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BREXIT AND THE EUROPEAN PEACE PROJECT PARADIGM

Abstract

Since its foundation, the European Union (EU) has been a peace project aiming to prevent another major war, while spreading peace, stability and prosperity across the European continent. In the past decade and a half, the EU has been facing a number of diverse challenges on multiple levels. Its complex structure and unresolved sovereignty issues have limited its decision-making capacity in a rapidly changing environment. This is an indicator that the EU paradigm is facing a crisis. Building upon the Kuhnian paradigm approach, this paper will address the cause and effect links between the possible crisis of the European peace project and Brexit. Five years after the referendum of 2016, by taking a closer, retrospective look into the root causes of Brexit, the campaign and the referendum results, the paper will also try to answer the following questions: did part of the British political elite made decision concerning Brexit much earlier than the Brexit referendum? Did they believe that the challenges with which they would face in EU would exceed the benefits of EU membership?

Keywords: *Brexit, European Union, paradigm shift, immigration, Euroscepticism*

EUROPEAN PEACE PROJECT PARADIGM

The two World Wars and the beginning of the Cold War served as a catalyst for a new European paradigm: prevention of another major war, spread of peace, stability and prosperity across the European continent. Among the many narratives that summarize this paradigm of Europe as a peace project, one states that “Europe is the place of freedom, tolerance and peace, conditions for the coherence of a multidimensional society. It is the cultural treasure of the future and for our descendants.” (European Academy of Sciences and Arts 2012) A public recognition came in 2012, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the European Union “for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe” (The Nobel Peace Prize, 2012). On the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, the then President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy stated: “I believe this [peace] is still our Union’s ultimate purpose” further adding that EU “is a new legal order, which is not based on the balance of power between nations but on the free consent of states to share sovereignty” (Herman Van Rompuy, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture on behalf of the European Union). Only four years later, the Brexit vote took place. This was experienced as a shock to the European paradigm.

Each paradigm has two basic functions: a cognitive and a normative function (Kuhn, 1996). While the cognitive function means that the paradigm is the prerequisite to perception itself, the normative function enables the paradigm to regulate and influence reality. In this manner, by filtering the inputs and outputs, the paradigm helps us successfully navigate the sea of challenges and opportunities of a given system. Paradigms change along with the very reality they try to explain. When a paradigm ceases to provide a sound explanation to problems, the paradigmatic view of the world soon becomes ‘paradigmatic’ and finally ‘dogmatic’, giving a false image of reality. While analyzing scientific revolutions Kuhn locates three preconditions for a paradigmatic shift: (1) A growing feeling that the existing paradigm does not function adequately; (2) growing number of evidence that do not fit in the existing paradigm; and (3) convincing argumentation for a new paradigm (Kuhn, 1996, 90-110). In the heart of the process of paradigm-shift is entropy defined as “the degree of disorder or uncertainty in a system.” According to Kenneth D. Bailey, “if the degree of disorder is too great (entropy is high), then the system lacks sustainability. If entropy is low, sustainability is easier. If entropy is increasing, future sustainability is threatened” (Bailey, 2010 2). Entropy is an inherent element of the life cycle of every paradigm that ends either with adaptation of the existing paradigm, or its complete replacement with a new one.

How does this apply to the European peace project paradigm? The world has changed, but so has EU, which has grown in territory and deepened in integration, bringing new cultures and sometimes conflicting political and economic interests under one roof. In this regard, there are some unresolved tensions between the Union and its members. For instance, Geopolitical Futures analysts note that the European integration merely “masked an underlying reality of fragmented nations, each facing its own unique political, economic and geographic challenges.” (Geopolitical Futures 2015). The member states have moved extensive decision-making powers from the national to the European level, in some aspects at the expense of democratic legitimacy and transparency. In the sphere of economy, over time, the European single market contributed to more market opportunities and jobs, higher

living standard and better quality of life. However, the global economic crisis of 2008 and the multi-year European debt crisis posed new challenges for the EU, such as global competitiveness and rising unemployment in many EU countries. In that process, certain aspects of its paradigm have shifted from their original place. There is a gap between the common aims of the European Union and the interests of individual member states.

EUROPEAN CHALLENGES

The EU has been facing a number of diverse challenges on multiple levels. Due to the pace of its decision-making process, keeping up with the dynamics of global and local tensions sometimes is a challenge for the EU. Lacking the full commitment of its member states in terms of its foreign policy, EU cannot be very effective in moments of crisis (Seralgudin, 2014).

