

The Perfect Storm of the European Crisis

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Edited by

Dan Dungaciu and Ruxandra Iordache

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

EUROPE: BETWEEN AN ANSWER TO CRISIS AND A CRISIS OF ANSWERS

DAN DUNGACIU

The most significant phenomenon happening today around us is the European crisis. As well as being a “total social phenomenon” such as classical French sociologist Émile Durkheim, would have said, it also affects all the levels of our lives – be they political, economic, cultural or social. Nothing remains untouched.

We are probably too close to the phenomenon to see all its consequences – you can't see the elephant with a microscope! – and from this stems the increasing difficulty of trying to offer sufficiently convincing, universal answers. The situation gets even more complicated: we are like the crew of a defective ship caught in a storm and which has to be repaired on the spot. Huge difficulties: how do you intervene deep enough to fix the problems, but not so deeply and thoroughly as to sink the ship itself? Because any troubleshooting should be done concurrently with an effort to keep the ship afloat in troubled waters. A heavy dilemma. But this is the image that most judiciously decrypts the status of today's Europe, hit from all directions, and – all the more unbearable – concomitantly.

In other words, a “perfect storm”.

The volume offered to our readers reunites the contributions of twenty authors – scientists from the “Ion I.C. Brătianu” Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations of the Romanian Academy – in response to this challenge. Using an expression that is becoming more abundantly associated with Europe, namely “the perfect storm”, the book aims to decode multiple layers of the crisis, whether they relate to migrants, terrorism, Brexit, the economic crisis of the Eurozone, the Turkish challenge, Russian pressures, TTIP, the resurrection of populism, the (sometimes) hysteria of the Euro media. Everything, in a volume written under the sign of urgency, and with a desire to put on the Romanian/European public agenda a subject approached shyly and with a

lack of contractual statements, as if it seems to be not our concern, even when it actually affects each one of us on a daily basis. We are Europeans, and when there is a crisis around us, the “solution” of hiding our heads in the sand is never pertinent.

The book does not claim to offer definitive answers to what is happening to all of us. Far from that. However, it attempts to outline the context in which these answers can be found and, moreover, to point out the places where one should search for them. Anyway, the point of departure and the red thread passing through the entire volume is the idea that any attempt to find simple/simplistic answers is of limited value use. The crisis is too important and too complex to be exhausted in minor registries. Hence critical references, in the volume, towards any attempt to trivialize or schematize a crisis which Europeans feel, for the first time, in all its intensity and complexity,

The volume is unique, being the first in Romanian specialized literature to try and decipher all the layers of the crisis surrounding us. This is one of the reasons why the team of scientists from ISPRI deserves to be congratulated. They marked a point of departure which, of course, does not aim to be one end of the road. Unfortunately, the crisis does not give signs of leaving too soon; by contrast, it seems to gain in complexity and depth, so we offer greetings, in advance, to any future contributions on this topic.

If one were to decipher the positive side of this crisis from an epistemological perspective, it would be the fact that it offers an ideal opportunity to speak about Europe, about what it wants and where it should be heading; and how we, as Europeans, are relating to it. It's a paradox, but one that is worth being recorded: we may discover our “Europeanism” rather in crises than in normal contexts. To start talking about it, to scrutinize it for the first time, to comprehensively put it under a magnifying glass.

This is not a bad thing in itself. We have to start at some point.

But we also have to assume another risk; may our wisdom of today not become the illustration of old Hegel's favourite saying: “Athena's owl only flies at dusk”!

PART ONE

**THE EUROPEAN CRISIS:
DILEMMAS, TEXTS AND PRETEXTS**

“PERFECT STORM” IN EUROPE:
TOWARDS A NEW WAY OF UNDERSTANDING
THE EUROPEAN CRISIS
AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

DAN DUNGACIU

“Europe is more than a geographical notion but less than an answer.”
(Judt, 2011: 138)

“The EU is a banal political authority, tolerated but not loved.”
(McNamara, 2015: 162)

Abstract

*The expression “perfect storm” entered general use after the 1997 publication of Sebastian Junger’s book *The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea*. The book was reprinted in 2009, but was made truly famous – and this comprises also the syntagm we examine here – by the 2000 film of the same title. In his preface to the volume, Junger wrote: “the perfect storm” is “a storm that could not possibly have been worse” (Junger, 2009: xiv), and this is the expression’s main sense, with all due annotations. Being caught in a “perfect storm” means being placed at the intersection of potentially fatal evolutions.*

Later, the syntagm started to be used in various fields and associated with different political geographies caught in critical levels of the crisis – China in 2007, Russia in 2014, Turkey in 2015. Starting in 2016, this syntagm began to be obsessively associated with the European Union, and not without cause.

Europe under siege

The most often cited article on this theme belongs to Richard N. Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, which was published late in November 2015: “Managing Europe’s Perfect Storm” (Haass, 2015). The starting tone is sceptical. By contrast with the famous “Chinese coincidence”, where the same ideogram can signify both crisis and opportunity, Europe is confronted today with a series of crises, behind which any opportunity is more and more difficult to see; if not practically impossible.

The first crisis is an economic one; not only is Europe not recovering economically, but it is evolving in a difficult, syncopated way, any perspectives for a new rhythm of growth and development being hard to notice. From this point of view Europe seems condemned to stagnation. What is more, the uninspired decision to introduce a common monetary denominator without it being accompanied by common financial policies is starting to show its consequences. Discipline vanishes, states start to behave differently; Greece was a long- debated case, but it is far from being the last.

The second crisis, Haass continues, is generated by Russia’s unprecedented actions in the Ukraine. The result? “A return to geopolitics” in Europe, at the worst possible moment; military expenditure has reached a historic low, and public support for the arms race is completely lacking.

