

European Integration in Conditions of Globalization

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Abstract

In this paper we investigate the subject of European integration, with regard to the problems resulting from the terrorist attacks by fanatic Islamists, and, more generally, the impact of the migrant/refugee problem. Prompted by the latest global financial meltdown, which also touched the Eurozone critical voices against the E.U. project, and predominantly the Euro and the Eurozone, have been raised. We will examine the risks of the E.U. project's failure, as well as the opportunities of economic and political integration for Europe. We will also look into the impact of the proposals put forward by various analysts advocating the disintegration of the Eurozone, or in favour of the introduction of a Northern and Southern Euro. Is 'Brexit' proof of the failure of the project for the E.U.'s integration, or can it ultimately trigger an acceleration of European integration? Answers to this, as well as other questions pertaining to this issue, are sought in the course of the present paper. According to our analysis, the leaders of the E.U. and European societies have two options: the first one, which is more in favour, owing to the present context as well as the forces of stagnation, is a setback in the procedure of furthering European integration, with the simultaneous cancellation of the project for Europe's democratic integration in the medium to long term.; the other option is the strengthening of European integration, with the rapid transformation of the monetary union into a new political and economic union, of the Federation type, which will constitute the most convincing and all-round response on the part of European societies to Euro-skepticism, anti-Europeanism and all forms of nationalism, seeking to dissolve, in one way or another, the Eurozone, and ultimately the E.U.

Keywords: Austerity; Integration; Euroscepticism; Nationalism; Anti-Europeanism; The Euro; The E.U.

Introduction

The 20th century was a hundred years full of twists and turns. The events of this century confirm the non-linear form of economic and social evolution [1]. Moreover, the great scientific breakthroughs of this century fuelled, renewed, or inhibited trends and schools of thought both in politics and philosophy, which influenced and triggered social, as well as political, upheavals and vice versa. In 1905, the young Albert Einstein formulated the principles of his special theory of relativity, introducing a new quantity, the speed of light. Through this theory, the concept of absolute time was overthrown and the laws of classical physics, which had been established by Newton and Galileo in previous centuries, were complemented. In November 1915, he formulated the General theory of relativity, through which he introduced a new view of gravitation, not as the result of a force, but due to a curvature of space-time, because of the presence of matter, that is, mass and energy, quantities linked together through the famous equation $E=mc^2$. The scientific revolution of the 20th century, however, continued with new breakthroughs on the molecular, atomic and subatomic level through quantum mechanics, nuclear physics, quantum electrodynamics, quantum chromo dynamics, the (super) string theory – with huge repercussions, not only on theoretical research, but mainly on people's everyday lives. The unification of all these fundamental forces has become the new Holy Grail for the Mathematicians and Physicists of the 20th and 21st centuries.

All these scientific developments borne out by observation and measurement (sometimes later than the time they were theoretically formulated) have created a dominant trend in the scientific

community, namely, Empiricism and Logical Positivism, also called Logical Empiricism. Classical Empiricism, as formulated by John Locke, David Hume and others of the French School (e.g., Auguste Comte), with the contribution of great scientists who systematized and standardized the science of Mathematics in the 19th and 20th centuries (Frege, Hilbert, Peano, Russell and others), has evolved into modern Formalism, Empiricism and Logical Positivism, the main proponents of which are the Mathematicians – Physicists of the Vienna Circle (Schlick, Carnap, Hahn and others), as well as Hans Reichenbach of the Berlin Society for Empirical philosophy. Classical Idealism (Platonism), as well as modern Idealism, mainly advocated by the proponents of German Idealism (Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel) has receded, as it had been ill treated by the Church during the Middle Ages and Nazism during the 20th century. In 1931, Logician-Mathematician Kurt Gödel caused a stir in the scientific community when he formulated his two theorems of incompleteness. The initial indifference on the part of scientific circles towards Gödel's methods for proving his theorems turned into embarrassment and finally into a revision of many stereotypes in scientific theory and research. The conclusion drawn from Gödel's methods for proving his theorems – at least for the writer – is that there is neither an absolute truth, nor final theories, nor perfect societies. All systems (scientific, economic, social, etc) are incomplete. No philosophical, economic, or political system can offer definitive answers to the problems of the world. This is because there is never an end. Evolution is a perpetual procedure towards infinity; with steps forwards and backwards. The truth is discovered gradually. However, there will always be parts of the truth eluding the scrutiny of science, or new questions will be arising. This process has no end. Man will always be attempting to formulate the all-encompassing theory, but will never be able to complete it. This is the magic of life – continuous research and discovery. One generation will

