicain Populaire) were crucial in establishing democratic institutions and fostering economic development. Christian democratic movements incorporated Catholic principles into the democratic political framework, establishing a distinctive paradigm for contemporary politics (Accetti 2019).

The social market economy, established in Germany through the guidance of Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard, serves as a notable illustration of the pragmatic implementation of Christian democratic ideals. This model integrated a market-driven economy with a robust state involvement in social policy, playing a crucial role in the post-war reconstruction and stabilization of the German economy. The integration of

economic efficiency alongside a commitment to justice and solidarity emerged as a fundamental element of the Christian democratic agenda (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010; Darabos 2021).

On an international scale, Christian democracy significantly contributed to the establishment of the European Union. Figures like Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi, and Konrad Adenauer established the foundational principles for European integration, perceiving it as a mechanism to ensure peace and foster solidarity among nations. The principle of subsidiarity played a pivotal role in fostering equilibrium between regional and supranational institutions, thereby facilitating European collaboration while preserving national identities (Accetti 2019; CDU Report 2021).

Furthermore, Christian democracy underscored the importance of family policy and the safeguarding of cultural values. The provision of support for families, exemplified by initiatives like *Kindergeld* (child allowance) in Germany, underscores the conviction that the family constitutes the essential building block of society, significantly contributing to the preservation of social stability (Accetti 2019; Darabos 2021).

1.1.2. Conservatism: Defender of Tradition and Order

Conservatism arose in response to revolutionary ideologies that posed a challenge to established social frameworks. Edmund Burke, recognized as the progenitor of contemporary conservatism, underscored the significance of continuity, reverence for traditions, and incremental progress as vital components for the stability of society. Burke's philosophy

established the groundwork for conservative ideology throughout Europe, where these principles were implemented in diverse historical and cultural settings (Disraeli 2022; Freeden 1996).

During the 19th century, conservatism underwent a transformation influenced by distinct national characteristics. In Britain, the Tory Party amalgamated economic liberalism with the safeguarding of longstanding institutions, including the monarchy and the Anglican Church. French conservatism, especially in the context of Gaullism, emphasized the importance of reinforcing national sovereignty and safeguarding the distinctiveness of French cultural identity. In Germany, conservatism has focused on the preservation of social structures while underscoring the significant role of the state (Disraeli 2022; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

Throughout the 20th century, conservatism experienced profound evolution. The British Conservative Party, guided by Margaret Thatcher, championed market liberalism and privatization, all the while upholding a commitment to traditional values. Across the continent, conservative parties

1.2. Aims and Methodology

Primary Aims of the paper

This research endeavors to examine the congruence of Christian democracy and conservatism in the realm of European politics, concentrating on:

- Recognizing domains of political and ideological consensus between these movements.
- Examining the points of divergence, especially concerning social policy, economic frameworks, and the processes of European integration.
- Offering insights for fostering productive cooperation between Christian democratic and conservative parties.

Systematic Approach

This study utilizes the approach articulated by Michael Freeden in his seminal work *Ideologies and Political Theory*. Freeden presents a novel methodology for examining ideologies as independent frameworks of political reasoning. His methodology facilitates the exploration of ideologies, considering them not merely as theoretical constructs but as actionable frameworks that connect political philosophy with its practical applications. This methodology is especially effective for examining Christian democracy and conservatism, as it elucidates the interrelations among their fundamental principles, including solidarity, subsidiarity, continuity, and sovereignty.

endeavored to harmonize economic pragmatism with the safeguarding of cultural heritage, striving to alleviate the social repercussions of globalization (Freeden 1996; Darabos 2021).

The conservative perspective on supranational institutions and centralization was clearly articulated during discussions surrounding European integration. Christian democracy championed the principles of federalism, whereas conservatism frequently emphasized the primacy of nation-state sovereignty. This position was especially evident in British Euroscepticism, where apprehensions regarding national identity and autonomy were of considerable importance (Freeden 1996; Accetti 2019).

Cultural conservatism underscores the significance of religion, traditions, and local values. The safeguarding of familial structures, the preservation of religious liberties, and the maintenance of cultural legacies stand as fundamental tenets of conservative policies, which seek to foster a harmonious relationship among individuals, communities, and the state (Disraeli 2022; CDU Report 2021).

At the very beginning of the methodology section, I find it important to explain to the reader how Freeden works with the concept of “ideology.” In the context of this analysis, ideology is not understood as a comprehensive and rigid doctrine attempting to explain the world and demanding full allegiance. Freeden emphasizes that in his work, ideologies are not treated as such fixed doctrines but rather as dynamic and flexible systems of ideas that adapt to specific historical, cultural, and social contexts. These are collections of political concepts, ideas, and value-based beliefs structured in a way that provides a framework for interpreting the political world.

Such an understanding of ideology makes it a suitable unit of analysis that can encompass a political-philosophical dimension, but not exclusively. Examining political philosophy would require different methods of analysis than, for example, the examination of political programs. Freeden’s approach will be further elaborated on with examples in subsequent sections of the chapter.

Freeden’s Methodology in Ideological Analysis

The concept of ideology frequently appears in contemporary political discussions, serving as a means to distinguish and counter political opponents. It functions not merely to articulate their concepts but also to undermine their credibility. This negative implication is not a recent occurrence but rather has profound historical origins. Especially following World War II, when various ideologies became linked to totalitarian regimes, the term took on a pejorative connotation. Rather than analyzing ideologies as frameworks of political thought,

perspectives regarding the “end of ideologies” surfaced, viewing them as remnants or potential dangers to the stability of democratic societies.

Michael Freeden fundamentally disputes this viewpoint. He contends that ideologies constitute an enduring element of any political society, as they offer a structured approach to the formulation and expression of political convictions. Freeden posits that ideologies not only endure but also serve as essential components of political thought and practice. Their elimination would signify the erosion of a society’s fundamental political identity.

The fundamental role of ideologies is to connect the domain of political philosophy with the sphere of political practice. Freeden underscores that ideologies empower political actors and societies to tackle issues that are either perennial or shaped by particular historical and cultural circumstances. In this endeavor, they offer pragmatic resolutions to theoretical philosophical dilemmas.

This relationship is especially apparent in the political concepts that underpin each ideological framework. The interpretation of concepts such as freedom, equality, and justice varies across ideologies, influenced by their contextual positioning and interrelations with other ideas. Ideologies consequently generate distinct interpretations, facilitating their utilization within specific political frameworks. Freeden posits that this process is fundamental for the formulation of political arguments and the making of decisions.

Freeden articulates that ideologies are intricate frameworks that ascribe significance to a diverse array of political concepts. This process is not arbitrary; rather, it embodies the intricate dynamics of a specific ideology. Freeden posits that ideologies serve as organized frameworks that allow political actors to systematize their beliefs and arguments. In contrast to political philosophy, which emphasizes normative and logical dimensions, ideologies are crafted to meet practical requirements and are frequently shaped by cultural and historical contexts.

This dynamism enables ideologies to adapt to the changing challenges faced by society. Freeden posits that their adaptability enables them to withstand and adjust to evolving circumstances while maintaining their fundamental principles. The fundamental principles, akin to the nucleus of an atom, serve as the bedrock of an ideology’s identity. In their absence, the ideology would lack coherence and ultimately disintegrate.

To elucidate the operational dynamics of ideologies, Freeden employs an analogy involving rooms and their furnishings. The space embodies the underlying ideology, whereas the furnishings reflect its fundamental concepts, including justice, freedom, and equality. The arrangement and significance of furniture can differ markedly across various rooms despite the presence of identical pieces. For example, the notion of “freedom” occupies a pivotal role within liberalism, whereas, in conservatism, it may be situated in a distinct context.

This analogy underscores that concepts lack inherent meanings and instead acquire significance through their interrelations with other concepts within a given ideology. Their significance is contingent upon their positioning and the interplay with other ideas. This indicates that a singular concept can fulfill distinctly varied roles across different ideological frameworks. This attribute is essential to the vitality of ideologies, enabling them to adjust to various historical and cultural contexts.

Freeden utilizes a metaphor of maps to elucidate the connections between political concepts within ideologies. Ideologies serve as frameworks that systematically arrange and elucidate the relationships among individual concepts. In contrast to geographical maps, ideological maps exhibit a dynamic nature. Their relationships exhibit a dynamic nature, influenced by various cultural and historical conditions.

“It may be useful to illustrate the above discussion by exploring an analogy with a map. We may regard logical constraints as determining the network of roads emanating from a given point. For a psychological exploration of the problems of consistency and dissonance-reduction in order to achieve psychological harmony, this network is shaped by our choice of starting-point, not as immanent to the map. In contrast, cultural constraints make recommendations as to the preferable route, depending on whether our priority lies in landscapes, speed, safety, or avoiding hostile villagers. Cultural constraints may also close some routes to traffic and recommend unfinished roads.

Each ideology, in turn, offers a map competing with those of its rivals. But here, the notion of a map becomes intriguing. Imagine the main political concepts as a given number of towns, except that each ideology seeks to position them not only within a different road grid but wishes to alter the topographical space between them, even to reshuffle their locations entirely, merge them, or deny that some of them exist. Unusually for a map, the relationships between towns would themselves be multi-dimensional.

The traveler would be offered a range of considerations in respect of moving between any two points, considerations that would not be evident on a simple reading of the map as a spatial representation of distance. Values such as efficiency, comfort, aesthetics, and security would supply alternative schemes for linking up the towns. Unlike a geographical terrain in which spatial relations are fixed, no one dimension of an ideological map is constant. What is constant is the very network of mutually informing and influencing concepts, on which human minds (rational or otherwise) and human wills impose the particular preferred set. Moreover, as there is no absolute sense in which any of the competing ideologies is superior, there is no correct map.” (Freeden 1996: 85-86)

This metaphor illustrates that there is no definitive “correct” ideological framework. Every ideology presents a unique viewpoint on the connections between concepts, and these connections may vary based on the context. This method facilitates the competition of ideologies, each offering its distinct interpretation of reality.

Freeden’s morphological analysis of ideologies relies on four essential aspects that constitute the methodological foundation of this study:

- Proximity analyses the interconnections among individual concepts within an ideology and the relationships that exist between them. In Christian democracy, the concept of solidarity is intricately connected to subsidiarity, establishing a coherent framework for political initiatives. In conservatism, the emphasis on continuity and the safeguarding of traditions forms the basis for political decision-making.
- Priority denotes the importance of concepts within an ideology. Certain concepts, like solidarity in Christian democracy and continuity in conservatism, occupy a central role, whereas others tend to be less significant or more marginal. This study examines the organization of these prioritized concepts and their impact on practical politics.
- Permeability highlights the capacity of concepts to traverse various ideologies and adjust to diverse cultural and historical contexts. This aspect is essential for comprehending how concepts from Christian democracy, like solidarity, can find relevance within conservative political discourses, particularly concerning family values or social policy issues.

- Proportionality relates to the degree of significance assigned to specific concepts within an ideology. Christian democracy emphasizes social justice and the principle of subsidiarity, while conservatism prioritizes sovereignty and the safeguarding of national interests. This study examines how these differences influence the compatibility of these ideologies.

Ideologies should be understood as fluid and adaptable frameworks of political thought rather than as fixed or inflexible systems. Their work connects theoretical concepts of political philosophy with the tangible requirements of political practice. Freeden’s examination offers important instruments for comprehending the operation of ideologies, highlighting their capacity to adjust to evolving circumstances. These frameworks are crucial for comprehending the development of political arguments and decisions.

Utilizing Freeden’s methodology enables the identification of the intricate relationships between the concepts of Christian democracy and conservatism, as well as their practical political applications. This report will follow his methodology and systematically explore the ideologies of Christian democracy and conservatism by examining their historical development, philosophical concepts, foundational principles, and specific policy manifestations.

This report will examine Christian democracy by focusing on Carlo Accetti’s work, *What is Christian Democracy*. Through this approach, he posits that Christian democracy constitutes a unique ideology that warrants systematic investigation. This method will facilitate a more detailed analysis of the distinctions between Christian democratic and conservative policies.



2 — HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN GERMANY

This chapter examines the evolution of Christian democracy in Germany, emphasizing its political, ideological, and European aspects. The approach integrates historical analysis with

Freeden’s morphological methodology, facilitating a detailed examination of the flexibility, intersections, and proportions of key concepts within the CDU/CSU framework.

