

Security as a prerequisite for prosperity

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Introduction

Security and economics go way back, at least in modern times. Historians tell us that before the modern age, security was more akin to *peace of mind*. It was a spiritual matter and a largely religious one. From around the Feudal period, society's need for a more *objective* security became visible, and with it the willingness to *pay* for security. The transition to modern times saw the transformation of security into a *commodity*.

Today, in the post-post-Cold War setting, security is not only inseparable from economics; it is entirely unthinkable without it. In our time, security has become *industrialized*. We look overwhelmingly to industrial innovation to give us solutions to security challenges. Societies put their faith in technology and in the hands of the industries that produce them.

At the same time we can observe that the natural result of this kind of industrialization is a certain *product differentiation* of security. We see IT security, food security, airport security, human security, societal security, health security, legal security, home security, and not least, financial security. Tell me who you are and I will tell you just how you are insecure.

Research has shown that the industrial production of security solutions runs the risk of shifting the question of *trust* of people to *trust* of security technologies. Fighting various forms of threat leads, in our time, to solutions that *remove* people from the security loop. We build walls, construct fences, mount cameras, introduce biometric detection and tracking systems, etc. These types of measures have many functions, and prevent danger to some degree. But they also have the effect of diminishing trust, trust in others, trust in society, in authorities, trust in oneself. Less trust generates more insecurity, weakening our purpose.

What do these economic matters have to do with *prosperity*?

What is prosperity?

Prosperity is a rich, complex and ambivalent notion. For this reason it's the kind of idea that social scientists hate and politicians adore.

When we prosper we flourish, we thrive, we have success and good fortune, good health, happiness, etc. Prosperity encompasses economic wealth, of course, but it gives to the notion of wealth, a thickness, meaningfulness, and substance.

Unlikely notions like 'profitability', 'productivity', 'effectiveness', etc., prosperity concerns not only monetary wealth, but the way people and societies experience that wealth. A full order-book, solid credit rating and full production does not mean prosperity unless it is accompanied by something *meaningful*. In other words, if we regard security as a simple search for social well-being then security research is a noble pursuit indeed. If however we understand security to be a contribution to a good quarterly result, then we are lost.

Security and liberalism

Our society is as understood as a liberal one. Both security and prosperity play key roles here.

Historically, security has played a part in the evolution of the liberal market system and in the emergence, development and maintenance of the liberal society that we are so committed to preserving.

But liberal society is fragile, as we know, even precarious. It is easily weakened or damaged. Remarkably though, it is most often *not* weakened or damaged from outside, but from within, either by official, unofficial, legal or illegal acts. In this sense, providing security against threats to our liberal society, liberal economies and markets, most often means providing security against what we are capable of doing to ourselves.

Security for prosperity; prosperity for security

Clearly security is necessary to maintaining the prosperity of private enterprise.

Obviously, if we understand security as stability, then a certain stability of prices is necessary for the prosperity of businesses. The regular flow of resources, labour, and raw materials is equally a question of security. Businesses also depend to some degree on the continuity of demand, which can be secure or insecure. It also concerns physical security, the rule of law and social harmony of the society in which businesses operate.

At the same time, we can see the reverse relation: A certain kind of prosperity is indispensable to security. The security and well-being of society is enhanced by the success of businesses. Job security is served by economic prosperity, tax revenues are increased, investment is improved, and a certain economic security can be found in the knock-on effects of successful commerce.

Security serves prosperity, prosperity serves security.

The liberal society

We also see in the liberal market system a strange double relationship to security. In a sense we can't live with it, can't live without it. We can't live without security, of course, for the reasons

just mentioned: it is the platform on which we carry out the business of everyday life. Security is an enclosure, a blanket in which we can live out our lives and do business.

On the other hand, liberal society nurtures a certain kind of insecurity. Uncertainty is the starting point of the Western free market system. The public and private interest rate—the cost of borrowing money—varies according to the real or perceived uncertainty of future value. Moneylenders lend money at higher rates in the face of greater uncertainty, commodity prices or higher, consumer prices lower, all as a function of perceived or real uncertainty.

Not security but *insecurity* is an immense driving force for investment and commerce in Western liberal societies. Enormous sectors of our economy solicit and serve, either directly or indirectly, the insecurity of individuals and groups. In terms of finance, but also industrial research and development, *insecurity* is big business.

The two faces of Europe

To conclude, the link between security and prosperity is best understood as two sides of the same European project. Both stem from a kind of spirit of modern progress.

On the one hand, Europe is the name of innovation, of scientific, technological excellence and economic modernization, encapsulated in a clear orientation toward the future. This is clearly the ethos that provides the impulse for the work of DG Enterprise.

On the other hand, Europe is the name of a social, political and humanist project. It's the place where a set of core ideas about life, well-being, culture, society, politics, have been articulated and are maintained on the political playing field. Among these are the principles that form the foundation of all the major documents of European culture: the right to life, dignity, individuality, various liberties, self-determination, etc.

These two Europe's are not two, they are one. Europe without both dimensions, is not Europe. No European will accept economic well-being and technological modernization without the humanist heart-beat. And no European is interested in humanist principles without their encapsulation in state-of-the-art scientific and economic institutions.

The meeting place of these two faces of Europe is called ***prosperity***.

By assuming the responsibility of security research in Europe, DG Enter assumes the responsibility of nurturing ***prosperity***, prosperity understood as the marriage of economic wealth and human wealth.

The good news is that security is not opposed to European social and human principles. And we are mistaken to focus a debate on trade-offs (be it between industry and society, liberty and security, ethics and security, etc.)

There is no contradiction between the idea of Europe and European security. On the contrary, European security can and should be the very embodiment of European principles.

It's not in the philosophy seminars of European universities that Europe tests its metal. It is here, in security research, that Europe shows what it's made of. It's here, where we make the difficult choices about what security means in Europe.

By choice or default, the Security Programme and DG Enterprise is the moral testing ground for Europe in our time. It is where the airy principles of European construction meet the pavement, and where decisions are made about the role of people, rights and responsibilities in the management of Europe's most dilemma-ridden challenge: the security of its society.

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