According to Colibasanu, the EU “evolved without developing crisis management tools or processes, which has slowed down the EU’s response to challenges since 2008.” (Colibasanu, 2016). Furthermore, the EU’s complex structure, the overwhelming and increasing complexity of its regulations and the unresolved sovereignty issue have contributed to limited decision-making capacities in times of crisis (Offe, 2015). This has resulted with reduced capacity to simultaneously manage multiple crises and different states. This was deepened by the increasing resistance by voters and public opinion in member-states, which made it even harder for the national governments to support implementation of Brussels’ recommendations. The final consequence of this is the inefficiency of EU regulatory bodies when dealing with problems.

The EU, which functions well in times of peace and prosperity, is not as good in times of crisis, such as the combination of the unresolved financial and credit crisis, the migrant crisis and security threats. We will briefly examine some of these challenges.

MIGRANT CRISIS

Until 2019 one of the key challenges for the EU was the migrant and refugee crisis. The violence in the Middle East as well as the poverty in underdeveloped and developing countries generated a flow of refugees and migrants. According to the UNHCR, from 2015 through January 2016, more than 1 million refugees and migrants came to Europe (UNHCR, 2016). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states that from January to September 2016, some 306,800 migrants arrived in Europe. Although the majority of them originate from conflict areas in Syria (30.3%), Afghanistan (15.9%) and Iraq (9.7%), there is a rising number of economic migrants from Bangladesh and Sub-Saharan African countries (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2016).

By establishing the Schengen Agreement, EU erased its internal borders without protecting the external ones. As Stephen M. Walt argues, “if Europe cannot control access to its own territory, it will not be able to control its political fate either.” (Walt, 2016). The massive first

migrant wave of 2014-2016 caught EU off guard. According to Europol, 90% of migrants who came to Europe last year used illegal people-smugglers. In 2015, organized crime networks earned between €3 billion and €6 billion from the migration business (Europol, 2016). The rising number of falsified Frontex documents, forged Syrian passports (“How easy is it to buy a fake Syrian passport?”, 2015) and a failure to properly register refugees and migrants showed an erosion of European institutions, mechanisms and policies. For instance, the European Migrant Smuggling Center – EMSC, established by the European Commission, began its work on February 22, 2016, during the climax of the migrant crisis (European Commission, [EC] 2016).

The migrant crisis unveiled the inflation of words and declarations, and deflation of concrete action. Unilateral actions by European states followed. Tensions rose as member-states began to re-impose their borders and deploy their national armies. The migrant crisis escalated in August 2015, when an uncontrollable number of refugees and migrants tried to illegally cross the Greek-Macedonian border. Regional alliances within the fragmented EU soon emerged. The Visegrád Group countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) – along with other EU member-states such as Austria, Slovenia and Croatia, supported the Macedonian efforts to close the Western Balkans migrant route (“Joint Statement of the Visegrád Group Countries on Migration.” 15 February 2016). This led to a paradoxical situation in which a non-EU state was protecting Europe from the threat of illegal migration that came from an EU member-state (Ivanov, 2016).

Although the EU-Turkey Agreement of March 18 2016 eased the burden on the EU (EC, 2016), the events in Turkey following the unsuccessful coup against Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government and EU’s response to it puts the durability of the agreement in question (Baume, 2016).

SECURITY THREATS

The migrant and refugee crisis soon opened the door for another EU challenge – a security crisis. The corridor was used not only by refugees and economic migrants, but also criminal networks and terrorists (Rayner & Mulholland, 2015). In its 2016 report, Europol states that “the overall threat to the security of the European Union has increased over recent years and remains on an upward trajectory” (Europol, TE-SAT, 2016). A major challenge is posed by the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters from Europe in the Middle East battlefields. According to Europol, “more than 5000 Europeans are believed to have travelled to conflict areas in Syria and Iraq.” (Europol, TE-SAT, 2016). As expected, some of them took advantage of the refugee crisis to return to their native EU countries and bring with them the hatred of diversity. Following the increasing number of terrorist attacks in Western Europe in 2015 and 2016, German Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted that “in part, the refugee flow was even used to smuggle terrorists” (Carrel & Barkin, 2016).