2.1. Key Events

Post-World War II, Germany experienced significant political and economic turmoil. The economic devastation, disruption of social structures, and the necessity for political reorganization established an environment conducive to the rise of a new political entity. This force has the potential to not only stabilize the nation but also to influence its democratic trajectory. The CDU/CSU emerged in this context, establishing itself as a fundamental component of democratic renewal in West Germany. The CDU developed as a framework that integrates Christian principles with contemporary democratic governance. The CSU, based in Bavaria, preserved its regional distinctiveness while aligning with the same ideological principles.

The foundation of these parties in Christian democracy is significantly influenced by Catholic social teaching, highlighting the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Their political program was fundamentally structured around these principles. The CDU/CSU employed these principles to create a social market economy, effectively merging economic efficiency with the safeguarding of society’s most vulnerable populations. The social market economy, developed under Ludwig Erhard’s leadership, served as a strategic response to the challenges of post-war recovery while also functioning as a mechanism to balance the interests of labor and capital (Accetti 2019; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The CDU/CSU political program highlighted core values, including family, social justice, and stability. The parties successfully attracted a diverse range of voters, encompassing conservatives, centrists, and moderate socialists. The principle of subsidiarity significantly influenced the broad voter appeal, maintaining that decision-making powers should be held as near to the citizens as feasible, with federal authorities stepping in solely when required. This idea served as both a theoretical basis and a pragmatic approach to addressing the decentralized political landscape of post-war Germany (Darabos 2021).

Christian democracy significantly contributed to the political stabilization of Germany. Under Konrad Adenauer’s

leadership, the CDU/CSU implemented a policy focused on fostering transatlantic partnerships and enhancing European cooperation, which effectively garnered the support of allies and established favorable conditions for economic growth. Their methodical approach to politics facilitated the swift reconstruction of the country and the reinstatement of citizens’ confidence in democratic institutions (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The establishment of the CDU/CSU significantly altered the political landscape of Germany. In contrast to pre-war Catholic parties, Christian democracy adopted a non-denominational stance, effectively bringing together Catholics and Protestants around a common ideological framework. The cohesion observed was crucial for the integration of society and the establishment of a democratic framework. The CDU/CSU emerged as a pivotal entity in the modernization process, all the while upholding traditional values, including family, religion, and community (Accetti 2019).

The social market economy, along with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, combined with a significant focus on decentralization, distinguishes the CDU/CSU as a unique political model. This model effectively stabilized post-war Germany and subsequently served as a source of inspiration for numerous other nations involved in the European project. The CDU/CSU emerged as the principal political entities in post-war Germany, adeptly navigating social and economic challenges to create a model that integrated efficiency with humanist principles. This combination served as the basis for their success and enduring political dominance.

The Role of German Christian Democracy in the Process of European Integration

The CDU/CSU, as the embodiment of Christian democracy in Germany, significantly influenced the development of the European project, which was designed to promote peace and stability following the war. Following World War II, the

integration of Europe was perceived as both an economic imperative and a moral and political responsibility towards future generations. Under Konrad Adenauer's leadership, the CDU/CSU firmly supported the notion that robust collaboration among European nations was crucial for averting future conflicts and promoting prosperity.

Subsidiarity, a fundamental principle of Christian democracy, played a pivotal role in the CDU/CSU's strategy regarding European integration. This principle maintained that decision-making authority should be situated near local communities, while European institutions were assigned responsibilities that surpassed the capabilities of individual nation-states. This comprehension of subsidiarity enabled the CDU/CSU to promote a decentralized integration model consistent with their ideological priorities (Accetti 2019).

The Treaties of Rome in 1957, which established the European Economic Community, represented a realization of the Christian democratic vision for Europe. The CDU/CSU regarded economic cooperation as a means to achieve political and cultural unity, highlighting the importance of balancing economic development with social justice. The equilibrium established on the foundations of the social market economy emerged as a fundamental component of the European integration process (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 represents another important milestone. The CDU/CSU played a significant role in endorsing this initiative, which established the groundwork for the European Union and facilitated further political integration. Their support was not just practical; it was fundamentally based on the conviction that European integration serves as a mechanism for promoting solidarity among nations and enhancing European identity. The CDU/CSU regarded the European project as a manifestation of their principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, implemented at the supranational level (Darabos 2021).

Nevertheless, the CDU/CSU faced the challenge of reconciling their endorsement of European integration with the necessity of safeguarding national interests. The balancing act became particularly clear during crises like the Eurozone and refugee situations, as German Christian democracy sought to align its commitments to the EU with its domestic political priorities. The capacity to align national and supranational interests illustrates a degree of ideological adaptability, allowing the CDU/CSU to maintain a leadership position in European politics despite a shifting political environment (Accetti 2019; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The CDU/CSU's involvement in European integration encompassed a range of factors beyond just economic considerations. Their initiatives aimed at constructing a European identity were notably important. Their policies, grounded in principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and cultural heritage preservation, played a significant role in developing

a distinctive model of European cooperation that effectively merges diversity with unity. This method guaranteed that Christian democracy emerged as a significant factor in the process of European integration.

Political Development of the CDU/CSU After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The 1989 down of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing reunification of Germany were both a considerable challenge and an opportunity for the CDU/CSU. As the prevailing political entities in West Germany, they were compelled to adjust to the novel political, economic, and social circumstances linked to the incorporation of former East Germany into the democratic framework. Reunification was not solely a technical procedure but also a measure of Christian democracy's capacity to adapt its ideological principles to emerging problems.

The notion of subsidiarity, a fundamental aspect of Christian democratic thought, was implemented throughout the merger of East Germany. This initiative utilized a decentralized methodology for political and economic reforms, highlighting the regional requirements and particularities of the eastern federal states. The CDU/CSU emphasized that reunification must encompass political, economic, and cultural dimensions to guarantee the nation's enduring stability and unity (Accetti 2019).

The CDU/CSU promoted the implementation of social market economy concepts in the new federal states within economic policy. This paradigm, demonstrated to be efficient in the post-war reconstruction of West Germany, was subsequently utilized to alter East Germany. Nonetheless, the issues were significantly more intricate, encompassing elevated unemployment, antiquated industrial frameworks, and the necessity to modernize infrastructure. The CDU/CSU reacted with a blend of economic assistance, investments, and reforms, seeking to reconcile market ideals with the necessity for social protection (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The CDU/CSU's political adaptability is seen in its response to the rise of populism and Euroscepticism, which gained traction in the 1990s and continued in subsequent decades. Confronted with a more varied political landscape, the party struggled with internal conflicts between its liberal and conservative groups. The liberal part of the CDU/CSU promoted enhanced European integration and the acceptance of globalization, but the conservative segment emphasized traditional values, national sovereignty, and the maintenance of German identity. The internal tensions frequently undermined the party's ideological clarity, necessitating compromises that prioritized pragmatism above principle (Accetti 2019).

The years subsequent to the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis underscored both the strength and the vulnerability of the CDU/CSU's strategy. During the financial crisis, the party played a crucial role in stabilizing the Eurozone through policies of collective responsibility and

solidarity. Nonetheless, these measures frequently imposed substantial financial strains on Germany, exacerbating internal discontent and criticisms of excessive European integration. Likewise, the party's management of the refugee crisis—though extensively lauded for its humanitarian aspects—fostered significant societal and political rifts, facilitating the emergence of alternative entities like the AfD. This statement revealed the CDU/CSU's difficulties in aligning national interests with their overarching objective of European stability (Darabos 2021).

The concepts of solidarity, subsidiarity, and proportionality, which have historically supported the CDU/CSU's ideological framework, have been essential in managing crises and adjusting to an evolving political environment. Nevertheless, the implementation of these ideas frequently demonstrates a propensity to favor European and global obligations over national sovereignty, prompting inquiries about the party's dedication to its conventional conservative foundations. The CDU/CSU's capacity to address concerns like globalization and climate change has reinforced its status as a prominent political entity; nonetheless, this balancing act has resulted in

2.2. Conceptual Grounding

The Social Market Economy

The social market economy has been a fundamental component of the CDU/CSU's philosophy and the cornerstone of their political identity from the post-war era to the present. This approach integrates market economy concepts with a focus on social responsibility, embodying the fundamental pillars of Christian democracy—solidarity and subsidiarity. It was developed in reaction to the economic and social issues of post-war Germany, utilizing Catholic social teaching and its emphasis on justice and the welfare of marginalized populations (Accetti 2019).

The social market economy was conceived by Ludwig Erhard, who served as Minister of Economics and subsequently as Chancellor. Erhard regarded market mechanisms as an effective means of income generation while also acknowledging the necessity of safeguarding social rights and human dignity. This concept aimed to achieve economic efficiency via competition while protecting the vulnerable segments of society through governmental intervention, regulation, and assistance (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The CDU/CSU included this model in their political agenda as a pragmatic embodiment of the principles of solidarity and fairness. Solidarity, a fundamental tenet of Christian democracy, was manifested in measures aimed at social security, including pension systems, health insurance, and family assistance. Subsidiarity advocated for decentralized decision-making and community empowerment, guaranteeing that aid was delivered where it was most required and in proximity to citizens (Accetti 2019).

ideological ambiguity, potentially estranging its fundamental conservative base.

In the post-Merkel period, the CDU/CSU confronts the simultaneous issue of critically assessing Merkel's legacy while devising a unified vision for the future. The lack of a clearly articulated ideological direction threatens to exacerbate internal tensions and diminish its political attractiveness. The party's propensity for compromise and pragmatic government has allowed it to remain relevant, albeit frequently at the expense of ideological coherence. Critics contend that this adaptability, although politically advantageous, has occasionally compromised the CDU/CSU's identity as a proponent of conservative principles and national sovereignty.

In conclusion, the CDU/CSU's flexibility has enabled it to manage intricate crises and sustain its prominence, albeit frequently at the expense of weakening or compromising its ideological principles. This prompts critical inquiries over the durability of its status as a party able to unify divergent viewpoints while maintaining its fundamental essence.

This paradigm served as the basis for the economic revitalization of post-war Germany, converting it from a ravaged economy into one of the largest globally. The social market economy demonstrated efficacy as both an economic framework and a political instrument that bolstered voters' confidence in democratic institutions. The CDU/CSU advocated it as a counter to liberalism, which they considered excessively individualistic, and to socialism, which they dismissed for its collectivist and centralized characteristics (Darabos 2021).

The tenets of the social market economy allowed the CDU/CSU to address the political and economic difficulties posed by globalization and technological advancement. These ideas continue to be pertinent today and are utilized in addressing contemporary concerns such as climate policy, digitalization, and demographic shifts. The CDU/CSU persist in underscoring the necessity of reconciling economic competitiveness with social fairness, underlining the conceptual coherence of Christian democracy (Accetti 2019; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

The Impact of Religious Principles on CDU/CSU Policy

Religious ideals, profoundly embedded in the Christian heritage, are essential to Christian democracy. Their impact is most apparent in familial, societal, and educational policies. Since its inception, the CDU/CSU has prioritized principles rooted in Catholic social doctrine. These ideas have constituted the cornerstone of their political program, emphasizing familial support, safeguarding the socially weak, conserving natural communities within society, and formulating legislation by natural law (Accetti 2019).

Family Policy

The family has consistently been a fundamental component of the CDU/CSU political agenda. Christian democracy perceives the family as the essential unit of society, holding principal responsibility for child-rearing and promoting intergenerational solidarity. This idea is manifested in tangible initiatives such as financial assistance for families (e.g., *Kindergeld*), parental leave provisions, and endeavors to establish conditions conducive to reconciling work and family life. The CDU/CSU viewed governmental assistance for families as both a civic responsibility and a method to enhance societal stability (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

Social Policy

The CDU/CSU advocated for the concept of solidarity as a moral duty to support society's weakest individuals in social policy. This principle originated from the Christian tradition of charity and social justice. Their programs encompassed the establishment of pension systems, health insurance, and various forms of social protection aimed at safeguarding human dignity and guaranteeing equitable chances. Although these measures provided practical advantages, their principal motivation sprang from the conviction that society ought to be structured on ethical principles and reciprocal assistance (Accetti 2019).

Educational Policy

The CDU/CSU endorsed an educational system that embodied Christian ideals to cultivate citizens in both knowledge and ethical responsibility. This methodology incorporated religious education into the curriculum, which continues to be enshrined in Bavarian legislation today. Historically, the CDU/CSU viewed education as a means to cultivate intellectual and moral integrity in individuals and promote societal cohesion, highlighting personal responsibility and ethical ideals (Pombeni 2019).