The third layer of the crisis, and the most urgent in the author’s opinion, is the wave of immigration coming from the Middle East. Almost everything starts to become questionable, and most of all the principles of open borders and free movement, elements upon which the European construct is fundamentally based. Germany has addressed this question “in an admirable but non-sustainable way”. Clearly, one cannot do much when addressing only the effects and not the deep causes of this exodus. This is where urgent action would need to be taken, in the opinion of Richard N. Haass. Any action would necessarily imply directing financial help towards those states already facing immigration problems, solving the Syrian conflict or at least creating in-state enclaves able to protect its citizens, and a new settlement with Turkey in order to reduce the immigrant tide. It is understood that the United States should step in and help both Europe and the Middle Eastern states in dealing with this pressing problem. Europe, especially, should not be allowed to fall under this assault. Haass is no optimist, but neither is he despairing. Europe finds itself at the dawn of a crisis which could become “perfect” in a matter of moments. Much remains to be done, and decision starts to become urgent.

One has to note that a series of measures taken by European leaders are in accordance with the author’s suggestions. In the meantime, in 2016, European pressures, far from being defused, have added at least two more layers to an already deepening crisis.

The perfect storm of Grexit and Brexit

Another vision explicitly evocative of a “perfect storm” in Europe was launched at the beginning of 2016 by the highly influential *Financial Times*, by identifying “three existential problems” of the European Union at the present moment; the financial crisis of the Eurozone, the migrant crisis and a potential Brexit crisis.

“Each of them separately rises potentially acute problems, but they all present distinct challenges. Does the risk of a ‘perfect storm’ still exist, if all three of them take place simultaneously?” (Barker, 2016)

The difficulties are enormous, and the eschewal of Grexit was accomplished at the cost of still unsolved massive structural problems, and under the premise of an extremely fragile Greek political consensus. And the migrant crisis only serves to amplify the already existing Greek crises as this country, unfortunately placed on the migrant itinerary, is confronted by new challenges, able to reopen new Grexit debates. These European crises are badly seen in the United Kingdom, and any pressures put upon the idea of Brexit are thus geometrically amplified. The British press often embraces the concept that the EU is unable to fend for itself, and this perspective is not helping at all; and even if the UK is not included in either the Schengen zone or the euro zone, public perceptions are still negative and on the worried side. Europe’s problem lies in the waves of immigration: if it is unable to stop them, then all the other crises will become self-fuelling. Migration is a bomb ticking under the not-too-solid foundation of the European Union.

And that was before the March 22nd, 2016 terrorist attacks targeting Europe’s administrative heart...

The European crisis and the crisis of explanatory models

The series of crises recently endured by Europe is more ample than anything presented before, and their list is far from being exhausted; Greece (with a “Grexit” avoided *in extremis*, but without solving any of its structural problems); the economic crisis or the euro-zone’s incapacity of

recovery and satisfactory economic growth; Russia's aggression and the Ukrainian file (Crimea and the Donbas); the Syrian files and the unprecedented crisis of refugees/migrants; the Spanish and Catalanian secessionist pressures; Brexit; the constitutional referendum on Dec. 4 brought down Prime Minister Matteo Renzi' government and could open the door to Eurosceptic parties to redefine Italy's relationship with the EU; the general resurrection of "populist" parties built upon an identity, euroskeptical attitude towards an Europe which wants to assume more and more prerogatives; the Turkish file and all its consequences (2016 Turkish *Coup d'Etat*); terrorism striking at the very heart of the political and administrative center of the continent (Paris, Brussels, Berlin etc.).

Where are we placed? And why is this happening to us? The easiest explanation, used almost every time the many-faceted European crisis is mentioned, would especially target the correlation between *economic crisis – national/identity resurrection*. Hence the "logical" conclusion; the EU economic crisis engenders political parties which react against the system, nationalistic, ethnicist and consequently anti-European. These parties, by their xenophobic, simplistic attitude, accentuate the migrant crisis and the dangers associated with the presence of refugees on the continent, subtly playing up to the terrorists by this mirror relationship.

This seems to be an exhaustive "X-ray examination" explaining the crisis which surrounds us all.

Such a vision is obviously naïve and lacking in sociological utility. In reality, specialized literature has already pointed out the complexity of these identity occurrences and the multitude of effects or correlations they can engender. First, building any causalities of the type "economic crisis generates nationalism" means defying reality itself. Experience has shown, more than once, that a whole array of imaginable correlations coexists inside these structures; economic growth – defusing nationalism – (the EU after WW2); economic growth – resurrected nationalism (the Russian Federation and China in the last decade); economic decline and resurrected nationalism (today's EU); economic decline and defused nationalism (Central Asia after the fall of the USSR). This diversity suggests that simplistic models are simply inadequate and irrelevant for the present discussion.

Secondly, postulating that everyone has just suspended their critical spirit and became a manoeuvrable mass for cynical, xenophobic, populist, nationalist parties would presume the existence of an amorphous, inert European mass, devoid of personality or reactions. It seems to suggest that all European politics is just a cynical game of elites who freely manipulate in any direction; this time, it would be the turn of remorseless populists.

Which, regardless of the fact that it shows the average European citizen in a less- than- favourable light – as a simple, amorphous, indiscriminating object of manipulation – is also completely false from a sociological perspective.

In reality, things are incomparably more complex – which means that solutions are also much more difficult to identify.

What is happening there? A new model for understanding the European crisis

The model offered here, allowing us to understand the European crisis, is of a different nature and acknowledges essentially three levels.