The rising number of terrorist attacks in Western Europe has contributed to a shift of European public opinion and the rise of anti-integration movements across Europe. As Geopolitical Futures analysts note, “the presence and growing influence of nationalist and anti-system groups makes it more difficult for national governments to agree to compromises

on the European level, leading to more gridlock and incoherent European Union policies” (Geopolitical Futures, 2015).

This difficulty to answer the challenges caused a gap between EU’s wider interests and the national interests of its member-states, as well as a divergence between the European elites and the citizens. Along with the widespread criticism of democratic deficit of the EU, euro-skepticism was on the rise across the continent (Habermas 2001; Torreblanca and Leonard 2013). In light of this, national governments had a difficult time defending the EU before their citizens. This was particularly the case with the UK.

THE CASE OF BREXIT

The Roots of Brexit

Much is being written about the UK-EU Brexit negotiations under former Prime Minister Theresa May and current Prime Minister Boris Johnson. However, for the purpose of this paper, the authors will focus on the roots, the campaign and results of Brexit.

Since the beginning, the UK and the EU have shared a complex relationship. French President de Gaulle, twice vetoed UK application for membership in 1963 and 1967. It was only in 1973 that the UK finally joined the then European Economic Community (EEC). In 1975, only two years after the UK joined the EEC, the first UK-wide referendum was held. Its purpose was to decide whether the UK should stay in the EEC or not. The percentage of those that voted to stay (67%) shows that Britons were certain of the UK’s future within the ECC (Mason, 2016).

Forty years later, in the 2016 referendum, a new generation of Britons was facing the same dilemma whether to stay in the EU or not. However, a very logical question is entailed, namely, had the majority of the British political elite decided for Brexit much earlier than the Brexit referendum? Did they foresee that the challenges would exceed the benefits of EU membership? In this context, Crines suggests that “the referendum campaign was a long time coming. Approximately 26 years, in fact” (Crines 2016) while explaining that immigration has been the constant issue for Conservatives since the time of Margaret Thatcher.

In the 2005 campaign, the Conservative message on anti-immigration was present in the slogan “are you thinking what we’re thinking” posters, and then it explains: “It’s not racist to impose limits on immigration” (Crines, 2016). Rowinsky noted that the final Brexit result was facilitated by the fact that the discourse of taking back control and controlling immigration had already been part of the collective memory in the years prior to the Brexit campaign. He also mentions the image and slogan used by the Leave campaign on the campaign battle bus (Rowinski, 2016). Fenton continues the thought, adding that the euro-sceptic press has campaigned against EU for years by using misleading headlines and sensationalist reporting (Fenton, 2016). Finally, Mayer argued that “the issue here is not solely about the predominant anti-EU bias during the campaign itself, but the effects of negative press coverage of the EU on collective beliefs over decades” (Meyer, 2016).

Another argument that supports this point is the Home Office campaign that told people to “GO HOME or face arrest”, which involved poster-clad vans driving through six London boroughs between 22 July and 28 July 2013. The statement of the Shadow Home Secretary Andy Burnham for *The Independent* further enforces this presumption. “It is clear that the Government has contributed to the unwelcoming climate and that our new Prime Minister in particular is responsible” (The Independent, 2016). The director of the Institute of Race Relations Liz Fekete has stated, “One of the things that has become clear is that the hostile environment that has been an official aim of policy for the last few years is coming home. If a ‘hostile environment’ is embedded politically, it can’t be a surprise that it takes root culturally” (The Independent, 2016). A UK Home Office poster included the following texts: “In the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest, 106 arrests last week in your area” and other parenthetically instructive information for the immigrants. Many complained about the phrase “go home” on the poster, believing that it was offensive and could intensify racial hatred and tensions in multicultural communities. In addition, in the past, racist groups have used the slogan to attack immigrants. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) received 224 complaints against the Home Office campaign in 2013 (Saul, 2016). However, ASA clearly stated that political ads are exempt from regulation by the ASA system and disassociated itself from the responsibility for regulating advertising of that kind (Committee of Advertising Practice Ltd [CAP] and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice Limited [BCAP]).