The incorporation of religious beliefs into these measures illustrates how Christian democracy aims to align governance with moral and ethical principles, establishing a framework that bolsters both individual dignity and societal stability.

Subsidiarity and Decentralisation

A significant element of the impact of Christian principles on the CDU/CSU was their promotion of subsidiarity. This principle, grounded in Catholic social teaching, guarantees that decision-making occurs at the most localized level feasible. Subsidiarity enabled local communities and families to assume a pivotal role in political and social affairs, with official intervention occurring just when essential. This strategy not only embodied the Christian principles of the CDU/CSU but also endorsed a decentralized governance model aligned with democratic norms (Darabos 2021).

Integration of Religion and Politics

In the post-war European Christian democratic tradition, the CDU/CSU effectively incorporated religious values into the contemporary democratic framework, aligning Catholic social doctrine with democratic political aims. Despite criticism for their close alignment with religious institutions, the CDU/CSU successfully adapted these beliefs to evolving socioeconomic situations. Religious values were regarded as both the spiritual basis of politics and practical instruments for enhancing solidarity, justice, and the equilibrium between individual rights and communal responsibilities (Pombeni 2019).

The intricate relationship between religious principles and CDU/CSU politics established the basis of their political identity and allowed them to influence German politics over time. Nonetheless, the impact of religion transformed, and the CDU/CSU exhibited the capacity to modify these principles to maintain significance in a progressively secular society.

2.2.1. Criticism of the CDU/CSU from Both the Left and the Right

CDU/CSU as a Dominant Political Force: Criticism from the Left and Right

As a centrist-right political force with a broad electoral base, the CDU/CSU has faced recurring criticism from two main directions—left and right. Their commitment to populism, aimed at maintaining societal equilibrium and appealing to a wide range of voters, made them a frequent target of ideological attacks reflecting the dynamics of changing political and social conditions.

Criticism from the Left

Left-wing parties and movements often accused the CDU/CSU of prioritizing the interests of the economic elite and neglecting the concerns of the working class. The social market economy, which the CDU/CSU championed as a balanced economic model, was viewed by some as a compromise that failed to ensure sufficient wealth redistribution or adequately protect workers from the effects of capitalism. Critics also pointed to a lack of innovation in social policies, accusing the CDU/CSU of insufficiently addressing inequalities and deepening social disparities (Accetti 2019).

Another focal point of criticism was the CDU/CSU's perceived rigidity on certain cultural and social issues. For instance, their traditional values, particularly in family policy, were seen by leftist critics as outdated and unable to meet the needs of a modern society. This conflict between progressive and conservative approaches led to tensions on issues such as abortion and LGBT rights. However, over time, the CDU/CSU moderated many of their historical positions, reflecting broader societal changes (Pombeni 2019).

Criticism from the Right

Conservative and nationalist circles accused the CDU/CSU of being too open to globalization, liberalism, and European integration. These critics argued that the CDU/CSU was abandoning traditional values and national interests in favor of international commitments and modernist agendas, such as green policies and migration. This criticism was particularly pronounced during the 2015 refugee crisis when Chancellor Angela Merkel's policies were viewed by conservative forces as a threat to national identity and security (Darabos 2021).

The CDU/CSU also faced criticism for their role in European integration, which conservative critics saw as undermining the sovereignty of nation-states. Sovereignist movements often accused the CDU/CSU of excessive support for European institutions at the expense of German interests. This narrative was reinforced during the Eurozone crisis when the CDU/CSU advocated financial solidarity among member states—a policy many perceived as an undue burden on German taxpayers (Accetti 2019; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

Ideological Flexibility

What set the CDU/CSU apart from other political parties was their ability to adapt to criticism and maintain a broad voter base. The CDU/CSU navigated these opposing poles by flexibly interpreting core concepts such as freedom, solidarity, subsidiarity, and proportionality to reflect shifting political and social demands. This flexibility demonstrated their capacity to integrate conflicting perspectives into a coherent political vision (Pombeni 2019).

2.2.2. Ideological Innovations of the CDU/CSU in the Context of Global Challenges

CDU/CSU: Modernising Christian Democracy to Address Current Challenges

The CDU/CSU, as proponents of Christian democracy in Germany, have exhibited a notable capacity to adjust to evolving global and domestic circumstances while maintaining the essence of their ideological tenets. Their innovation potential has been crucial to their survival and development, particularly amid globalization, climate change, digitalization, and migratory crises.

Globalization and Economic Policy

During the globalization era, the CDU/CSU confronted the challenge of reconciling the tenets of the social market economy with the escalating global economic integration. They underscored the significance of international trade while promoting strong social safety systems. Their policies aimed to prevent polarizing strategies, balancing market accessibility with the safeguarding of national interests, which, however, some argue, resulted in excessive concessions to leftist currents, particularly as a consequence of coalition governance. (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

Climate Change and Sustainability

The CDU/CSU responded to escalating domestic and international pressure from environmental movements on climate change. Initially seen as advocates of industrial growth, they gradually integrated environmental concerns into their political platform. This shift exemplified their commitment to solidarity and justice, promoting ecological projects that were socially egalitarian and economically considerate to marginalized communities.

The CDU/CSU sought to illustrate that traditional values could serve as a basis for tackling modern challenges by endorsing renewable energy, sustainable technologies, and international climate cooperation. This policy enabled them to connect with the increasing prominence of Germany's Green Party, facilitating cooperation within both the government and the European Parliament. (Accetti 2019).

Nonetheless, their energy policy strategy has faced considerable criticism. The resolution to eliminate nuclear energy following the Fukushima accident in 2011, although politically favorable at the time, rendered Germany significantly dependent on coal and natural gas imports, notably from Russia. This reliance not only compromised the nation's climate objectives by extending fossil fuel usage but also revealed significant weaknesses in Germany's energy security, especially during rising geopolitical tensions with Russia. Critics contend that the rapid nuclear phase-out, coupled with excessive dependence on intermittent renewable energy sources without enough investment in storage and grid infrastructure, has resulted in an energy policy paradox: lofty climate objectives hindered by practical deficiencies and geopolitical vulnerabilities.

These policy decisions exemplify the difficulties encountered by the CDU/CSU in reconciling environmental objectives with energy autonomy and economic stability, prompting inquiries into whether their approach favored political expediency over long-term strategic foresight.

Technology and Digitalization

The CDU/CSU integrated the problems brought by technological advancement and digitalization into their ideological framework. Their agenda encompassed support for digital infrastructure, innovation, and educational efforts aimed at equipping the workforce for the digital era. They prioritized preventing digitalization from worsening social inequities, embodying ideals of subsidiarity and solidarity by advocating for equitable access to digital technology for all citizens.

Nonetheless, Germany's increasing technology deficit, especially in the industrial sector, persists as a significant concern. Addressing this issue will be essential for the future leadership of the CDU, particularly under Friedrich Merz, who is perceived as a pro-market economic liberal.

Migration and Demographics

The increasing migration pressures and demographic shifts have posed considerable hurdles for the CDU/CSU. Their migration policies were founded on ideals of solidarity and human dignity, promoting a system that offered humanitarian assistance while preserving social cohesion. Nonetheless, the efficacy of these programs has been scrutinized, especially in light of internal discord between the CDU and CSU. The CSU frequently embraced a more prudent approach, prioritizing stringent migration regulations and mobilizing security personnel when required.

The demographic challenges prompted the CDU/CSU to prioritize family support and enhance birth rates. Initiatives encompassed financial incentives for parents, adaptable work arrangements, and funding for educational systems. Notwithstanding these endeavors, reversing the continent-wide

trend of diminishing birth rates has proven elusive (Darabos 2021).

Ideological Flexibility and Innovation

The CDU/CSU have demonstrated that their capacity for innovation does not entail forsaking historic principles but rather reinterpreting them in light of contemporary circumstances. Their methodology illustrates that Christian democracy may maintain its relevance in the face of swift transformations while still adhering to its core beliefs.

The ideological advancements of the CDU/CSU exemplify how conventional political parties can evolve in a globalized context while preserving their foundational principles. This adaptation underscores the persistent significance of Christian democracy as a political entity adept at addressing modern problems (Accetti 2019; Pombeni 2019).

2.3. Impact on European Politics: Germany as a Leader in European Integration

The German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) have been instrumental in influencing the European integration initiative. Post-World War II, the CDU, led by Konrad Adenauer, advocated for European union as a strategy to ensure peace and stability in the region. Adenauer regarded European integration not solely as a political initiative but as a moral obligation to resolve historical conflicts among nations and to create a cooperative framework grounded in Christian principles of solidarity and human dignity (Accetti 2019).

The CDU played a pivotal role in garnering support for the Treaties of Rome in 1957, which established the European Economic Community. This initiative aligned with the CDU's vision of economic collaboration as a way to overcome protectionism and advance free trade among European countries. German Christian Democrats believed economic integration was essential for achieving a politically unified Europe, promoting ideals of subsidiarity and regional cooperation (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

However, critics argue that in recent decades, the CDU's vision of integration has increasingly drifted toward a Eurofederalist framework, characterized by a strong preference for centralization at the expense of national sovereignty. This tendency has often been reinforced by the CDU's willingness to align with socialist and Green political groups in the European Parliament, particularly on issues of climate policy, fiscal transfers, and expanded EU competencies. While these collaborations have facilitated legislative efficiency, they have also drawn criticism for prioritizing consensus over a defense of core conservative principles.

The CSU, as the Bavarian affiliate of the CDU, has often acted as a counterweight, expressing reservations about the risks of

excessive centralization and the erosion of national sovereignty. While supportive of European integration in principle, the CSU has frequently emphasized the importance of safeguarding regional autonomy and limiting the scope of supranational governance. This stance reflects the CSU's commitment to Bavaria's identity and traditional values within the broader European framework (Pombeni 2019).

The German Christian Democrats significantly contributed to the establishment of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which laid the foundation for the Eurozone. The CDU promoted a unified currency as a means to enhance economic cohesion and competitiveness against global powers. However, this ambition has not been without consequences. Critics argue that the CDU's advocacy for the Eurozone downplayed economic disparities between member states, resulting in recurring financial instability and dependence on extensive fiscal transfers. The CSU voiced concerns over these imbalances, advocating for stricter fiscal discipline and economic accountability, though these warnings were often overshadowed by the CDU's more integrationist agenda (Darabos 2021).

The relationship between the CDU and CSU underscores an ongoing tension in German Christian democracy between Eurofederalist ambitions and the preservation of national and regional interests. While the CDU has consistently prioritized European integration as a project of solidarity and collective responsibility, the CSU's more cautious approach highlights the risks of overreach and the erosion of democratic accountability within member states. Critics contend that the CDU's increasing alignment with socialist and Green factions has contributed to a shift in its identity, steering it away from traditional Christian democratic principles and toward a technocratic, centralized vision of Europe.

The Impact of German Christian Democracy on the Development of European Identity

German Christian democracy has profoundly influenced the formation of a European identity based on the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and respect for national and regional diversity. The CDU originally envisioned the European project as both a pragmatic framework for collaboration and a moral mission to establish a community rooted in shared Christian values. This vision allowed German Christian democrats to promote a European model that combined economic prosperity with social responsibility (Accetti 2019). However, this model has faced challenges in practice, particularly as the CDU's policies increasingly align with federalist tendencies that risk sidelining the diversity of national identities in favor of uniformity.

Christian Foundations of European Identity

The CDU has historically emphasized the Christian foundations of European civilization as a unifying cultural heritage across EU member states. These roots were framed not only as historical antecedents but also as a moral framework for addressing contemporary political and social challenges. The

CDU's commitment to integrating Christian social teachings into European policies aimed to provide a counterbalance to purely secular or technocratic approaches. Yet, critics argue that this emphasis has weakened in recent years as the party has prioritized political expediency and collaboration with progressive factions over defending the role of Christianity in shaping European values (Pombeni 2019).

Economic Integration as a Mechanism for Cohesion

The CDU endorsed economic union as a mechanism to resolve historical tensions and promote solidarity among European nations. By championing the implementation of the Euro and fostering deeper economic integration, the CDU sought to build trust and collaboration across the EU. However, this strategy has faced criticism for its unintended consequences. The reliance on fiscal transfers to sustain weaker economies has fuelled resentment in economically stronger nations like Germany, while centralized monetary policies have exacerbated inequalities between member states. Critics argue that the CDU's approach often prioritized symbolic unity over practical sustainability, raising questions about the long-term viability of its vision for Europe (Darabos 2021).