The first is the Paretian model of “mutual dependencies” which helps us in the process of judiciously identifying causalities, relationships between phenomena and the distinctions between effects and causes. Because this implies not only unilinear causes, but also mutually uncontested, complex relationships.

The second level implies the identification or rather the absence of identity questions, seen as the main “engine” of our contemporary European crisis. The fact that the European project did not begin with a cultural or identity dimension is one of its main setbacks. Alas, it’s too late to start rebuilding Europe all over again, and impossible to change anything now. We are practically in the middle of the storm and European precariousness is now more obvious than ever. It addresses the European identity crisis – which will be examined later, from a sociological point of view – and defies, from this angle, any possible comparison with the United States. America is, after all, a “nation state”, unlike the EU. Europe is not, as a famous French researcher would say, “a community of citizens” (Dominique Schnapper); or, in clearer terms, the EU cannot credibly and universally use the personal pronoun in its plural form: “we, Europeans”.

This is the nodal axis of the crisis. All the rest are either its catalysts, or its indicators.

Thirdly, the model will make a clear distinction – in its final analysis – between *cause* and *effect*, *independent variable* and *dependent variable*, in analyzing the European crisis. Because not all the elements cited above as belonging to the continuum of the European crisis are of the same magnitude.

Let’s address these topics one by one.

Not unilineal causality, but mutual dependencies

In order to understand recent developments within the European space, one has to abandon simplistic models like the one above. Vilfredo Pareto, a classical Italian sociologist, uses his massive 2-volume treatise, comprising 1600 pages, as an argument against a series of pre-formed ideas populating the sociological world. One of these was the issue of causality as applied to societies. In reality, Pareto states, any social balance or imbalance is determined by a complex relationship between social elements interacting with each other in a complex “mutual dependency” (Pareto, 1919: 1410). The Italian sociologist thus identifies five elements: (a) *residua*; (b) interests; (c) derivations; (d) social heterogeneity; and (e) the circulation of elites. We will take into account the fact that *residua* mean here *sentiments* or *states of mind*, and derivations mean *theories*, *substantiating verbal expressions*, *doctrines*, *political programs* etc. We will not delve too deep into Paretian analysis, with its subtle and verbose nature; but will try to develop the notion that four possible interaction models have to be analyzed in order to understand its final form.

I.(a) acts upon (b), (c), (d); II. (b) acts upon (a), (c), (d); III. (c) acts upon (a), (b), (d); IV. (d) acts upon (a), (b), (c) (Pareto: 1410). From these combinations, I generate “a notable part of social phenomena” followed by a combination between II and IV, with II being the least important (Pareto: 1411).

The complex Paretian model demystifies the idea that “derivations” can significantly modify social order and social balance. In fact, Pareto warns, they are powerless in regard to either social change or social balance. The concept according to which “Reason” can prevail anywhere and in any way is seen as an error from a sociological point of view; a state of spirit, “the logic of feelings” (Pareto: 1416), i.e. what Pareto understands by “*residua*” is much more important, even crucial. Man is not a reasonable being – he is a *rationalizing being*. This is the essence of Paretian analyses. “Derivations” are just a more or less acute expression of “*residua*”, thus in order to change them, to replace one “derivation” with another – or one theory with another – one has to change the “*residua*” which generated those public expressions.

The actions of men, for the most part, are neither logical nor illogical - they are *non-logical*. What does this mean? It means that, whenever one deals with states of mind such as fear, anxiety or frustration, one cannot be saved by a good theory or a (simple) appeal to reason and rationality. Rather, a different “existential involvement” or “other types of *residua*”

would be involved, in a Paretian sense, in order to generate other theories (or “derivations”).

What we are actually interested in – a warning for any simplistic, naïve models – would be sufficient. The problem of contemporary Europe, and its citizens, is that (too many of) them are at present in a situation where states of mind and beliefs do not generate *European ideas* as such.

“We, the people” or why the EU is not a “community of citizens”

The second level of the model is identitary, and in order to understand it judiciously, one has to delve into a short comparative recourse to history.

More than 200 years ago, in Philadelphia, in the hot summer of 1787, fifty men were talking, confronting each other and arguing. They were the delegates of the thirteen states newly freed from British dominion. The perpetual crisis engendered by the War of Independence seemed to have but one solution; a stronger Federation, and effective, efficient centralized power. The people present there were unaware of their stormy debate’s outcome, but the moral and political stature of a Washington or a Franklin, the ability of a Madison or a Hamilton allowed the delegates to produce, in September 1787, a document recommended to be adopted by the Convention. This document became *the Constitution of the United States of America*. An arduous, subtle and profound debate followed, and its end result was what we now know as *The Federalist Papers*. A unique moment not only in the history of the world, but also in the history of modern political thought (Dungaciu, 2012: 285).

This situation, as Larry Siedentop morosely commented, was totally different from anything occurring in Europe when the so-called European Constitution was “discussed” (Siedentop, 2000).

The nature of such failed assemblies was evidently and incontestably artificial, despite intensive media coverage meant to “imbue it with life”. How was it – the British thinker asks – that such a theoretically crucial debate did not elicit any reaction from European peoples concerned with their own future destinies? Whence all his passivity, when it comes to Europe and its founding papers? Why this lack of involvement in any debate about the condition of Europe at the start of the 21st century? More to the point; what did America have in the 18th century that Europe does not have in the 21st Century?

Before we attempt a clear answer, we must offer a series of statistically revealing data about the condition of Europe and Europeans from an

identity point of view; they offer hints, albeit indirect ones, about where the answer might lie. Starting with 1992, the EU publishes so-called “Eurobarometer”, which offers European interviewees the chance to identifiably place themselves inside four categories; “just Europeans”, “Europeans and nationals”, “nationals and Europeans”, “just nationals”. The results can be seen in *Figure I-1*.