always hand over the treasure trove of knowledge it has gained to the next one, and this generation, in turn, will hand over to the one following it, which will build upon the knowledge accumulated and gained by the ones preceding it. In this sense, all knowledge and scientific discoveries belong not only to the researcher who produced the final scientific finding. He certainly receives well-deserved credit from the whole of humanity for his contribution, which is the result not only of his genius, but also a persistent and laborious effort on this part, as well as commitment to his aim; however, without previous accumulated scientific knowledge, it would be impossible for him to continue to the end. Therefore, scientific knowledge is a collective worldwide process – a relay race of knowledge gaining. That is why it constitutes universal human property. Consequently, the world community should safeguard it and disseminate it worldwide, so that everybody might have access to it without cost. Non-completeness, however, does not concern only man and human systems; the same applies and will also hold true for the machines of the future. We will continuously build more and more intelligent and powerful machines, in terms of memory capacity, process speed, and ingenuity of creation. No machine, however perfect it may be in technological terms, will be perfect. It will be able to perform things humans are unable to, but will never be in a position to substitute its creator, that is the human being. Scientific research and knowledge is a perpetual effort on the part of humanity towards discovery and insight.

On the social and economic levels, the 20th century began with shocking events in all European countries. In Great Britain, the country influenced more than any other by political and economic liberalism, Trade Unions had risen to the status of a political party, claiming a share of power and a fairer distribution of the wealth produced in the country. In Germany – by now the most powerful European country – Bismarck was pressing on with his policies of social reform. This is the country which will play the leading part throughout most of the 20th century, either in a negative light, due to this country's responsibility for the outbreak of the two World Wars, or, in a positive light, as a pioneering and innovative country, establishing a Social state on the one hand, while becoming the primary driving force of European economy and the formation of the European Union, on the other. In France – the other major partner in the European integration project – a country which contributed decisively to the building of modern Europe, there was a huge movement against clericalism; the Church was finally separated from the state, freedom of religious belief was enacted, and the foundations were laid for the most culturally tolerant modern European society. In Russia, a great democratic revolution broke out in 1905, which was crushed amid bloodshed by Czar Nicolas II [2].

In August 1914, WWI broke out, with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire attacking Great Britain, France and Russia – countries which also have their share of the responsibility for the onset of war – while in 1917 the U.S.A. also entered the fray. February 1917 saw the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution, the collapse of the Monarchy after the abdication of Czar Nicolas II, and by October of the same year, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, the Soviets had actually seized power and the Bolsheviks had prevailed entirely, promising peace and food for the hard-hit Russian people. In this way, through lack of any kind of organized bourgeois resistance, the seizure of power on the part of the Bolsheviks was a relatively easy task, while the elections called by Prime Minister Kerensky for November 1917 were never to be held, as they were preceded by the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks, urged by Lenin's slogan 'All power to the Soviets!' dominated politically these councils, which were set up

during the 1905 Revolution and comprised of workers and soldiers, and took over the administration of Russia. At the same time, they signed a peace treaty with the advancing on the field of battle German army (The treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 3rd March 1918), in order to preserve the young regime and satisfy at the same time the desire of Russian people for peace. In November 1918, Germany finally lost the war, but already the whole of Europe was drenched in blood. All eyes were now fixed on the new regime in Russia and the civil war which had erupted, since the spectre of Communism 'haunting Europe' as Marx had predicted in his 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' seventy years earlier, was now not simply haunting Europe, but turning into an actual, tangible fact. Fearing the spread of Communism across Europe, the Western powers sent a military force to assist the counter-revolutionary 'Whites' of Russia against the Bolshevik revolutionary 'Reds'. Communist and workers' political parties in Europe were given a huge boost after the outbreak of the October Revolution in Russia, and developed rapidly. Some of them developed modeling themselves on the Soviet Communist Party. In several other countries, however, with Germany prominent amongst them, the social-democratic political parties followed a different path, the path of reformations. They had by now disagreed and dissociated themselves from the rebellious Bolsheviks, following the path of a peaceful transformation of the system through an expansion of democracy with progressive changes and reforms. That is, they chose the way paved by the pioneering European social-democrats Bernstein and Kautsky, who early on had disagreed with Marx and Lenin on the ways and means towards achieving Socialism. Karl Kautsky adopted democratic socialism and the Parliamentary framework, and disagreed flatly with Lenin and the Bolsheviks' tactics, so much so that Lenin wrote his famous book 'The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky' (October-November 1918) [3].