2.4. Impact on European Politics: The Limitations of German Christian Democracy as a Model for Other European Countries

The Constraints of the German Christian Democratic Paradigm in Europe

Although German Christian democracy, embodied by the CDU and CSU, significantly influenced European integration and the advancement of European identity, its ideological and political methodologies are not universally relevant in other European nations. The distinct historical, cultural, and economic circumstances of Germany fostered an environment conducive to the CDU and CSU's development of a unique brand of Christian democracy. Nevertheless, this paradigm has encountered difficulties in functioning as a prototype for other national political organizations.

Historical Circumstances as an Obstacle

German Christian democracy arose from the devastation of post-war Europe, where its tenets of solidarity, subsidiarity, and reconciliation received widespread endorsement. This circumstance was specific to Germany, which needed to restore its international reputation while reconciling with its history. Other European nations may lack the same historical context for enacting analogous policies, hence constraining the universal application of the German Christian democratic model (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).

Cultural Disparities and Their Effects

The ideals underlying German Christian democracy manifest distinctively throughout various European cultures. In more secular nations of Western Europe, like France or the Netherlands, Christian ideals, despite their Christian democratic heritage, may be less appealing as the ideological basis for political agendas. In contrast, in Central and Eastern European nations, where Christian traditions are more robust, similar ideals may be more favorably received but are frequently understood differently, especially regarding migration or European integration (Accetti 2019).

Economic and Social Inequalities

The economic prowess of Germany allowed the CDU and CSU to execute ambitious plans grounded in the ideals of the social market economy, which integrates economic efficiency with social security. In other Southern European nations, including Greece, Spain, and Portugal, where economic conditions and fiscal stability are suboptimal, replicating this approach may prove challenging. Likewise, Central and Eastern European nations, still contending with the remnants of Soviet economies, face considerable hurdles in applying this paradigm (Pombeni 2019).

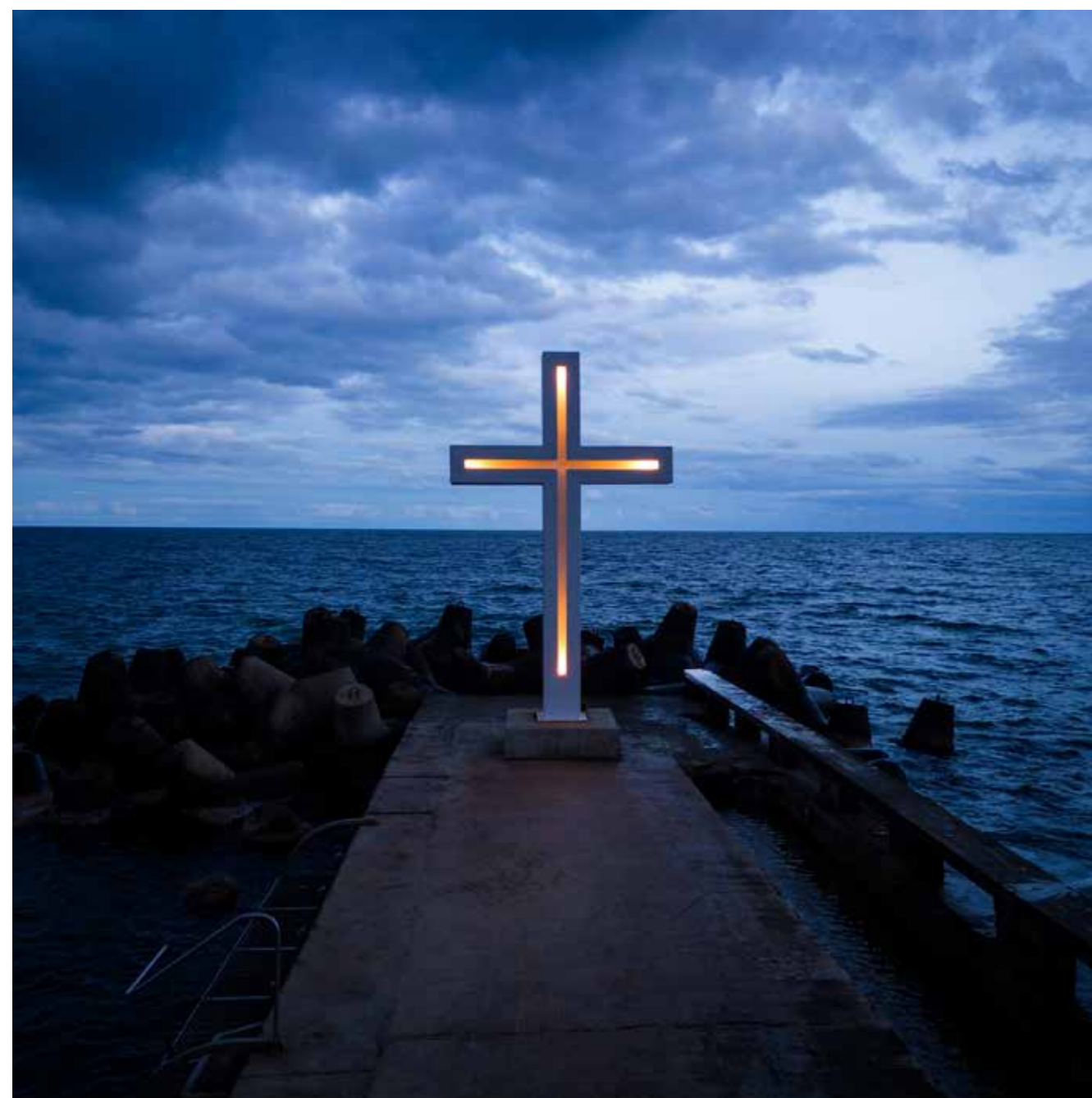
Political and Institutional Adaptability

The CDU and CSU have exhibited significant political adaptability in maneuvering across the intricate terrain of domestic and European politics. Their capacity to harmonize ancient values with contemporary difficulties has been a pivotal element in their success and prolonged governance within a stable political milieu. Nonetheless, other European Christian democratic and conservative parties may lack comparable political resources or institutional backing to react similarly. This disparity restricts the applicability of the German model in alternative circumstances, especially in nations with fragmented political systems (Darabos 2021).

The Necessity for Model Adaptation

The German Christian democracy model established by the CDU and CSU provides a significant framework for European collaboration and political stability. Nonetheless, its effectiveness depends on certain characteristics that are not easily imitated in other European nations. The future of Christian democracy in Europe relies on its capacity to adjust its fundamental principles to various cultural, economic, and political situations while maintaining its identity and foundational values.

This trend necessitates transparency and discourse among Christian democratic and conservative parties throughout Europe to maintain their significance in a changing political environment (Accetti 2019; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen 2010).



3

CONSERVATISM AND ITS CONCEPTS

The Origins and Development of Conservatism

Conservatism arose as a reaction to revolutionary occurrences that undermined traditional social and political frameworks and aimed to effectuate significant transformations. The philosophical underpinning is based on the concept that society functions as an organic whole, with its stability reliant on respect for traditions and historical evolution. Edmund Burke, a pivotal figure in conservatism, regarded tradition as a reservoir of common wisdom and underscored the significance of evolution over revolutionary change. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke characterized society as an intergenerational compact, wherein each generation is mandated to safeguard the heritage of its predecessors and transmit it to subsequent generations (Freeden 1996).

Fundamental Principles of Conservatism

An investigation of conservatism necessitates the identification of its fundamental notions, including tradition, authority, and continuity, and an examination of their connections to ancillary factors such as economic policy or decentralization. Conservatism can be perceived as a dynamic framework that adapts to external circumstances while maintaining its core principles (Freeden 1996).

Decentralisation and Local Autonomy

Alexis de Tocqueville enhanced conservative thinking by prioritizing decentralization and local autonomy. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville cautioned against the perils of centralizing authority, which he posited could jeopardize individual liberty. His examination of democratic mechanisms underscored the necessity for robust local institutions that safeguard against tyranny while promoting civic participation. This emphasis on local structures corresponds with conservative ideology, which dismisses universalist frameworks and favors solutions customized to particular historical and cultural circumstances (Freeden 1996; Tocqueville 1835).

The Function of Religion in Conservatism

Juan Donoso Cortés underscored the significance of religion as a stabilizing influence on society. He contended that the church and its ethical principles are fundamental supports of societal order. Cortés' condemnation of revolutions and liberalism

originated from his conviction that these movements disturb the natural order and result in chaos. This viewpoint introduces a cultural and ethical aspect to conservatism that transcends just political issues (Cortés 2020).

Adaptability via Peripheral Concepts

Freeden's methodology facilitates an examination of how conservatism integrates fundamental notions with ancillary aspects, thus enhancing its adaptability. Benjamin Disraeli's notion of "one nation" integrated the social obligations of the elite with conservative ideology. This method integrated philosophical consistency with pragmatic measures that tackled the issues of industrialization and social disparity. Disraeli's work illustrates how conservatism adapts its ancillary principles to address evolving societal demands (Disraeli 2020).

Sovereignty and Decentralisation

Hannes H. Gissurarson emphasized the significance of sovereignty and the safeguarding of national institutions within conservative ideology. Conservatism perceives the decentralization of power as a bulwark against excessive involvement by centralized governmental entities. This notion holds special significance in the European environment since conservative parties encounter challenges to reconcile national and European interests (Gissurarson 2020).

Pluralism and Contextuality within Conservatism

Gerald Gaus introduced an element of diversity and contextuality to the intellectual structure of conservatism. It does not provide universal solutions but acknowledges the diversity of political systems and traditions. Conservatism underscores the need to honor local circumstances, which is fundamental to its skepticism regarding universalist and abstract frameworks that neglect historical and cultural particularities (Gaus 2000).

Reconciling Stability and Transformation

Freeden's approach underscores conservatism's capacity to reconcile stability with change. Conservative thought eschews rigidity and allows for the reinterpretation of its principles while remaining anchored in its foundational values. This adaptability guarantees the continued significance of conservatism in contemporary politics.

3.1. Practical Application of Conservative Values in European Political Systems

Conservatism: Tradition in an Evolving World

Conservatism, as a political ideology, possesses a profound legacy throughout European political systems, prioritizing stability, sovereignty, and continuity. These ideals are manifested in policies that reconcile the necessity to address contemporary issues with the conservation of traditions. Conservatism emphasizes the preservation of established structures and ideas seen as essential for societal and political stability (Freeden 1996).

Sovereignty: Safeguarding National Frameworks

A fundamental tenet of conservatism is sovereignty, intricately linked to the safeguarding of national interests and identity. Conservative ideologies frequently resist the undue enhancement of supranational organizations that compromise national sovereignty. This theory posits that the nation-state is the most effective guarantor of political stability and social order, as it embodies historically validated and culturally entrenched governance structures (Freeden 1996; Gissurarson 2020).

This idea is manifested through a focus on subsidiarity, permitting choices to be taken at the most localized level while ensuring the national government remains the principal protector of citizens' rights and obligations. This paradigm is especially prominent in nations with a robust conservative heritage, such as the United Kingdom. In contrast to centralized systems, conservatism fosters diversity and local distinctiveness, allowing for adaptation to diverse cultural and geographic situations (OMP 2020).

Decentralization: Harmonizing Local and National Interests

Decentralization, as a pragmatic manifestation of conservative principles, embodies a reverence for regional identities and local communities. Conservatism perceives decentralization as a mechanism to avert the overconcentration of power, promoting the establishment of local governments and community frameworks. This policy permits flexibility in legislative implementation, enhancing a sense of responsibility and belonging at the local level (OMP 2020; Darabos 2020).

In European politics, decentralization frequently entails reconciling local requirements with national objectives. The equilibrium between regional identity and national unity is underpinned by conservative principles, establishing a stable foundation for this dynamic. Federal systems in Germany and Switzerland facilitate conservative policies that address regional particularities while maintaining national cohesion (OMP 2020; Gissurarson 2020).

Cultural Continuity: Safeguarding Traditions in an Evolving World

Conservatism underscores the importance of cultural continuity and traditions as stabilizing elements during periods of swift transformation. This idea is manifest in measures that safeguard cultural heritage, religious liberties, and linguistic identities. Conservatism advocates for the preservation of historical values while simultaneously endorsing essential reforms to address contemporary difficulties (OMP 2020; Freedden 1996).