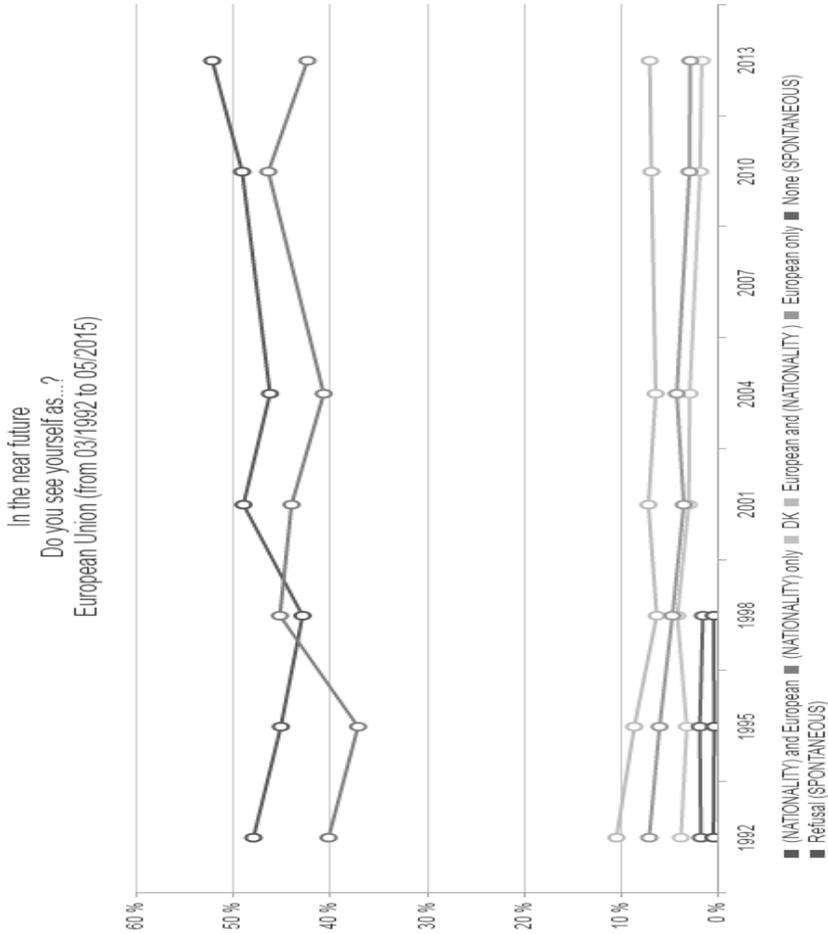


Figure I-1

What conclusion can we draw from these figures? First – regardless of the period investigated, regardless of the economical “state” of the continent or its citizens, the graph curves are not significantly different; on the contrary, they are surprisingly constant. An uncontested majority of Europeans identified and still identify themselves as “national and European” and “only national” (about 90%); and only 10% as “European and national” and “just Europeans”.

These figures are shockingly paradoxical, at least when seen through the grid of public and political discourse delivered by (some) of the European institutions; or public messages charged with a rhetoric which either vituperates or minimize “the national”, in all its identity forms. Obviously, the old continent’s inhabitants believe and want something else. The Eurobarometer’s figures clearly show the directions from which an answer to our questions should arise. It is an *adherence* problem, not just one of *popular European projects*. It is a much deeper question, not associated with any fashionable momentary options.

It is said that Henry Kissinger once expressed, in his cynical-pragmatic style, scepticism towards any possibility of a united Europe thus: “And if I want to call ‘Europe’ on the phone ... who do I call?” On a different level, other doubts were expressed relative to the project of a unified European army: “...In what language would the orders be issued?” And a contemporary researcher of the phenomenon of integration expressed his anxieties in the formulation: “Who would give his life for Europe today?”

These three dubitations circumscribe possible levels of investigation for European integration. If we could *theoretically* identify answers to the first two questions – a project for institutions able to take over the representative mechanism, the “telephone”, already exists, and its main language is (still) English (paradoxically, its “owners”, the English are most reserved towards any projected integration into an Europe which has already institutionalized and invested their language) – the last obstacle is still unsolved and essentially delineates the area around which all the great *non-answers* of our aforementioned project gravitate. At the deep and intimate level of identity contractual statement, of ultimate needs that this so-called “European culture” – and later “global culture” - can satisfy, the great principles of the European mythos are at stake. Who feels indignant, and who places his right hand upon his heart when seeing the blue flag with yellow stars, or hearing Beethoven’s Ninth (the so-called “European hymn”)?

For the moment, no one.

Will the number of people willing to do it significantly increase in the near future? We do not have any proof for this; what we have is the conscience of crucially important questions, also noted by the “builders” of the new European project – in its hard, supranational form – who hurried to include in their own portfolio instruments belonging to the national patrimony project (fiercely contested by voices from their own camp): hymn, flag, “Europe” day, school manuals of European history etc.

Robert Schuman, himself one of the founding fathers of the European Coal and Steel Community, presciently warned, in his *Pour l'Europe* (1963): “Before becoming a military or economic alliance, Europe must become a cultural identity in the truest sense of the word”.