In Spain, a bloody civil war broke out in 1936, when fascist military officers led by General Franco, supported by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, did not acknowledge the democratically elected government, supported by the country's left-wing political forces, as well as bourgeois democratic forces, which had formed the 'Popular Front', an alliance of a predominantly anti-fascist nature. It was a civil war of international proportions, since almost all the great powers of Europe soon to play a leading part in the opposing war camps formed within the context of WWII, were involved, either directly or indirectly. The victor of the civil war in 1939 – General Franco – imposed a military dictatorship which lasted until his death in 1975! The Spanish civil war and the famous International Brigades inspired the American writer Ernest Hemingway, who supported the democrats, to write his famous work, 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' [4].

In the Fall of 1929, the Great Crash of the financial system broke out in the U.S.A., with hundreds of banks and businesses going bankrupt and millions of workers becoming unemployed. The crisis crossed the Atlantic, sweeping across the countries of Europe – Germany in particular. The rapid rise of Fascism and Nazism, dominant now in Italy and Germany respectively, had its roots in the results of the financial crisis (poverty, unemployment, etc). Another factor contributing to this rise were the harsh war reparation payments imposed by the victorious western powers of the Great War upon the defeated nations. The treaties imposed particularly on Germany were unbearably stringent, and were never forgotten by the German people [5]. Thus, the newly-established Weimar Republic, this enlightened period in the history of inter-war Germany, was destined to come to an abrupt end, after nationalism and Nazism prevailed with Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Large investments in the armaments industry now

became the vehicle for overcoming the economic recession of 1929, but in essence they signified the beginning of Hitler and the Nazis' war machine preparation [6].

WW II checked violently any social progress already recorded in Europe. Fascism, which had originated rapidly in Italy, evolved into an extreme form in Germany, Nazism. The West showed no interest in this development, hoping that it would prove a good levee against the Soviet Union and the westward spread of Communism. They were wrong in their judgment, however. Thus, for the second time Europe experienced the horrific atrocities of war, with millions of war casualties and scores of countries ravaged. The allies eventually won the war with the significant contribution of the Soviet Union, in which, after Lenin's death, another form of totalitarianism had prevailed, Stalinism, with prosecutions, executions and exiles, the notorious Gulags – the system of forced-labour camps in the Soviet Union – for the enemies of the regime. Even pioneers of the October Revolution were prosecuted or executed by order of Stalin, the peak being the Moscow trials and the purges that ensued. Despite all this, the Russian people put up a fierce resistance against the Nazi invasion (1941) and on 30th April 1945 the Red Army, victor of the Battle of Berlin, in a symbolic act, raised the red flag with the hammer and sickle on the roof of the German Reichstag. This was, of course, after the Red Army had previously subjugated all the eastern European countries while advancing towards Berlin. It was the beginning of the division of Europe with the formation of two 'blocs' (western and eastern) – the so-called 'Cold War' period – until the collapse of 'Real Socialism' in 1989. This Cold War period constituted a very difficult period for humanity – there were even moments when the world ran the risk of a nuclear holocaust, such as the Cuban Missile crisis of October, 1962 [7].

This defeat of Fascism in 1945 sealed the historical course of Europe, which has not experienced a large scale war on her soil since 1945. Democratic Germany (now the Federal Republic of Germany), which had turned over a new leaf in her history, became the locomotive of a huge growth potential spreading across Western Europe, with the contribution of the post-war conditions, as well as the Marshall plan which assisted, to a large degree, in the restoration of the ravaged countries of Europe, including the Federal Republic of Germany. Tens of thousands of Greek emigrants find a welcoming home and employment in the heavy industry of Western Germany – as the German Republic was now called – in contrast to Eastern Germany (the People's Republic of Germany), that is, the part of Germany which remained under Russian influence until the reunification of Germany in 1989 with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.

In the Balkans, regional military conflicts break out, in the form of small scale wars between various ethnic and religious groups within the territory of former Yugoslavia. These conflicts brought about the bombing of Belgrade by NATO forces because of the abhorrent crimes against, and inhuman prosecutions (the so-called 'ethnic cleansing') of, the Albanians on the part of the nationalist regime of Milosevic in Kosovo, as well as against the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These conflicts led to the creation of new states and the declaration of Kosovo's independence from the now disintegrated Yugoslavia, as well as a new balance of power in the Balkans, with the blessing of the U.S.A. and NATO [8].