The pragmatic implementation of conservative principles within European political frameworks involves tackling modern challenges while preserving core identity. Conservative methodologies integrate continuity with innovation, enabling political parties to formulate policies that address current requirements while safeguarding what they deem effective and worthwhile. This pragmatic approach distinguishes conservatism from ideologies centered on extreme change or inertia, illustrating its viability in Europe's dynamic political landscape.

Conservatism as a Reaction to Contemporary Challenges

Historically, conservatism has asserted itself as an ideology adept at confronting contemporary difficulties while preserving its core principles. The fundamental conservative premise of safeguarding stability and tradition is adaptable to contemporary societal needs, rendering it a dynamic ideology responsive to globalization, cultural disputes, and technological advancements (Freedden 1996).

Globalization and its accompanying economic and social upheavals pose significant difficulties for conservatism. European conservative parties endeavor to reconcile the promotion of free markets with the safeguarding of local communities. Scandinavian conservative parties, for instance, amalgamate market-oriented policies with an emphasis on social cohesion, tackling issues of inequality and social exclusion (Gissurarson 2020).

Cultural disputes, frequently ignited by migration, are a significant challenge for conservatism. European conservative parties prioritize safeguarding national identity, maintaining cultural legacy, and assimilating migrants in accordance with the principles of host nations. The CSU in Bavaria has adopted a limited migration policy while emphasizing integration through shared values, exemplifying a pragmatic conservative position on the matter (Freedden 1996; Gissurarson 2020).

Technological advancement, encompassing digitalization and automation, introduces more issues that conservative parties confront. In this context, conservatism frequently

underscores the necessity of rules to protect society from the adverse effects of technological advancements while advocating for their appropriate use to enhance the economy and elevate the quality of life. British conservatism epitomizes this strategy by conventionally endorsing business innovation while advocating for prudent regulation of the technology industry (Gaus 2000).

Environmental concerns, especially the climate problem, have emerged as a domain where conservatism is compelled to adjust to contemporary circumstances. Conservative parties in Western Europe are progressively incorporating environmental protection concepts into their programs, highlighting sustainability as an integral aspect of traditional

3.2. Modern European Conservatism: ECR and the Heritage of Identity and Democracy

The 2024 landscape of European conservatism illustrates a shifting ideological and political dynamic influenced by the reconfiguration of major conservative groups. The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) is pivotal in this context, having established itself as the foremost advocate of Eurorealist conservatism within the European Parliament. The party's dedication to national sovereignty, cultural preservation, and economic decentralization establishes it as a cohesive force for diverse conservative movements throughout Europe. The dissolution of the Identity and Democracy (ID) group and the subsequent establishment of Patriots for Europe (Pfe) and the Europe of Sovereign Nations Group (ESNG) has further diversified conservative ideologies, presenting both opportunities and challenges for the wider conservative movement.

The Influence of ECR on the Development of European Conservatism

The ECR has established itself as a proponent of a Eurorealist perspective that prioritizes national sovereignty, subsidiarity, and a decentralized European Union. In contrast to federalist parties, the ECR promotes a Europe of nation-states, wherein Member States retain authority over essential domains such as immigration, energy policy, and fiscal governance. The party contests excessive regulation from Brussels and emphasizes the reduction of bureaucratic burdens on businesses while promoting innovation and economic resilience.

The ECR emphasizes the significance of safeguarding Europe's Christian heritage and varied national identities. This encompasses endorsing policies that safeguard traditional family structures, foster cultural heritage, and oppose ideological uniformity enforced by international organizations. The ECR promotes free markets and limited government intervention, emphasizing assistance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the competitiveness of European industries.

values. Conservatism perceives environmental stewardship as an obligation to future generations, associating contemporary ecological issues with principles of responsibility and continuity, frequently criticizing imprudent environmental measures (Freedden 1996).

Freedden's study demonstrates that conservatism may be both pragmatic and receptive to innovation, all while preserving its fundamental identity. It is a dynamic system, not a static ideology, capable of assimilating new thoughts and evolving to maintain relevance. This ability to adapt is a fundamental conservative reaction to contemporary difficulties, guaranteeing its sustained relevance in changing political circumstances.

The ECR adopts a pragmatic stance in European politics, prioritizing collaboration among similar conservative parties but being receptive to temporary coalitions on particular matters with other factions. This strategy has enabled the ECR to sustain a pivotal position in influencing European conservatism, especially in domains where its objectives coincide with the interests of other conservative groups.

The Disintegration of Identity and Democracy

The disbandment of the Identity and Democracy (ID) organization in 2024 represented a pivotal event in European conservatism, resulting in the formation of two new organizations: Patriots for Europe (Pfe) and the Europe of Sovereign Nations organization (ESNG). These factions embody contrasting conceptions of national sovereignty and conservative principles, illustrating the intricacy of the modern conservative movement.

Patriots for Europe (Pfe) and The Europe of Sovereign Nations Group (ESNG) employ a populist strategy, highlighting the safeguarding of national sovereignty against perceived dangers posed by globalism and supranational entities. The group has concentrated on matters including immigration restrictions, contesting the Green Deal's effects on national industries, and promoting a resurgence of traditional values. Pfe's and ESNG's focus on robust national boundaries and skepticism towards EU institutions corresponds with the overarching conservative narrative. However, it frequently shifts towards rhetoric that favors cultural exclusivity and Euroscepticism rather than constructive engagement.

The fragmentation of ID into Pfe and ESNG has created opportunities for the ECR to assert itself as the leading conservative force in Europe. The ECR's focus on pragmatic governance and respect for national sovereignty offers a middle ground between Pfe's and ESNG's populism and centrism of the EPP. This positioning allows the ECR to act as a bridge, fostering dialogue and collaboration among various

conservative factions in the European Parliament while reinforcing its vision of a decentralized Europe.

However, challenges remain. The ideological differences between these groups can hinder the formation of a cohesive conservative agenda. While the ECR advocates for a balanced approach that combines sovereignty with cooperation, PFE's and ESNG's positioning and rhetoric may create friction in policy negotiations.

3.3. Regional Variations of Conservatism

Toryism: Pragmatism vs. Ideology in the Context of British Politics

Toryism, the British variant of conservatism, is distinguished by its profound pragmatism coupled with an adherence to traditional values and institutions. Its origins trace back to the 17th-century English Revolution, during which the Tories upheld the king, the Anglican Church, and a stratified social hierarchy in opposition to revolutionary transformations. The historical setting influenced the fundamental tenets of Toryism, highlighting authority, continuity, and social harmony (Freeden 1996; Gissurarson 2020).

While not officially a Tory, Edmund Burke profoundly impacted British conservatism. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke cautioned against drastic alterations that neglect historical continuity and societal equilibrium. Toryism integrated Burke's observations into a political approach that eschews inflexible ideological positions, prioritizing pragmatic solutions instead. This strategy enables British conservatives to adeptly address evolving circumstances and societal difficulties while maintaining their foundational values (Disraeli 2020).

A fundamental characteristic of Toryism is its adaptability to changing social and economic circumstances. Benjamin Disraeli, a notable 19th-century Tory, introduced the notion of "One Nation," emphasizing the social obligation of elites to less advantaged segments of society. Disraeli's social reform programs illustrated that Toryism could incorporate liberal and progressive components inside a conservative structure, so augmenting its legitimacy throughout the industrialization period and tackling increasing inequality (Disraeli 2020).

The pragmatism of Toryism is also apparent in its economic policy approach. Historically, British conservatives have endorsed free markets while simultaneously advocating for regulations to safeguard critical industries and maintain stability. This equitable strategy allows Toryism to tackle globalization issues while safeguarding national interests. An illustrative instance of this pragmatism is their position on the European Union. The Conservative Party has historically shown skepticism towards European integration, prioritizing national sovereignty as a fundamental principle of British politics. This skepticism resulted in the Brexit choice, embodying a historical

The current state of European conservatism reflects both its strengths and its vulnerabilities. The fragmentation of ID highlights the ideological diversity within the movement, but it also underscores the potential for strategic alliances that respect national autonomy while addressing shared challenges. The ECR's pragmatic approach, coupled with its focus on cultural preservation and economic decentralization, positions it as a stabilizing force within this dynamic environment.

Conservative tradition of protecting national institutions and sovereignty (Gissurarson 2020).

The cultural aspect is a crucial attribute of Toryism. The Conservative Party has long prioritized the preservation of British identity and cultural heritage, as demonstrated by policies regarding education, the protection of historical landmarks, and the promotion of the English language as a symbol of national unity. This cultural policy is intricately linked to their conviction on the significance of local institutions, which act as counterweights to centralized authority while promoting civic participation (Freeden 1996).

Toryism embodies a unique form of conservatism that integrates pragmatic approaches with a resolute dedication to traditional values and institutions. It has influenced British politics for generations, showcasing its lasting significance in confronting contemporary difficulties while remaining faithful to its historical foundations. This amalgamation of adaptation and tradition guarantees the sustained impact of Toryism on British political affairs.

Gaullism: The French Tradition of Sovereignty and Its Impact on the European Project

Gaullism, named after Charles de Gaulle, embodies a distinct variant of French conservatism that prioritizes national sovereignty, a robust state, and geopolitical autonomy. This philosophy is rooted in the French heritage of centralized authority, historical experiences with revolutionary transformations, and a robust feeling of national identity. De Gaulle regarded the nation as the principal entity in political life, asserting that only a sovereign nation can guarantee the stability and continuity of its ideals and institutions (Freeden 1996; Gissurarson 2020).

Gaullism is fundamentally based on the concept of "French exceptionalism," emphasizing France's autonomy in both foreign and domestic affairs. De Gaulle opposed France's subjection to supranational entities, fostering a skeptical attitude towards European integration if it threatened the autonomy of member nations. This position was particularly apparent during his presidency when he denied British accession to the European Economic Community (EEC)

and promoted a "Europe of Nations," wherein sovereign states would collaborate based on equality and autonomy or temporarily disengage from NATO in certain domains (Freeden 1996).

The reformist inclinations of Gaullism were apparent in his endeavors to modernize the French economy and society while prioritizing national interests. De Gaulle endorsed economic changes intended to enhance France's position in global competition while simultaneously opposing liberalization that may jeopardize social cohesiveness and national identity. The endeavor to reconcile modernization with the safeguarding of national interests is a fundamental aspect of Gaullism (Gissurarson 2020).

Gaullism significantly impacted the European project, especially on sovereignty and the autonomy of member states. De Gaulle resisted federalist aspirations that may undermine the authority of nation-states and advocated for a model of intergovernmental collaboration. This cooperative concept underpinned the Luxembourg Compromise of 1966, which conferred veto power to member nations on issues of national interest. Gaullism consequently instilled the notion that European integration must honor the sovereignty of individual nations along with their historical and cultural particularities within the European project (Freeden 1996).

Despite de Gaulle's skepticism regarding further integration, his stance promoted discussions on alternate models of European cooperation. Gaullism exemplifies the fusion of conservative philosophy with the safeguarding of sovereignty, pragmatic reforms, and its impact on the evolution of European political and economic frameworks. It underscores the significance of equilibrium between the autonomy of member states and the common aspirations of Europe.

Conservative Approaches to Migration and Their Impact on European Cohesion

Migration constitutes a significant problem for European conservative parties. Conservative perspectives on this matter are fundamentally anchored in the preservation of cultural identity, security, and social stability. Simultaneously, these viewpoints illustrate the diversity of regional traditions and political priorities, potentially resulting in difficulties not just within conservative parties but also in their interactions with Christian democratic parties that prioritize unity (Freeden 1996; Gissurarson 2020).

Conversely, Central European conservative parties, such as Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland, prioritized border security from the inception of the migration issue during the past decade and have steadfastly resisted the compulsory redistribution of migrants inside the EU. These parties emphasize security threats and the possible erosion of national identity, frequently viewing migration as a danger to conventional values and the uniformity of their society (Gissurarson 2020).

Synergies and Conflicts

Conservative parties' approaches to migration have a profound impact on European cohesion. On the one hand, they foster discussions about cultural identity, sovereignty, and security, contributing to the development of political solutions that address the diverse needs of member states. On the other hand, their varied stances often complicate the search for a common European solution. Migration thus remains one of the most significant challenges for European conservatism, requiring a delicate balance between protecting national interests and promoting cooperation and European unity (Freeden 1996; Gissurarson 2020).