Brexit: the Campaign

The UK’s frustration concerning migrants reached its climax during the ongoing European refugee and migrant crisis, which is heavily affecting the political, economic, security and demographic landscape across the EU. Seen through media and comments on social media, during the EU referendum the British public perceived immigrants as the ones who took away their jobs, houses, education and even caused crime and social disorder (Tebbit, 2014). According to the Ipsos MORI research “the June 2016 Issues Index which was released just ahead of the EU referendum showed concern about immigration had risen by 10 percentage points in the Issues Index; and the NHS, EU and Economy had also risen in importance” (Ipsos MORI, 2016). Police authorities stated that reported hate crime rose by 57 per cent in the four days following the referendum, and that 42 per cent more hate crimes were reported in the last two weeks of June (2016) than there had been in the corresponding period of 2015 (Lusher, 2016).

The main media streams focused on EU’s failure to manage the migrant and refugee crisis. Indicators point to the conclusion that Britain did not want to share the risk with the other EU member states and used the referendum to detach itself from the EU. However, during the EU referendum, the main UK political parties, Tory and Labour, failed to make a strong case for the single market benefits, such as the free movement of goods, people, services and capital. Thus, the main focus during the referendum was the contest between economics and immigration.

The Leave campaign group was run by the TaxPayers' Alliance (TPA), which was launched by Matthew Elliott and Dominic Cummings, a former aide to Conservative cabinet minister Michael Gove. This group was launched on October 9, 2015, and had a cross-party backing including MPs and peers from the Conservatives, Labour, UKIP and other parties. The Vote Leave group was collaborating with the other two groups Leave.EU and Grassroots Out, which merged later for the sake of the same goal (The Battle, 2016). In brief, the Leave campaign argued that leaving the EU would allow Britons to take back control by being in charge of their own borders and having control on immigration, to spend money on their own priorities such as the NHS, schools and housing, and would be free to trade with the whole world and make their own laws (Vote Leave, 2016).

On the other hand, the In campaign claimed that Britain was stronger, safer and better in Europe than if it would be out on its own, that it would have more jobs, lower prices, better protection of workers' rights, stronger economy with more money for NHS, Britain. (The In Campaign, 2016). Meyer has noticed "the Remain campaign started from a huge 'deficit' in public knowledge about the nature of the EU, its powers and the UK role within it." (Meyer 2016). The Remain group's positioning strategy was not chosen at the most fortunate time as EU was battling with large waves of migrants flooding into the Continent and the unsolved Greek debt crisis. Although Remain focus was on the economy, underlining the risks of leaving the EU, Britons were less touched by the slogan of 'stronger, safer, and better off' than Vote Leave's 'Take back control.' The economy as a theme was perceived more as an interest of the political and business elite than the people of Britain. Cameron's undelivered promises from 2010 to reduce the figure to the 'tens of thousands' was the winning chance for the 'Leave' to attack with immigration issue.

In the EU referendum the two campaigns offered a blend of myth and facts and in the debate the Remain camp failed to explain the benefits of EU membership. Despite the concerns of the UK Statistic Authority or organizations such as Full Fact and initiatives like UK in a Changing Europe of misusing claims, the final result showed that it is not easy to sway voters with facts. The most misleading claim, used on the Leave campaign's posters, was that the UK sends 350 million pounds each week to the EU, for which Nigel Farage has already admitted "that was one of the mistakes made by the Leave campaign" (McCann & Morgan, 2016). In addition, other misleading promises of the Vote Leave campaign were discovered and published by some of the media. Banducci and Stevens perceived that due to the media's treatment of all claims as equivalent, voters were not motivated by accuracy (Banducci & Stevens, 2016).

The immigration issue was more emotional and visible, with aggressive anti-immigration and anti-European sentiments compared to the economic issue that was perceived as represented by the elite and endorsed by many experts who failed to convey the facts to the electorate. However, people voted for change because they had a fear of what the future holds. The Leave campaign offered a very effective slogan (Take Back Control) that encompassed people's fears, hopes and responsibility to take back control of their country.

Brexit: the Results

On June 23 2016, the political goal of the British political elite campaigning for leaving the EU won with 51.89% against to those that voted for remain 48.11% with turnout of 72.21% (The Electoral Commission, 2016). The political elite favoring the Leave campaign had a relatively easy task to prepare, analyze and predict the outcomes of the referendum although the results were narrow. The main “nutritive substances” of the political communication of the Leave camp were immigration and the current economic situation spiced with fear and hope effectively joined in the slogan “Take Back Control”. But interestingly, the Leave voters put the controlling immigration issue above the access of the single EU market, and they did not show rationality regarding this issue. According to the Economic Optimism Index of IPSOS MORI (July, 2016) the Economic Consumer confidence falls to (% better minus % worse) -34%, which is lowest since January 2012. In the same report, 89% of both the Leave and Remain voters say that they would not vote differently and that Brexit would be bad for the economy in the short-term, but good in the long term.