And this is not possible. Because societies are not born from top to bottom, by “social contracts” – *pace* classical liberalism! – or by elaborating cabinet constitutional projects. On the contrary, the American Constitution – to return to our starting point – proved to be viable and effective *because* it was the expression of *former contractual statements*. That *non-contractual part of the contract* which makes possible the existence of *the contract itself*, was viable and in existence (Durkheim, 1893). That “*We...the people*” noted in the document – who is “*we*” here? We, those who already feel part of a project, belong to a territory and are part of an (also) identity project – that pre- contractual “first person in the plural” already existed and was, through the Constitution, *expressed in the law* (Scruton, 2002: 11-13). Hence the force of the American Constitution and of America itself through time.

For the time being, as the Eurobarometer presented in this text remorselessly shows each year, this “*we...the people*” does not exist at a European level yet. Only at the *national* level. “Europe” is still a bridge too far for too many (most) Europeans.

Causes, effects, indicators of crisis

The third element of this model is a consequence of its predecessors. Based upon already-pronounced truths, one can now afford a better understanding of differences amongst the European crises we all witness. Some of these are primary elements, causes: others are effects or consequences. Obviously, in a series of already- cited crises, not all have the same status.

The first thing one has to understand is that the much- invoked economic crisis of the Eurozone is not the direct, unmediated cause of identity resurrections, and, as a consequence, neither is it a mechanism of deep crisis for the European project. Not every economic crisis

endangers a political project. To think this is true obviously suggests that any economic crisis inside a national state should necessarily lead to its moral, social and political decay. Any national state plagued by either war or crisis should have succumbed. From a historical perspective, things have never happened this way. Rather to the contrary! In times of economic crises, war defeats, natural disasters or foreign occupation, national communities have always found resources and rallying powers.

Why don't we see such a revolution in today's Europe? For reasons we have already tried to synthesize. Unlike national states, Europe is not an *identitarily-founded political community*. Its economic crisis is just one layer of a problem reanimating - and not generating! – a deeper crisis, the identitary one. Faced with their economic crises, Europeans suddenly realized that “Europe” does not deliver anymore, that it is not the source of prosperity and comfort they imagined. When this became obvious, everybody shunned it. The “European attachment” of “Europeans” suddenly weakened, making them seek refuge in an inner dimension or the interior. *The socio-economic crisis generated a deep failure of trust at the European level.*

This is the foundation upon which a different order of threats was being positioned; the problem of migrants and refugees only served to geometrically amplify a sense of uncertainty mutating into anxiety and fear. Terrorism was the last straw, throwing European populations into an unprecedented crisis. From this perspective, one can talk about “a perfect storm in Europe”.

European man, to a large extent, is scared, anxious, frustrated. The resurrection of so-called populist, identitary parties is a *consequence* of this state of things, these “residua” as Pareto would call them. It is a “derivation”. Not in any case is this a cause of the European crisis we are all immersed in. Hence, the solution for these “multiple crises” is not an idea of “more Europe” but rather its opposite, of “less Europe”, of more local/national dimensions respectively. This would be the – perhaps illusory – foundation of contemporary European “safety”.

One last example. This European mistrust is manifested in varied forms and contexts. A preemptory proof is the recent Dutch referendum concerning the Business and Association Agreement between the EU and the Ukraine. It was not by accident that one of the most recent references to the “perfect storm” formulation is related to the 6th of April Dutch referendum, in which the voters rejected, in validating proportions, the Business and Association Agreement between the EU and the Ukraine. Why did we draw attention this episode? Because, as it was well noted, “the referendum did not reveal just the political turmoil at Europe's

Eastern frontier, but the rift between European institutions and European voters as well” (Valero, 2016). In reality, the Dutch referendum was not about the Ukraine, not even about Putin (as certain posters, asking the voters for a “yes”, would suggest) but about the Dutch attitude towards European policies. A much more worrying situation when one takes into account that, at the moment of the referendum, Holland held the presidency of Europe, and the referendum thus became a precedent for many other European states wishing to act in similar manner, even if upon other bases (ref. the case of Hungary).

Intermezzo (1): the “new intergovernmentalism”

Before we pass to conclusions and potential consequences of this European status quo, one must insist upon two recent attempts at “saving” European identity and consequently discuss their potential efficacy.

In fact, the subsequent importance of national interests and consequently of the sovereignty and prerogatives of national states has already been noted by recent theoreticians of European integration. Although they acknowledge the reality of national state reticence towards a wider involvement in a supranational (perhaps federal) project, in reality they suggest that Brussels has already discovered a solution for overcoming this difficulty (as inscribed in the Maastricht Treaty, signed by the European Council on February the 7th, 1992, and which founded the E.U.).

The iconic case we bring to the attention of our readers is that of the “new intergovernmentalism” subtly theorized in a 2015 volume edited by Christopher J. Bickerton, Dermot Hodson and Uwe Puetter – *The New Intergovernmentalism*. This is an interesting endeavour from our already-debated perspective. The starting point is the “paradox” of post-Maastricht European integration, clearly noted by the authors. In essence, it concerns the already noted and documented reality stating that “national governments are being forcibly dragged into the arena of E.U. political decisions, but are either reticent to delegate new powers to the Commission or the Court of Justice, or are overtly avoiding such obligations. Far from opposing this evolution, the Commission, the Court of Justice and the European Parliament actively encourage it, a clear tendency which shows once more that “European supranational institutions are no longer wired into the process of a closer and united union” (Bickerton, Hodson, Puetter, 2015: viii)

It was agreed in Maastricht that major sections of EU activity – economic governance, foreign policy, justice and domestic policy – should not fall under the influence of already-commissioned supranational

decision organisations. This does not mean that the “post-Maastricht phase” meant a “temporary deviation from supranational norm”. It should rather be seen as “a new phase of European integration becoming more systematic and stronger since the 1992 ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. In order to bestow upon this period the basic unifying powers we believe it already has, we will name this integration form *the new intergovernmentalism*”. (Bickerton, Hodson, Puetter, 2015: 4)

To put it simply, the new intergovernmentalism is a tendency towards integration without traditional post-Maastricht delegation forms, as a choice for national governments wishing to involve themselves in cooperation solutions while still “being deeply reluctant to imbue the Court and Commission with yet more powers” (Bickerton, Hodson, Puetter, 2015: 5). An important transformational mechanism – a real solution! – would be the so-called *de novo* institutions,

“newly created institutional bodies often enjoying considerable autonomy in regard to executive and legislative powers, and exercising a considerable degree of control over their particular resources. Some *de novo* institutions such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) are well known; others, less so” (Bickerton, Hodson, Puetter, 2015: 3).