The Relationship Between Conservatism and Christian Values in Different Regions of Europe

European conservatism has differing levels of association with Christian principles, influenced by historical, cultural, and political variables. This relationship is frequently influenced by the particular setting of a nation, its religious heritage, and the position of Christianity in public dialogue. In certain nations, Christian values continue to be fundamental to conservative politics, whilst in others, this association has diminished or evolved due to the influences of secularisation and modernization (OMP 2020; Gissurarson 2020).

Western Europe: Historical Connection with Christian Democracy

In Western Europe, conservatism is frequently linked to Christian democracy, especially in nations like Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The CDU in Germany and the ÖVP in Austria prioritize the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and personal responsibility, which are fundamentally grounded in Christian tradition. This conservative ideology is informed by Catholic social doctrine and Protestant traditions that have historically influenced the political culture of these nations (Darabos 2020).

In highly secularised nations like France, where the separation of church and state is a fundamental tenet of the republic, conservatism often distances itself from an overtly Christian framework. French Gaullism embodies a trend that merges conservative ideals with national sovereignty without overtly prioritizing Christian beliefs. Nonetheless, certain elements of Christian morality are implicitly evident in its emphasis on family, community, and nation (OMP 2020).

Central and Eastern Europe: Religion as a Source of Identity

In Central and Eastern Europe, the association between conservatism and Christian principles is more pronounced, frequently attributed to Christianity's historical function as a guardian of national identity and culture throughout times of external subjugation. In Poland, the PiS party prominently embodies conservative principles closely

associated with Catholic faith and traditions, but it is not formally a Christian democratic party. The PiS party employs Christian principles to reinforce national identity, particularly in the realms of family policy and migration (OMP 2020).

A like trend is seen in Hungary, where Fidesz integrates conservative ideals with Christian culture as the cornerstone of national unity. Viktor Orbán consistently underscores that safeguarding Christian Europe is a fundamental aspect of Hungarian policy, particularly during discussions on migration and multiculturalism (OMP 2020). In many nations, Christian identity is regarded not merely as a spiritual underpinning but also as a political instrument to promote conservative policies.

Northern Europe: Secularized Conservatism

In Nordic nations like Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, conservatism is generally less associated with Christian principles and more concentrated on economic matters, decentralization, and state administration. Although Christian churches have historically held considerable significance, the process of secularisation in many nations has reduced their impact on conservative politics. Conservative parties in this region emphasize governmental efficiency, individual accountability, and the maintenance of traditional social frameworks without overtly invoking Christian values (OMP 2020; Gissurarson 2020).

Factors Influencing the Connection Between Christianity and Conservatism

The relationship between Christian principles and conservatism is shaped by multiple causes. The cultural backdrop, particularly the historical role of the church in society, is crucial in nations where Christianity has influenced political identity. The historical experiences of nations, especially with totalitarian regimes or colonization, influence the various connections between religion and politics. In Poland and Hungary, Christianity acted as a safeguard against communism, reinforcing its association with conservatism (OMP 2020).

Economic conditions represent another critical issue. In affluent nations, conservatism is less dependent on religious ideals, as social and economic stability diminishes the necessity for overt allusions to spiritual roots. In contrast, in nations experiencing political or economic instability, Christian values frequently serve as a mechanism for mobilizing voters and reinforcing national solidarity (Gissurarson 2020; Freedon 1996).

The relationship between conservatism and Christian principles constitutes a dynamic framework that mirrors the diversity of European areas and their historical-cultural circumstances. Conservatism adeptly incorporates Christian principles, maintaining their significance in public discourse while simultaneously adjusting to secular contexts, so showcasing its flexibility and adaptability.

3.4. Political Cooperation Between Conservative and Christian Democratic Parties: Opportunities and Limits

The European political landscape offers avenues for collaboration among conservative and Christian democratic parties, which, despite varying priorities, possess numerous shared value-based and political foundations. This cooperation relies not just on aligned priorities but also on addressing disparities arising from historical events, regional characteristics, and contemporary problems in European politics.

Common Values and Political Priorities

Conservatism and Christian democracy converge in their focus on safeguarding traditional values, which underpin societal stability and order. A significant point of alignment is found in their common objectives for family policy. Support for the family as the essential unit of society is seen in numerous Christian democratic and conservative parties, manifested in initiatives such as tax incentives for families, parental assistance programs, and the safeguarding of children's rights. This problem reverberates throughout Europe and establishes a robust foundation for the formation of political coalitions (OMP 2020).

A crucial domain of collaboration is the conservation of cultural heritage. Conservative and Christian democratic parties underscore the necessity of preserving national and European cultural identity amid globalization and migrant issues. This emphasis is manifest in endeavors to save religious symbols, cultural traditions, and linguistic diversity, underpinned by a common framework grounded in the theological and historical backdrop that resonates within the political rhetoric of both ideologies (Darabos 2020; Freedon 1996).

Challenges in Unifying Positions

Notwithstanding analogous values, collaboration between these two movements encounters considerable obstacles. Migration constitutes one of the most significant challenges. Conservative parties, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, frequently prioritize a rejection of migration, concentrating on security and the preservation of national identity. In contrast, Christian democratic parties, like the CDU in Germany, adopt a more integration-focused and humanitarian approach to migration. Divergent approaches generate tensions in the formulation of common policy at the European level (OMP 2020).

A further difficult matter is sovereignty and European integration. Conservative parties such as Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland emphasize the necessity of reinforcing national sovereignty and oppose federalist inclinations within the European Union. Conversely, Christian democrats generally advocate for more integration to foster unity and cooperation among states. This inconsistency hinders cohesive political objectives and necessitates adaptability in formulating agreements.

Coalition Building Perspectives

Notwithstanding the hurdles, collaboration between conservatives and Christian democrats presents opportunities for forming coalitions grounded in theological commonalities and pragmatic political objectives. Collaboration opportunities exist in family protection, addressing climate change by safeguarding local traditions and ecological practices, and fostering economic development while maintaining social principles. Family policy and cultural preservation may

function as cohesive foundations for dialogues around shared initiatives (OMP 2020; Gissurarson 2020).

Establishing coalitions necessitates not only the identification of common values but also an openness to regional particularities and varying agendas among stakeholders. Compromise solutions on migration may entail enhancing border security while concurrently promoting integration initiatives for admitted migrants. In the domain of sovereignty, it is crucial to achieve an equilibrium between bolstering national power and fostering collaboration within European frameworks (OMP 2020; Freedon 1996).

The collaboration between conservatives and Christian democrats constitutes a dynamic and intricate process necessitating a pragmatic approach. The efficacy of this collaboration will hinge on the capacity to discern strategic priorities that can bolster political cohesion and tackle prevailing difficulties at the European level.

POLICY AREAS OF OVERLAP AND DIVERGENCE

4.1. Social Policy

Subsidiarity vs. centralization: Cross-overs and differences

The notion of subsidiarity, which prioritizes resolving difficulties at the most localized level, is a fundamental tenet of the social policy of German Christian democratic parties, including the CDU and CSU. This approach fosters decentralization and empowers local communities to participate in decision-making processes. Programs such as *Sozialraumorientierung* in Germany allow local governments to customize social services to the distinct requirements of their inhabitants, enhancing the efficiency and relevance of the assistance offered. However, critics argue that the CDU's commitment to subsidiarity has often been undermined by its support for European policies that promote centralization, creating a disconnect between its domestic rhetoric and its actions at the EU level.

A comparable emphasis on subsidiarity is evident among other European conservative parties, which promote the decentralization of decisions related to social services and migrant integration at the local level. This allows for greater responsiveness to the specific needs of individual communities. This method aligns with the principle of subsidiarity enshrined in European law, which underscores that decisions should be made as close to citizens as possible. Yet, the CDU's support for EU-wide initiatives, particularly in areas such as migration policy and social standards, has occasionally contradicted this principle, raising concerns about whether it prioritizes ideological consistency or political expediency.

Conversely, certain conservative parties, such as the British Conservative Party, have advocated for more centralized approaches in specific domains. Reforms in education and healthcare under Margaret Thatcher's administration, for instance, involved centralizing decision-making authority to enhance efficiency and standardize services nationally. While these measures often led to improved accountability and uniformity, they also provoked conflicts with local authorities, which perceived these reforms as an erosion of their traditional powers. This highlights the inherent tension between centralization and decentralization within the broader conservative spectrum.

The variations in approaches to subsidiarity and centralization among Christian democratic and conservative parties in Europe reflect the distinct historical, cultural, and political contexts of each country. While German Christian democratic parties have traditionally championed decentralization and the empowerment of local communities, critics argue that their advocacy for greater EU integration often undermines these principles. This tension raises broader questions about the CDU's commitment to subsidiarity, particularly when its policies at the European level appear to favor a more federalist direction. These disparities within the European conservative landscape pose challenges but also provide opportunities for mutual learning and the identification of balanced models for public governance that respect national sovereignty and local autonomy.

Family Policy: Traditional Values and Modern Approaches

German Christian democratic parties have always promoted family policies based on traditional values, highlighting assistance for families via financial incentives and tax reductions. Programs such as *Kindergeld* (child allowance) and *Elterngeld* (parental allowance) aim to alleviate the financial strain on families and assist parents in the upbringing of their children. These measures demonstrate the parties' dedication to safeguarding the family as the essential unit of society.

A comparable strategy is observable in other European conservative parties. Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS) implemented the *Rodzina 500+* (household 500+) initiative, which offers a monthly allowance for every second and subsequent child in a household to enhance birth rates and improve familial living standards. This curriculum emphasizes the significance of family and supports conventional family values.

In contrast, certain conservative parties in Europe embrace more contemporary strategies regarding family policy. The Moderaterna party in Sweden advocates for measures aimed at reconciling work and family life, such as flexible working hours and readily available daycare. These initiatives seek to advance gender equality and facilitate the ability of both parents to balance professional obligations with familial duties.

The variations in family policy approach between Christian democratic and conservative parties in Europe illustrate the distinct historical, cultural, and social circumstances of each country. Some parties prioritize traditional family values and financial assistance, while others advocate for contemporary approaches that enhance gender equality and work-life balance. Notwithstanding these diverse techniques, they converge on a singular objective: to fortify the family as the foundation of society and guarantee its flourishing in an evolving social milieu.

Solidarity and Efficiency of Social Security

The efficacy of social security and the equilibrium between solidarity and economic sustainability are essential concerns that both separate and unify conservative and Christian democratic parties throughout Europe. Notwithstanding regional variations in addressing these concerns, there exists a collective endeavor to uphold a stable social structure that honors the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and individual responsibility.

German political parties have always advocated for the social market economy model, which integrates market principles with a comprehensive social security framework. This model frequently encounters criticism from Southern Europe, where analogous programs are perceived as expensive and challenging to maintain without robust economic foundations. This prompts talks on how the German model may be modified to address the requirements of economically underdeveloped nations, such as Portugal or Greece.

Italy's Fratelli d'Italia emphasizes national ideals and their relation to family policy, advocating for tax incentives for families and initiatives for affordable housing. This focus on familial assistance mirrors the German model but is more orientated towards national identity and social cohesion.

4.2. Economic Policy

4.2.1. Social Market Economy vs. Liberal Economy

The social market economy, a fundamental aspect of German Christian democracy, is a synthesis of market economics with social equity. Post-World War II, the CDU and CSU emerged as proponents of this paradigm, founded on the ideas of solidarity and subsidiarity. This approach endorses a proactive role for the state in safeguarding social protection within a market-oriented framework. It embodies a cohesive integration of liberty and equality, acting as a benchmark for numerous conservative parties throughout Europe.

Conversely, British and Czech conservatism, exemplified by the Conservative Party and ODS, respectively, have historically valued individual initiative and liberal economic tenets. This strategy emphasizes the reduction of public expenditure,

Conversely, Spain's Vox advocates a more stringent conservative ideology, underscoring the necessity of safeguarding traditional family values and limiting migration, which they contend undermines societal equilibrium. These disparities underscore how conservative ideas adjust to regional cultural and political environments.

Portugal's Chega, in contrast to Fratelli d'Italia or Vox, emphasizes economic efficiency and fiscal restraint. Their emphasis on curtailing social benefit misuse and enhancing labor mobility stands in stark contrast to the German strategy, which prioritizes extensive support for families and education. This disparity illustrates the wider European discourse between expensive social protection frameworks and liberal ones prioritizing individual accountability.