In 1945, the advance of the Red Soviet Army westwards, after the retreat of the German military forces, set up the conditions for the establishment of the 'socialist camp'. Only that the 'socialism' of these countries was not a conscious and democratic choice on the part of

their peoples, but a top-down, violent imposition by the Soviets, through brute force of arms; it is true that the agreements between the victors of the war and the creation of respective 'spheres of influence' contributed to such a development. The insurrections in these countries during the second half of the 20th century (East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968) were drowned in blood after the blunt intervention of Soviet troops [9].

The years after the end of WWII saw the Spring of Europe, namely, of Western Europe, as the countries of Eastern Europe or 'Real Socialism' were experiencing their 'Political Winter', which lasted until 1989. After the tearing down of the Berlin Wall [10], one after the other, all the countries of the 'Socialist Camp', through peaceful in general processes, turned over the last leaf of this social experiment of 'Real Socialism', which, for some historians, had in store for them only deprivation and political prosecutions in the way it was implemented. Our opinion, however, is that the problems which arose were associated to the core of that system, as it was formulated by its theoreticians and founders, Marx, Engels, Lenin, etc. This is because, had it been simply a matter of implementation, there would have been some countries which would have implemented the system differently. However, despite particular differences amongst these countries, the basic elements pertaining to the core of this system in all countries were the same. These mainly concerned the central system for the organization and planning of the country's economic system (centralized planning), the fact that all basic production means and services were state property, and the existence and function of a single party within the country's political system, in conjunction with a hugely repressive framework upon political and individual freedoms; all this within a state, access to which was granted only to the one and only existing political party and its members. The failure of this model, then, regards the core of the system, consisting of the basic theoretical principles upon which its actualization in the real world was based.

Thus, the founding of the European Economic Community, on March 25, 1957 in Rome, by the six founding countries (Belgium, W. Germany, France, Italy, Luxemburg, and Holland), was a new page in the history of post-war Europe, as well as a new hope for the peoples of Europe, inaugurated by the most enlightened political leaderships of the Old Continent [11].

Globalization and European Integration

If we would like to provide a definition of globalization, for the sake of simplicity, we would say that by this term we wish to articulate those processes of internationalization cutting across national borders, processes embracing all sectors of the economy, politics, science, civilization and society in general. These processes result in the very elements they pertain to, acquiring ever more universal characteristics. These same procedures have an essential objective character and are not derived from, or guided by, some particular power centre, as some wish to imagine. There are certainly some power centres taking advantage of these processes and the opportunities offered for the formulation of policies influencing the global stage in one way or another. These policies have now taken on a universal character; however, they also have adverse effects, which are increasingly felt and perceived in their daily lives by more and more people on the planet. Particularly for Europe, the issue of globalization within conditions of the exacerbated migration and refugee problem coupled with Islamic terrorism has taken on new substance and importance [12].

These procedures are certainly not an overnight affair. Humanity has always attempted to 'break through' the borders and barriers shaped by the social and political circumstances of any particular era. Could it not be said that, in ancient Greek times, the Delian League, with its headquarters at Delos, was the 'universal' political and commercial centre of the day? It was also a meeting place for the ancient peoples of the Mediterranean, and many more, to develop trade relations. Later, in the course of History, did many Empires which followed, such as Alexander the Great's, the Roman, the Byzantine, the Ottoman, the British, etc, not include elements constituting the 'globalization' procedure of their respective eras?

Today, with the Computer Science and Telecommunication revolutions in full swing, as well as the development of new systems of transportation, communication and traveling, the pace of 'globalization' is ever increasing. Scientific knowledge today knows no borders. Libraries are now universal and located in technological 'clouds' which have no homeland and can be 'visited' through the Internet by anybody, from every part of the globe. People can travel within a few hours from one part of the planet to another, thousands of kilometers apart. The news is live with developments and events being watched by the 'global citizens' 'on line' and 'in real time', to use terminology which is in global fashion. Currently, an event in one country is immediately made known throughout all the countries of the planet. A scientific breakthrough is integrated much more rapidly, in relation to the past, within global economic and social life, and people can watch all world developments as if they were eye-witnesses.