It is through institutions such as these that the E.U. manages to evolve, using a consensus between European institutions and national governments, never explicitly stated but still able to promote the European project, to deepen integration while at the same time maintaining an appearance of sovereignty (as recorded in different treaties) much preferred by reticent, hubristic national states.

The present volume offers a significant theorization of the “new intergovernmentalism”, including the six initial conjectures the project authors discussed (Bickerton, 2015: 306-314). In essence, they deal with an attempt to prove that the European project is able to continue, despite “national difficulties”. Although criticized as being over technocratic and undemocratic, the only way for the integration process to continue would be

“via the route of new intergovernmentalism, of decisions dominated by the European Executive, respectively implemented by national administrations but not subject to domestic political contestation” (Bickerton, 2015: 315).

Thus, the “new intergovernmentalism” tells us we are dealing with a continuous process of European integration, at an unprecedented level, but which does not coincide with a transfer of powers towards traditional supranational institutions; rather the opposite. Everything happened

somewhere, at intermediate levels, in newly-created institutions able to carry the processes forward but never towards a final, clear point. An imbalance, and not a balanced finished project, seems to be the rule of the game. The authors conclude; “never was the E.U. farther from becoming a complete supranational system of political decision, much less a national state” (Bickerton, 2015: 328).

And yet, despite trying keep up appearances, “the new intergovernmentalism”, which would perhaps be able to hide real integration processes from the eyes of the world, does not have the capacity to explain either today’s deep crises, or their eventual consequences. Their obstinate avoidance of identity questions cannot be a long-term solution.

Intermezzo (2): our daily Europe

The question of identities is extremely complex, because the subject is fluid and defies precise instruments for studying it. Identities are not – as has already been said – as easily replaceable as hats: if you place one upon your head, the next one will not fit anymore. Identities are complex, with multiple layers, and one has to understand them in all their complexity. The European identity layer is just one of them; and it never assumed any totalitarian virtues, in the sense of trying to evict the others.

The most recent and important analysis of this topic belongs to Kathleen R. McNamara, and was published in 2015 – *The Politics of Everyday Europe. Constructing Authority in the European Union*. In essence, it is an attempt to investigate, as the title shows, the mechanisms leading to “the building of political authority” within the E.U. Its thesis states that the “imaginary Europe”, “current, everyday symbols and practices” offer basic materials for the E.U.’s political authority and the re-emergence of European citizens (McNamara, 2015: 161). The author’s optimism is well-tempered. Taking into consideration the presence of national states and their symbolism, “the E.U. has to not only tolerate, but also celebrate the national traditions and political authority of each state”. European identity exists, but it still has a long way to go before becoming a determining force. Because each of us has multiple identities, it would be preposterous to speak in strictly exclusive terms. We all are Europeans. But how far could the political assumption of this formulation go?

McNamara reminds her readers about the ideas of a Giscard d’Estaing and others in his immediate circle, who postulated and advocated, during their talks about the European Constitution, a need for dramatic title changes for Europe, including its Constitution – “United Europe” or “The

United States of Europe” – but these denominations were never implemented because of the challenge they would have represented to national sovereignty. Then came the famous French “No” of 2005, addressing the European Constitution, at a moment when economic and social prosperity were at an historic high, and trust in European integration was much more significant than ever before.

The author’s approach is ambiguous, her passion for the subject being successfully dampened by reality: a delocalized and rootless understanding of Europe and its citizens, including their place inside the geopolitical structure, are “weak foundations for the type of solidarity and sacrifice demanded by contemporary geopolitical, economic and social challenges” (McNamara, 2015: 166). The American author’s conclusions are revealing:

“I underline a need for increased politicization and a sense of European identity, less technocratic and more passionate: this might cause trepidation in some of my readers. After all, nationalism was the cause of much injustice and bloodshed in the last decade. One cannot help but feel worried about new, more vocal varieties of political identity arising at the European level?” (McNamara, 2015: 170).

And McNamara answers:

“The E.U. is not and will never be a perfect democracy. But the achievements of the E.U. in the postbellum period indicate the fact that it was and still is a force working for the common good, which does not necessarily have to fall into the traps of excessive nationalism.” (McNamara, 2015: 170)

When is the author right? When she identifies a European identity process included in the level of European perception, not forgetting that the E.U. legitimizes itself in a way by its own political, social and cultural practices, even at the level of everyday life? Perfectly true! But, as *Figure I-2* shows, even if each of us possesses multiple identities, their equalization is as much of an error as ignoring their political and existential weight. There are identities and then there are identities. For some of them we are ready to do incomparably more than for others. Some we readily give up; others are never denied. Some demand sacrifices which we assume, others never reach an existential level. Hence, to speak of a “European identity” (which undeniably exists) without placing it in a context, without synchronic or diachronic comparisons, would be a breach of trust. And from this point of view, as McNamara clearly feels, in her quality as a fervent admirer of the European Union, any valences or action

potentials of “usual identities” are clearly undervalued when compared to national identities.