Political entities like Hungary's Fidesz and Poland's PiS have a distinctive viewpoint. Their comprehensive family initiatives tackle demographic issues and uphold conventional family values. These policies are frequently juxtaposed with the German model, although they are distinguished by heightened centralization and state interventionism, hence aligning more closely with the solidarity-driven social policies of Southern Europe.

The primary inquiry in evaluating these approaches is how to reconcile solidarity with the efficiency of social security across varied cultural, economic, and political contexts. Western Europe tends to adopt decentralized models grounded in subsidiarity, whilst Eastern Europe and Southern nations prefer centralized solutions that mirror their historical and economic contexts. This diversity exemplifies the resilience and versatility of conservative and Christian democratic ideas in modern Europe. Conservative parties can mutually inspire one another and collaborate to identify common solutions to the difficulties confronting Europe collectively.

privatization, and the restriction of governmental involvement. This concept may seem to contradict the German method; nonetheless, similarities exist in the advocacy of personal responsibility and encouragement of entrepreneurship. Conservatives in the UK and Czechia prioritize individualism over community cooperation, a fundamental aspect of the German model.

In Southern Europe, where parties such as Italy's Fratelli d'Italia and Spain's Partido Popular prevail, conservative economic policies frequently tackle elevated public debt and unemployment. These parties promoted changes aimed at decreasing governmental expenditure and improving economic self-sufficiency, thereby aligning with the liberal tenets of British conservatism. Nevertheless, they frequently lack the comprehensive social protection mechanisms provided by the German model.

Scandinavian conservative parties, including Sweden's Moderaterna and Denmark's Venstre, present a compelling hybrid strategy. They integrate liberal economic principles with substantial governmental expenditure on social care while endorsing a centralized administration of social institutions. This concept offers significant social inclusion but differs from Germany's decentralized subsidiarity, which prioritizes regional and local competencies.

The PiS party in Poland embodies a conservative ideology that integrates robust social measures, especially in family support, with the preservation of traditional values. This paradigm corresponds with German Christian democracy regarding family support, but it is less dependent on market principles for economic development.

British conservatives and German Christian democrats encounter analogous issues stemming from globalization, including sustaining competitiveness and safeguarding domestic employment. The CDU and CSU promote a balance between market liberalization and social rights, whereas British conservatives emphasize a more adaptable labor market and reduced taxation to draw investment.

Notwithstanding the disparities within European conservative and Christian democratic frameworks, there exist opportunities for future partnership. Conservative parties are united in their dedication to upholding family values, safeguarding small and medium-sized firms, and reinforcing national identity within economic policies. They together oppose centralized bureaucracy and strive to reconcile social and economic priorities.

The variety of approaches poses both obstacles and opportunities for European conservatism. Although German Christian democracy favors a more centralized approach, its principles of subsidiarity and solidarity may facilitate collaboration with conservative parties advocating alternative economic policies. In contemplating the future of European economic policy, it is essential to reconcile opposing viewpoints and enhance cooperation grounded in ideological similarities.

4.2.2. Conflicts and Opportunities Between These Models

Economic models in European conservatism and Christian democracy illustrate the variety of national interests, historical contexts, and ideological legacies. These disparities may result in conflicts while simultaneously generating chances for idea exchange and collaborative enhancement. A central topic of discourse is the alignment of market principles with social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

The German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) have historically endeavored to reconcile economic competitiveness with sustainability. Their endorsement of the European Green Deal illustrates a strategy that combines climate objectives with technological

advancement and sustainable growth. This program, encompassing industrial decarbonization and investments in renewable energy, was designed to secure Europe's long-term economic stability. Nevertheless, the CDU increasingly asserts that such measures must adhere to the principles of subsidiarity and maintain the worldwide competitiveness of German enterprises.

The Czech ODS, representing the conservative faction within the ECR, has criticized numerous environmental policies, including elements of the Green Deal, as excessively onerous for the business sector. ODS promotes economic liberty and safeguards small and medium-sized firms against onerous bureaucracy, consistent with their liberal economic perspective. This difference between the CDU's realistic stance on sustainability and ODS's skepticism over environmental legislation exemplifies divergent priorities in economic policy. Notably, these disparities did not inhibit ODS from participating in European elections alongside EPP-aligned parties that reflected the German strategy.

Conservative parties in Southern Europe, including Spain's Vox and Italy's Fratelli d'Italia, adopt a pragmatic stance on environmental matters, emphasizing solutions that reduce economic expenditures. Although they advocate for environmental protection, they frequently underscore the necessity of accounting for local economic circumstances and social stability. These parties offer a viewpoint that could enhance talks on sustainability by emphasizing the significance of regionally tailored measures.

Notwithstanding disparities in conservative economic models that may induce difficulties, there exists potential for collaboration in domains of mutual interest. Innovation, infrastructure development, and sustainable development are areas where various economic viewpoints can align. The essential factor for success will be the capacity to amalgamate these diverse viewpoints into a unified European agenda that honors the distinctiveness of national contexts while attaining shared objectives.

The CDU's interpretation of the social market economy reflects both its strengths and its vulnerabilities. While the integration of market economics with social equity embodies the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, critics argue that the CDU's implementation increasingly leans toward centralized and interventionist policies, particularly within the European Union. By supporting extensive EU regulations, fiscal transfers, and projects such as the European Green Deal, the party has, at times, undermined the subsidiarity principle by prioritizing European-level decision-making over local and national autonomy. This approach risks conflating solidarity with dependency, as seen in the financial and social burdens placed on economically robust states like Germany to support weaker EU members. Additionally, the CDU's frequent collaboration with socialist and Green factions on expansive EU initiatives raises concerns about a dilution of core conservative principles, including fiscal discipline, individual responsibility,

and the protection of national sovereignty. While the CDU's commitment to balancing economic liberalization with social cohesion is commendable, its growing alignment with

4.3. European Integration

Federalism vs. Sovereignty: Conflicts and Synergies

European integration constitutes a fundamental subject that both divides and unites conservative and Christian democratic parties across Europe. On one side, there are advocates for closer integration; on the other, factions prioritizing national sovereignty. These approaches illustrate the diverse historical experiences, geopolitical agendas, and ideological orientations of various factions.

The CDU, as the leader of German Christian democracy, has traditionally championed deeper European integration, driven by the historical conviction that a cohesive Europe ensures peace, stability, and economic growth. This federalist approach is exemplified by their support for shared EU policies, including budgetary integration and asylum reforms. However, critics argue that this stance often undermines the principle of subsidiarity, with decisions increasingly centralized in Brussels rather than being made at the national or local level. This tension is particularly evident in their support for expansive policies like the European Green Deal, which some contend imposes excessive burdens on individual Member States, particularly those with different economic or energy priorities.

In contrast, other conservative parties across Europe emphasize the protection of national sovereignty and resist moves toward centralization. For example, Poland's Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) advocates for national control over energy and migration policies, arguing that these areas are vital to preserving cultural identity and economic security. Similarly, the Czech ODS supports European cooperation but opposes federalization, promoting flexibility and national decision-making as the foundation for meaningful collaboration. These approaches highlight a broader divide within European conservatism between federalist ambitions and sovereignty-focused priorities.

Despite these differences, opportunities for cooperation exist. For example, securing Europe's external borders provides a shared goal that combines the need for effective migration management with respect for national autonomy. However, critics note that the CDU's federalist tendencies, coupled with frequent alignments with socialist and Green factions in the European Parliament, risk alienating sovereignty-oriented parties and complicating efforts to build a united conservative agenda on issues such as migration, energy security, and economic resilience.

federalist and progressive tendencies threatens its ideological consistency and its ability to effectively champion conservative values in the evolving European political landscape.

Southern European conservative parties, such as Spain's Vox and Italy's Fratelli d'Italia, present a pragmatic approach to European integration, endorsing initiatives that align with their national interests, such as migration control while resisting overreach from EU institutions. These parties emphasize regionally tailored solutions over centralized mandates, highlighting the limitations of a one-size-fits-all approach to EU policy.

The Role of German Christian Democracy in Finding Compromises

German Christian democracy, particularly through the CDU and CSU, has historically sought to mediate between competing visions within the EU. This role has been facilitated by their pragmatic approach to reconciling differing priorities among Member States. However, this mediation often leans toward centralizing solutions that critics argue undermine national sovereignty and local decision-making. For instance, during the Greek debt crisis, the CDU played a leading role in eurozone reforms, balancing financial aid with strict fiscal conditions. While this preserved economic stability, it reinforced perceptions of centralized control by stronger economies like Germany over weaker Member States.

The CDU and CSU have also worked to bridge economic priorities between fiscally conservative northern nations and growth-oriented southern ones. While their efforts have promoted regional cohesion, critics contend that such compromises often dilute the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, prioritizing EU-level solutions over empowering Member States to address their unique challenges.

To maintain its role as a unifying force in European politics, German Christian democracy must navigate these tensions carefully. A more balanced approach that respects national sovereignty while fostering practical cooperation on shared challenges—such as border security, energy policy, and economic stability—could provide a way forward. Critics emphasize that without a stronger commitment to conservative principles, including limiting regulatory overreach and protecting cultural and economic autonomy, the CDU risks losing its credibility as a mediator and its influence within the broader conservative landscape.

5

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION

5.1. Conflict Points

Freedman's methodology allows for the analysis of disparities via the perspectives of proximities and disproportions. Conservative and Christian democratic parties possess the capacity to identify shared interests in overlapping domains. Solidarity, a fundamental tenet of Christian democracy, could provide a foundation for formulating cultural heritage conservation laws that honor national particularities.

Simultaneously, it is essential to tackle migratory issues in a manner that mitigates disputes between proponents of integration and advocates of sovereignty. Collaborative European projects may create opportunities for practical solutions that reconcile the preservation of national identity with the promotion of social cohesion at the European level.

This method not only discerns the essence of conflicts but also investigates avenues for resolution. These initiatives can fortify conservative and Christian democratic alliances and enhance problem-solving efficacy at the European level.

Sovereignty and European Integration

A major debate between conservative and Christian democratic parties in Europe pertains to migration policy and the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The disparities are frequently entrenched in national priorities and the historical contexts of different states, resulting in varied positions on matters such as refugee redistribution, migrant integration, and the maintenance of local traditions.

The overarching context of migration and cultural heritage preservation demonstrates that, although disparities among the stakeholders are apparent, reconciling these discrepancies could yield significant advantages at both national and European tiers. By concentrating on common objectives, such as preserving cultural identity and fortifying local communities, these parties could attain a synergistic effect that would augment their impact and prominence in European politics.

Economic Differences

The CDU and CSU traditionally promote a social market economy model that integrates free-market principles with comprehensive social support programs. This strategy

prioritizes solidarity and the safeguarding of at-risk populations while promoting competitiveness. The German Christian democracy utilizes this model as both a mechanism for enhancing economic stability and an ideological basis that embodies the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity.

Conversely, traditional conservative parties typically advocate for a more liberal economic strategy. This paradigm emphasizes reducing state regulatory involvement, encouraging private enterprise, and constraining social expenditure. It is predicated on the notion that economic liberty fosters enhanced growth and innovation. However, it may encounter obstacles related to social inequality and access to fundamental services.

Green policies represent another domain in which the disparities between these parties are evident. The CDU endorses efforts like the Green Deal, which seeks to integrate economic sustainability with environmental objectives. This strategy demonstrates Germany's commitment to long-term environmental sustainability, achieved through investments in renewable energy and green technologies.

In contrast, some ECR-affiliated parties condemn these initiatives, contending that EU environmental laws impose obstacles on businesses and impede economic progress. Their strategy emphasizes energy security and economic competitiveness, prioritizing short-term economic interests over long-term environmental objectives.

Opportunities for collaboration

Notwithstanding these disparities, avenues for collaboration are there. Conservative and Christian democratic parties could collaborate on initiatives that integrate economic prosperity with ecological sustainability. The advancement of green infrastructure and, more significantly, technology breakthroughs may act as a shared focal point of interest.

These initiatives may also alleviate tensions between various economic models and environmental policy approaches. Consolidating their position on these matters could augment their capacity to promote common objectives within the EU and elevate their political clout. Furthermore, this collaboration could aid in tackling the enduring difficulties confronting the entire EU.