Brexit was the focus of many professional and leading academics in UK and the world and they gave extensive and comprehensive views on this pivotal moment for the British citizens. Meyer is suggesting that two lessons must be learned from this referendum experience: first, more investment is needed in educating the public regarding the EU, and the second, that inaccurate reporting and the press ownership creating it must not go without challenge (Meyer, 2016). Berry argues that the Leave campaign offered more coverage on their arguments unlike the Remain campaign which was unable to communicate a positive image for Europe. According to Berry, the reason for this partially lies in the failure of media and politicians to comprehensively establish and present European narratives in the past (Berry, 2016). Along the same lines, FitzGibbon commented that voters’ negative position toward the status quo of UK’s EU membership resulted in rejecting EU membership altogether, while lacking clear alternatives (Fitzgibbon, 2016). It seems Brexit was an urgent exit without any detailed plans for a post-Brexit Britain. Hughes suggests that voters’ unhappiness with the state of the NHS, housing and education was nothing to do with the EU or immigration but was a result of the Tories’ policies. He adds that “Labour, LibDem, Green and SNP voters all backed Remain by more than 60%. It was Tory voters who split 58% to 42% for Leave, plus almost all UKIP voters” (Hughes, 2016).

Brexit: the Aftermath

Following the results of the referendum, the new Prime Minister Theresa May was considering the two possible models of Brexit: the so called ‘soft Brexit’ and ‘hard Brexit’, finally choosing a ‘hard Brexit’ which meant “excluded membership in the internal market, which would mean accepting EU legislation, the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice (CJEU), the freedom of movement for labour, and ‘vast contributions’ to the EU budget.” (Schimmelfennig 2018, 14)

The Brexit deal came into effect on 23:00 on 31 December 2020 after a complex process of negotiations. On 18 April 2017 Prime Minister Theresa May called for general elections,

arguing that this would strengthen the UK position in the negotiations with the EU. However, the Conservative party lost its majority and Theresa May had to form a new government with a more fragile support. The EU insisted that the “divorce issues” must be agreed first, and only then discuss the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Without going into details, there were three issues on the UK-EU ‘divorce’ agenda. The first was the question of citizens’ rights. With over 3 million EU citizens living in the UK and over a million British citizens living in the EU, Brexit created a great uncertainty about their rights. The EU insisted that any “any EU citizen living legally in the UK before Brexit should be considered legally resident there, even if they did not have documents to prove this, and EU citizens’ rights had to be legally enforceable by the European Court of Justice” (O’Rourke,). Since it would apply reciprocally for UK citizens living in the EU, the UK government agreed on this.

The second issue was the financial settlement. Theresa May stated that “the UK will honour commitments we have made during the period of our membership.” (O’Rourke 2018) This meant paying €20 billion to the EU budget ending in 2020. Having in mind the short, two-year period to activate Article 50 and, and the fact that UK could not discuss a future trade deal without solving the ‘divorce’ issues, the Government agreed to fulfill its financial commitments as defined by the EU.

The third issue was the border with Ireland. Following Brexit, the UK-Ireland border would be an external border of EU with a non-EU country. Having in mind historical sensitivity and the Good Friday Agreement, all involved sides agreed that the border between the UK and Ireland should be “invisible and frictionless”. However, according to O’Rourke, “the UK government wanted to keep all of its trade with all of the EU as frictionless as possible, despite leaving both the customs union and the Single Market. [...] Alternatively it suggested that what the British actually wanted to do was to use the Irish border issue as a Trojan horse.” (O’Rourke 2018, ch.11). However, the European Commission stated that “the aim should be not only to avoid a hard border, including any physical border infrastructure, but to ‘respect the proper functioning of the internal market and of the Customs Union as well the integrity and effectiveness of the Union legal order” (O’Rourke 2018, ch.11). The EU pointed that UK must resolve the problem with Ireland before proceeding with the discussion about the trade deal.