How attached you feel to... (%)

	Your city\ town\ village		(OUR COUNTRY)		The European Union		E
	Total Attached	Aug. 2015 - Aug. 2014	Total Attached	Aug. 2015 - Aug. 2014	Total Attached	Aug. 2015 - Aug. 2014	
■	89	=	92	▲ 1	49	▲ 4	59
■	82	▲ 1	83	=	56	▲ 5	63
■	96	=	98	▲ 2	44	=	56
■	88	▲ 2	89	▲ 1	35	=	57
■	88	=	98	=	46	▲ 1	74
■	89	=	94	▲ 1	53	▲ 4	67
■	82	▲ 4	93	=	48	▼ 2	54
■	93	▲ 3	97	▲ 3	51	▲ 8	55
■	97	▲ 1	99	▲ 2	34	▲ 4	40
■	91	▼ 1	88	▲ 5	56	▲ 10	60
■	82	▲ 1	94	▲ 1	55	▲ 4	61
■	91	=	90	▲ 3	55	▲ 14	58
■	92	=	89	▼ 3	40	▲ 1	46
■	92	▲ 3	97	▲ 4	24	▼ 3	29
■	91	=	93	▲ 2	65	▲ 2	67
■	88	▲ 1	93	▲ 3	51	▲ 9	54
■	87	▲ 5	93	▲ 1	74	▲ 2	80
■	89	▲ 1	94	▲ 4	59	▲ 8	75
■	81	▲ 2	95	=	59	▲ 4	69
■	74	=	86	=	39	▲ 8	60
■	94	▲ 2	95	▲ 1	38	▼ 3	56
■	92	▼ 2	95	▼ 1	58	▼ 1	65
■	97	=	97	=	54	▲ 9	54
■	95	▲ 2	94	▲ 2	60	▲ 2	64
■	88	▼ 1	92	=	50	▲ 12	56
■	92	▼ 1	95	▼ 1	49	▼ 5	63
■	84	▼ 3	95	▲ 1	39	▲ 4	65
■	83	▼ 2	96	▲ 1	44	▲ 4	77
■	86	=	91	▲ 3	40	▲ 4	50

Figure I-2.

Source: Eurobarometer 84, Autumn 2015

What remains to be done? Towards a new European normality

“If one looks towards the European Union as a universal solution, invoking the name of ‘Europe’ as a mantra, waving the ‘European’ flag in the faces of ‘nationalist’ heretics and crying out ‘abjure, abjure!’, we will soon find out that, far from solving the old continent’s problems, the ‘myth of Europe’ has become an impediment in acknowledging them”. (Judt, 2011: 138).

This warning, emanating from Tony Judt, author of the exceptional *Postwar* and, three years later, the emblematic essay *Europe – A Grand Illusion?* – is more than revealing. We try not to judge realities here, but to understand that the continent’s present and future both can look different from what we imagined yesterday. We will not launch into political debates or apodictical conclusions; we will just offer a few orienting ideas about what might lie in our future, finishing with the darkest scenario, recently launched in regard to the evolution of a crisis which has offered this material both its text and pretext.

1. “The perfect storm” which we might observe will not lead to an annihilation of the continent, but it will certainly defuse European integration movements, both on the horizontal plane (as extensions) and on the vertical (federalization). Reaction to the recent Paris, Brussels or Berlin attacks indicates the fact that we have reached a point of no return, of zero tolerance for a “deepening” of European expansion; at least for the time being, both Brussels and the EU need to work harder in order to convince European citizens that they are the legal and credible repositories of their populations’ identity and security anxieties.
2. It will not be possible to elude or altogether ignore the identity dimension anymore. When one deals with occurrences touching upon the existential level – fear, anxiety, uncertainty – all these will surface, either mediated or unmediated, and rise to the fore. What will follow will be the obvious association between migration and the identity dimension, with acute political effects all over the continent. This will engender two effects; the apparition, or resurgence of identity political parties upon the European political stage and/or the appropriation of their values by *mainstream* parties (system parties) with a view towards diminishing the electoral weight of the first. The effects, in both cases, will be similar.

3. A legitimate question is whether Euro-scepticism and overinflated national sensibilities would be able to reach a level allowing them to completely block the European project. For the time being, besides the well-known case of France, they seem to radically touch upon the Northern states; and are closer to the *mainstream* in Austria where, during the presidential elections, a so-called “extreme right” politician and leader of the Freedom Party, Norbert Hofer, almost became president, given the special configuration and political atmosphere reigning in the country at the time of elections (Hockenos, 2016). Surprisingly, despite the polls, he lost. Had he won, he would have been the first European president of such persuasion. But it still is not very clear what the future holds for Austria, since Hofer said, after the results were published; “the result of these elections is not a defeat, but it is an investment in the future” (Smale, 2016). Even in the unlikely occurrence of Hofer winning the Austrian elections, the country would have been powerless to shift the axis of Europe, due to its small size and limited political weight. But given the perspective of elections in France and Germany, the European Union will really be in danger if the balance of extremist parties becomes critical.
4. The idea of “*more Europe*” as a solution for the “perfect storm” is both naive and dangerous. Insisting upon this kind of “solution” at present will engender contrary effects and strong reactive measures. Any federalist excess today will cause a virulent counter-European reaction in the near future. At present, the European state of mind is well known, and local politicians cannot swim against the current. At the limit, a referendum is the most popular and democratic tool available, but it can also become a suitably dangerous instrument (Stratfor, 2016). We’ve already had, as aforementioned, an apparently absurd referendum in Holland, deeply rooted in European discontent directed at the EU (Valero, 2016); in the United Kingdom, in Budapest, concerning the possible acceptance of migrants/refugees, and in Italy. What will happen if all European nations start to use this referendum “tool” excessively? The main problem, as has been noted before, is that *referendums are non-negotiable*; they are appodictical and final, because they represent the will of the masses, clearly and fully expressed. More, what is going to happen if different nations decide, through referendums, different measures for the same European problem/challenge? What will this lead to? And how will the calculated, too-shrewd Brussels manage to solve this challenge? Will it be able to do this and maintain European

unity at the same time? Obviously not, if the idea of a national level referendum is not to be limited. (*The Economist*, 2016).