5.2. Cooperation Opportunities

Collaborative Endeavours in Culture

Culture remains a critical area for cooperation between conservative and Christian democratic parties, particularly when viewed through the lens of national sovereignty and the preservation of traditional values. Shared priorities, such as the safeguarding of cultural heritage, the promotion of local traditions and lifestyles, and the reinforcement of national identities within Europe, form a robust foundation for collaborative initiatives. These efforts should prioritize protecting the unique cultural identities of Member States while resisting top-down impositions from EU institutions that may dilute or homogenize these distinct heritages.

Conservative and Christian democratic parties share a commitment to preserving historical and cultural sites as an integral part of their political agendas. However, from a sovereignty-focused perspective, such preservation efforts must remain the responsibility of national and regional authorities rather than being subsumed into centralized European frameworks. For example, the CSU's consistent advocacy for the protection of Christianity and Bavarian traditions underscores the importance of local identity as a cornerstone of regional and national cohesion. Similarly, cultural policies should emphasize the need to defend Europe's diverse traditions against external pressures that undermine its cultural integrity, such as unchecked globalization or ideological relativism.

Collaboration in cultural initiatives offers a significant opportunity to showcase shared values while maintaining the autonomy of individual nations to define and protect their unique identities. By prioritizing decentralized approaches and focusing on cultural preservation as a tool to strengthen national pride and solidarity, these partnerships can align with the broader goals of respecting subsidiarity and safeguarding Europe's rich diversity. Such initiatives not only reinforce the distinctiveness of conservative and Christian democratic parties but also provide a counterbalance to trends that prioritize homogenization over diversity in European policymaking.

Economic Cooperation

The economic sector presents substantial opportunities for collaboration between conservative and Christian democratic parties in Europe, as their agendas frequently align on critical priorities such as endorsing family-owned enterprises, revitalizing traditional industries, and fortifying regional economies. Both political traditions underscore the significance of economic policies that encourage self-sufficiency, advance sustainable development, and safeguard small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) as the foundation of European economies. Notwithstanding divergent methodologies on specific matters, there exists a considerable opportunity to recognize common

answers that bolster economic stability and competitiveness throughout the continent.

From a geo-economic standpoint, collaboration must prioritize diminishing Europe's dependency on external economic forces, achieving energy autonomy, and safeguarding supply lines for essential industries. This encompasses promoting investment in emerging technology, infrastructural initiatives, and regional development that emphasizes employment creation in economically disadvantaged regions. A reinvigorated focus on bolstering Europe's industrial foundation and fostering innovation will be essential for maintaining the continent's competitiveness in the global arena. Simultaneously, economic strategies must include the increasing strategic significance of historically neglected regions, such as Central and Eastern Europe, where investments in infrastructure and technology might substantially enhance regional economies.

The importance of robust economic collaboration with the United States under a re-elected Trump government in the realm of transatlantic relations is paramount. An effective Europe-U.S. economic relationship must emphasize trade agreements that safeguard national interests while minimizing obstacles to transatlantic trade. This collaboration can enhance mutual strategic objectives, including challenging China's economic and geopolitical dominance, advancing energy security, and encouraging innovation in essential industries like artificial intelligence and clean technologies. Furthermore, a strong alignment with the U.S. on economic policy may guarantee that Europe maintains access to vital American markets and technologies, thus bolstering the economic sovereignty of European nations in a globalized economy.

By amalgamating these geo-economic concerns with established pledges to subsidiarity and decentralization, conservative and Christian democratic parties can collaboratively formulate robust economic policies. This collaboration may enhance Europe's economic resilience while maintaining its regional diversity and honoring the sovereignty of individual Member States. This strategy will not only bolster Europe's long-term economic objectives but also enhance its position as a pivotal global player in partnership with critical allies such as the United States.

Assistance for Family Enterprises

Family enterprises constitute a fundamental component of the economic agendas of numerous conservative parties. The German Christian Democrats, in conjunction with other conservative parties, underscore the significance of small and medium-sized family enterprises, which are crucial to local economies and contribute to regional employment. Collaborative efforts may encompass activities aimed at enhancing access to capital, alleviating administrative constraints, and facilitating generational succession in family

businesses. These initiatives would enhance the growth of local communities and fortify regional economies.

Prudent Strategy for the Green Economy

The green economy progressively serves as a conduit for aligning ecological objectives with economic development. CDU vigorously advocates for ecological solutions while underscoring the necessity of preserving economic competitiveness. Other conservative parties may find opportunities for partnership in endorsing modern technologies. This strategy may entail advocating for transitional technologies that integrate modernization and industrial conservation while minimizing environmental effects.

Tax Reforms as a Cooperative Arena

The differences between economically liberal-conservative parties and socially-oriented Christian democratic parties create both problems and chances for collaboration, especially on tax policy. From a Eurorealist viewpoint, collaboration must emphasize the alignment of tax systems that honor national sovereignty while promoting competitiveness and economic development. This may include negotiating solutions that reconcile fair taxation with the necessity of minimizing bureaucratic costs and promoting entrepreneurship. Proposals may entail collaborative initiatives to lower tax rates for small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), remove superfluous regulatory obstacles, and provide incentives for investments in innovative and sustainable technologies while preserving budgetary autonomy.

The economic alliance between conservative and Christian democratic parties can effectively tackle contemporary difficulties and strengthen cohesiveness throughout Europe. For optimal efficacy, such collaboration must comply with the idea of subsidiarity, guaranteeing that decision-making is proximate to the public and that national governments maintain authority over essential economic policies. Integrating these economic activities with overarching cultural and political agendas—such as safeguarding national identities, advocating traditional family values, and enhancing regional development—can magnify their aggregate impact. By merging the conservative focus on decentralization and sovereignty with the Christian democratic dedication to pragmatic government, these parties may provide a robust basis for enduring and significant collaboration within the European political arena.

Forming Political Alliances

Political coalitions serve as a crucial mechanism for conservative and Christian democratic parties in Europe to promote their principles and political objectives. Despite

notable differences, ideological commonalities and mutual interests create a foundation for a partnership that could augment their power at the European level.

Ideological Convergences as a Basis for Cooperation

The CDU and CSU, as proponents of German Christian democracy, align with European conservative groups in prioritizing the preservation of traditional values, subsidiarity, and regional identity. Matters such as family policy and cultural heritage preservation present opportunities for the coordination of collaborative political agendas. Collaborative projects aimed at helping traditional families or preserving European cultural identity could be the foundation for establishing partnerships at the European level.

Resolving Disputes Between Sovereignists and Federalists

A primary source of contention between the parties is their divergent views on sovereignty and European integration. Although the CDU and CSU advocate for enhanced integration within the European Union, sovereignist parties prioritize the safeguarding of national interests against centralized decision-making in Brussels. Reconciling these disparities may necessitate reaching concessions on certain political matters, such as immigration policy or social system reform. A collective aspiration for European security and prosperity may act as a compelling impetus for collaboration among factions with divergent perspectives on integration.

Collaborative Partnerships inside the European Parliament

The European Parliament serves as an essential platform for conservative and Christian democratic parties to unite in promoting common objectives. A collaborative legislative agenda addressing the safeguarding of traditional values, enhancing subsidiarity, and bolstering Europe's economic competitiveness might amplify their collective power. For instance, coalitions on environmental policies that integrate sustainability with economic development may attract a wider range of conservative politicians.

Viewpoints on Coalition Cooperation

The efficacy of partnership between Christian democratic and conservative parties hinges on their capacity to identify shared priorities. Recognizing common interests, such as family policy, cultural heritage preservation, or sustainable economic development, presents chances to enhance their political agenda at the European level. Notwithstanding their divergent approaches to sovereignty and integration, conservative parties could forge effective alliances that embody their common principles and objectives.

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN EUROPEAN CONSERVATISM: EVALUATION

Compatibility Between Christian Democracy and Conservatism

Christian democracy and conservatism possess intersecting ideals that facilitate collaboration; nonetheless, substantial intellectual and practical difficulties remain. Both traditions underscore the maintenance of conventional social frameworks, the prioritization of the family as the foundation of society, subsidiarity as a fundamental value, and the advancement of a socially accountable market economy. These common ideals underpin collaboration, especially in domains such as cultural preservation, economic resilience, and policies that enhance social cohesion.

Freedman's paradigm for analyzing ideologies emphasizes the connection between solidarity and subsidiarity in Christian democracy, with conservatism's emphasis on sovereignty and national self-determination. Solidarity, characterized by the enhancement of social cohesiveness and communal welfare, corresponds with conservatism's emphasis on preserving robust national and cultural ties. Subsidiarity, which prioritizes addressing problems at the most localized level, reflects the conservative inclination towards decentralization and the aversion to the encroachment of supranational entities. These common principles establish a basis for cooperation, especially regarding family policy, the preservation of cultural assets, and the protection of small and medium-sized firms.

The distinctions between these ideas are especially evident in their methodologies on European integration and governance. Christian democratic parties, such as Germany's CDU and CSU, have historically endorsed a federalist perspective of Europe, promoting enhanced political and economic unity. This approach promotes stability, unity, and collaborative problem-solving on migration, climate change, and foreign policy. In contrast, conservative parties frequently prioritize national sovereignty and resist centralized decision-making, viewing it as detrimental to the capacity of Member States to meet their distinct requirements.

Critics of the federalist inclinations of Christian democracy contend that its focus on unification at the EU level often undermines the autonomy of individual nations and local communities. In migration and refugee policy, the Christian democratic advocacy for equitable burden-sharing systems frequently conflicts with sovereignty-focused approaches that emphasize state authority over borders and asylum determinations. Likewise, the advocacy for ambitious green

transformation policies has elicited apprehensions regarding their effects on national economies, with detractors contending that the economic burdens unfairly affect industrialized or resource-dependent Member States.

The intrinsic conflict between federalism and sovereignty prompts inquiries on the degree to which these ideologies might harmonize their disparities in application. Historical history indicates that compromises are attainable, especially when Christian democratic principles of solidarity align with the conservative mandate of safeguarding national interests. Establishing consensus on common objectives, such as safeguarding Europe's varied cultural heritage or implementing policies that benefit families and SMEs, can offer a practical foundation for collaboration while reducing ideological rifts.

The Future of Collaboration

The future of collaboration between Christian democracy and conservatism in Europe hinges on the readiness of both ideologies to identify shared interests while maintaining their fundamental tenets. Common interests, such as advancing sustainable economic reforms, minimizing overregulation, and strengthening social cohesion, offer opportunities for significant collaboration. Nonetheless, essential disputes regarding the function of EU institutions, centralization, and the equilibrium between collective action and national sovereignty persist as significant problems.

Platforms and Tools for Collaboration

Successful collaboration necessitates strong systems for communication and coordination. The European Parliament functions as a crucial platform for harmonizing stances on significant topics, especially via temporary coalitions over economic policy, migration control, and cultural conservation. The establishment of working groups centered on common priorities—such as familial assistance, preservation of local customs, and advancement of decentralized governance—may enhance collaboration while honoring ideological divergences.

Nationally, regional conferences and forums, including political parties, think tanks, and civil society, could provide avenues to tackle common concerns and formulate coordinated responses. These platforms facilitate the exchange of best practices and the creation of solutions customized to local situations, promoting trust and mutual understanding.



Informal networks and educational endeavors are essential in reinforcing connections between Christian democratic and conservative entities. These initiatives may improve ideological coherence regarding subsidiarity, economic decentralization, and cultural preservation. Measures to develop trust, such as collaborative legislative initiatives and unified policy statements, are crucial for reconciling federalist and sovereignty-focused viewpoints.

Critics contend that the growing alignment of Christian democracy with progressive policy agendas—especially over climate policy and EU fiscal oversight—threatens to alienate conservative allies. To retain credibility and encourage collaboration, Christian democratic parties must exhibit a revitalized dedication to subsidiarity, proportionality, and

respect for national sovereignty. This strategy would not only maintain their ideological consistency but also enhance their position as mediators within the wider conservative landscape.

By concentrating on shared objectives, such as safeguarding families, fostering sustainable economic development, and opposing unwarranted bureaucratic encroachment, Christian democratic and conservative parties can forge a more unified and efficient political coalition. This necessitates a deliberate endeavor to harmonize the values of solidarity and subsidiarity with the imperative to honor national autonomy and variety. Such an approach is the sole means by which various philosophies may together tackle Europe's most urgent concerns while maintaining their unique identities.

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