Although EU continuously insisted that trade agreement negotiations can begin only after Brexit, it made a concession to the UK by agreeing that “UK would be guaranteed a customs union agreement with the EU” even if Brexit negotiations failed (O’Rourke 2018). On 14 November 2018 Theresa May’s Cabinet approved the Withdrawal Agreement. The Agreement, along with the Political Declaration on the future relationship between the UK and EU were endorsed at the EU Summit on 25 November. However, following several defeats in the House of Commons over the negotiation strategy and the withdrawal deal to leave EU, Theresa May resigned on 24 May 2019. Boris Johnson formed a new administration and renegotiated the Withdrawal agreement. Following the renegotiations, on 24 January 2020 the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community was signed. After all parties ratified it, the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the EU took effect on 11 p.m. GMT on 31 January 2020.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of EU was to help overcome national differences and bring prosperity to its members. However, the EU did not erase the diverse geographic, political and economic realities of its member states, which came to the surface in time of crisis.

Apart from the political split, the great divide of Brexit was between the European paradigm, supported mostly by young and urban citizens, on the one hand, and the spirit of euro-skepticisms of elderly citizens living in rural areas, nostalgic for the past glory of their country. Euro-skepticism among the elderly citizens is a growing European issue. The EU referendum showed a demise of the “cosmopolitan paradigm” supported by younger generations and gave birth to the “parochial paradigm” of the elderly British citizens led by their political representatives.

As mentioned earlier, there are three preconditions for paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1996, 90-110) that could be applied to EU. The first precondition for paradigm shift caused by entropy deals with the rising feeling that casts doubt in the adequate functioning of the current paradigm. In recent years, we become accustomed to the daily articles and analysis on the European crisis, but also to a great number of conferences on the future of Europe. As shown in this paper, Brexit was a result of decades long euro-skepticism among British voters and elites.

The second precondition is related to the evidence of challenges to the ability of the existing paradigm to explain the world and propose solutions to the problems. At the time of the Brexit referendum, in the eyes of many national voters, EU appeared to have failed to give timely solutions to the examined crises such as the financial and credit crisis, the migrant crisis and the security crisis. The immigration issue became relevant for many British politicians and was used by the Leave camp as one of the main themes during the 2016 referendum in order to appeal to the electorate. This served as argument for the Leave campaign that led to Brexit.

The third precondition for a paradigm-shift implies a convincing argumentation for a new paradigm. The proliferation of theories and the daily debates over fundamentals of the existing system indicates the entropy of the current paradigm. That is, of course, unless the current system manages to successfully answer the challenges.

The EU is facing contradictions between the vision and mission of the paradigm of Europe as a peace project, on one hand, and reality on the other hand. Reality changes rapidly, and we still hang on to our old paradigms, that give us a less realistic sense of security and predictability. There are two options ahead for the EU.

The first one implies internal change and adaptation to the rapidly changing world. The authors of this paper share the opinion that EU policy makers can and should work on reinforcing the EU paradigm that brought peace in Europe. In this regard, a self-evaluation could allow EU to re-discover itself while preserving the essential elements of its initial peace paradigm. A paradigm exists in people’s minds. EU needs Europeans, citizens who actively participate through greater democratic legitimacy and transparency. EU should learn from past mistakes. Its indecisiveness contributed to the economic, migrant and security crisis. It must repair the damaged credibility by providing timely solutions to crises. It must reduce the dependence of member states and increase the competitiveness of the economy. In order to protect unity in diversity, it must prevent the rise of radicalism, religious fundamentalism

and terrorism, by remaining faithful to its original ethical and moral values. Also, there is a need for change of the mentality of EU policymakers in order to include public opinion as an effective partner in policy-making by taking into consideration the electoral demands, party ideologies, goals of the governing political parties, macro and micro factors of, economic, social, cultural and political nature. Inadequate responsiveness to the electorate's needs and wants is "highly damaging to the EU project and to democratic principles in general" (Balestrini & Gamble, 2011). The art of managing the conflicting opinion of individual voters within the EU family, on one hand, with EU's collective interest and governing constraints that the national parties face, on the other hand, is necessary in order to improve the level of transparency and communication towards the electorate. The EU as a supranational entity does not face competition like political parties face during elections. Yet, the EU still has to adjust its own products, especially after the Brexit and the rise of anti-Europe parties in Germany, France, Netherlands and elsewhere.

The second option is a complete replacement of the existing with a new paradigm. This, however, would imply a thorough reconfiguration of the European structures that could plunge the nations of the continent into the unknown.

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