5. Can the crisis be countered? Impossible in the short term. We are in a situation where the EU as such can't pretend to either reform or modify itself in order to answer present-day provocations and anxieties, because it has no way of doing so. On the one hand, we note the unavoidable elitism of Brussels, with an attitude reminiscent of the 18th century and its “enlightened despotism”. And rightly so, in a way. As has often been noted, “the EU is accused of being elitist, but becomes even more so because this is the only level where one can hope or expect a pan-European settlement” (Krasnev, 2016). This is a risky direction, because it acutely touches upon the problem of European democracy or democratic deficiency. This is Polichinelle's secret in Europe. There is no “European democracy” because there are neither public European spaces, nor adequate representation, electoral cycles, or continental-level candidates. Europe's main problem is that

“we use and demand a democratic language which talks about participation and transparency” and we do it at an EU level; but “if we make participation and transparency the two pillars of European reform, then we will destroy it” (Krasnev, 2016).

6. How do we escape this dilemma? Where lies the solution? The most obvious answer is that we need new European leaders, with different visions, with force and European enthusiasm, able to relaunch the European project. Sociologically speaking, this expectation is a little bit naive. In reality, there are no European leaders able to reinforce the European project because... nobody expects them! Present-day Europe is not in an expectant state of mind. Political leaders are not born or appear “out of nowhere”. They occur upon an event horizon, and take the stage when someone, albeit tacitly, invites them there or forces them to assume their role. The occurrence of “providential leaders” is, to paraphrase Pascal, a kind of “I would not search for you if I had not already found you”. In order for us to understand if visionary European leaders, with real programs and manifestos able to relaunch a whole continent, can appear in today's world, we have to start by examining the present level of expectations; this would certainly not benefit any of them! Regardless of rational arguments or expectations, it is an utopia to think that one can put any basis upon such endeavours. The European population's state of mind

suggests that, at least for a time, this type of “search” will take place only at a local/national level.

7. One last observation. The European crisis already attracts the darkest prophets and most pessimistic prophecies. Even the fateful unthinkable word “war” has been articulated! The most terrifying prophecy of all belongs to George Friedman, who in his last paper *Flashpoints. The emerging crisis in Europe* describes a possible evolutionary path for the old continent. We will present, at the end of this material, the stages of this almost fatal evolution presented by Friedman; an evolution towards a Europe in danger of returning to its old, never entirely abandoned demons, who seemed to have been temporarily forgotten in a dungeon of memories. The idea of an inherent, unavoidable European crisis is suggested even in the autobiographical passages explaining the reason the Friedman family had for leaving the old continent and moving to America:

“We left Europe because my parents were that there was a deep corruption in the European soul that could be hidden for a while, but would always show itself eventually.” (Friedman, 2015: xix)

The thesis of the following analysis is that the fall of the EU will engender a deep crisis which will inevitably awaken the dogs of war seen, in the official narrative upon which Europe was founded, as asleep forever.

“The E.U. faces a crisis it cannot easily deal with. The EU is failing, and the question is whether it can regain its. I am arguing that it cannot because its problems are structural nature, and will lead to failure. If it is true that it is the integration of Europe that has abolished conflict, and that without the EU conflict will return, as it did in the Balkans and the Caucasus, then the future of Europe is very different from what we most are expecting.” (Friedman, 2015: 148)

The main endeavour is, as always, Germany and its future.

Inevitably, Germany will have to assume the fact that it is Europe's richest country, and will have to become the strongest too.

“Germany will therefore become a full-fledged power; first flexing its political muscles, and in time its military ones as pressures develop. Economic, not military, considerations will be driving Germany. This time is not far off.” (Friedman, 2015: 159)

From a geopolitical perspective, the biggest card Germany plays will be that of relationships with Russia. France will turn towards Africa and the Mediterranean, and Germany will side with Russia. All these evaluations naturally lead towards key questions; does what followed after 1945 represent the natural fate of Europe and the way its future will look, or will Europe return to its historically consecrated series of conflicts?

The short answer, according to Friedman, is that “Europe’s history of conflicts is far from over” (Friedman, 2015: 251):

“The problem of Europe is the same problem that haunted its greatest moment, the Enlightenment. It is the Faustian spirit, the desire to possess everything, even at the cost of their souls. Today they desire to possess everything at no cost. They want permanent peace and prosperity. They want to retain their national sovereignty, but they do not want these sovereign states to fully exercise their sovereignty. They want to be one people, but they do not want to share each other’s fate. They want to speak their own language, but they don’t believe this will be a bar to complete mutual understanding. They want to triumph, but they don’t want to risk. They want to be completely secure, but they don’t wish to defend themselves.” (Friedman, 2015: 258)

And at the end of this dark and pessimistic script, Friedman concludes: the answer to the most important question – will Europe be able to leave behind its 31 years? - “must be no, but a qualified no”. When Europeans

“will have to choose between war and peace, as they did in the past, they will choose war. Nothing has ended. For humans, nothing significant is ever over” (Friedman, 2015: 258).

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