Modern globalization, expressed mainly through the free movement of capital, people, scientific knowledge and technology, creates new conditions and another kind of reality in modern-day society, giving rise on the one hand to opportunities, but on the other triggering off inhibitions, phobias, and irrationalities, which spawn and propagate conspiracy theories. Industrial production takes advantage of the new data being created and is expanding eastwards in search of new markets, more inexpensive raw materials and cheaper labour. This tendency has always been in operation across capitalist markets and will continue to run taking on each time a particular historic substance and importance. Multinational corporations are no newcomers to the modern conditions of globalization. They have been in existence for scores of decades and will continue to be active as long as there is life left in capitalism, developing alongside of it. Capital and markets will expand and become increasingly internationalized as long as there are buyers; there will be continuous demand on their part for investment, products and services, and, of course, profits. The new globalization of the modern age certainly creates new problems for nations and their societies. At the same time it creates new conditions and opportunities for those societies transcending national borders and 'becoming globalized' [13].

New problems to be resolved are created by the transnational operation of businesses. Where will multinational enterprise groups be taxed for their profits? In the country of the corporate headquarters, in the countries where their wealth is generated, or in the countries where some of their subsidiaries market their products and services, and where potentially their sales might be also made through the Internet as well as to third parties? How will the problems posed by the international networks of 'Black economy', i.e., smuggling, the arms trade, drug trafficking, as well as the modern slave trade of human trafficking (i.e., the prostitution of children and women) be tackled? And what is to be done concerning the challenges of climate change and global warming, or the issue of migration flows into Europe, and

Islamic terrorism? These are problems which in the conditions created by globalization take on new substance and importance, and which cannot be addressed by one country alone. New transnational institutions, new legislation, and new transnational entities are necessary in order for these problems to be tackled, as well as for the co-operation of all the states involved to be initiated. Thus, in these conditions of globalization, policies and societies are inevitably becoming 'globalized', as economic and social problems are also increasingly being 'globalized', in the sense that modern answers and solutions to problems do not depend anymore on the decisions made by a single country, or an individual government. Broader partnerships and co-operation of all forms are now required for resolving global issues, whether it be the tackling of the planet's energy problem, the resolution of the world environmental pollution problem, combating water scarcity, fighting poverty, or other issues of a global nature mentioned above [14].

On the political level, various political entities, such as the European Union, will seem to come more and more in handy, under certain conditions, of course, thus proving more and more effective. Political debates will be carried over to centres beyond national borders on an ever increasing rate. The governments of individual countries and their respective political parties will be seeking out allies and platforms for co-operation beyond their national borders. In light of all this, political players must consider their policies in relation to globalization on a national and European level, and establish their political platform on the basis of reality, as it has been shaped by actual developments, and not through a voluntarism (determined/proactive) approach, in the way some may assume developments in their mind on the basis of national borders. These developments cannot be interpreted simply as positive or negative; they are developments based on objective data, creating new risks and problems, but also new opportunities. Denouncing or condemning these developments can certainly only result in being left out of these developments, while other forces will be dictating the conditions of the new reality. Even political party institutions will have to seek out their new uniform European expression through transcending their national dimension, a development which will decidedly contribute to the speeding up of the processes for European integration. If modern pro-European political parties do not address the issues of globalization immediately, in conjunction with European integration, then the risk of a new, singular nationalism, which has already shown its face in all European countries, prevailing, is at the gates. Their role today is not to remain entrenched in some national claims, but to dictate the terms and conditions of a new democratic, transnational, European administration [15].

In the immediate future, European political debate will shift towards a confrontation between the political forces in favour of further European integration and unification and those in favour of the disintegration of the European Union and the restoration of the sovereignty of the Nation-State. This is by no means a simple or easy matter, as there are still many forces within European societies enchanted or attached to the past of national entrenchment. The most serious factor is that these forces cut across the whole political spectrum of each and every European country, and view globalization as their absolute enemy. A case in point is the recent militant reaction of French and Greek farmers' trade unions to the import of food products from third countries; behind these protests are concealed fears of a possible elimination of national tariffs on imported goods, and the subsequent prospect of the European Union abolishing subsidies on certain agricultural products [16].

Some analysts at times identify 'globalization' with the policies pursued by the U.S.A superpower on the global political arena. This is a mistake. 'Globalization' is in great measure an objective process. To a large extent, the policies pursued by the U.S.A are consistent over time. Some changes appearing at times are dictated by the prevailing social and political forces of the day, and their choices and priorities upon undertaking the country's administration. There are several examples in the past when the European Union either disagreed with, or was forced to conform to, U.S. policies, which ultimately created problems and imbalances even within its remit. An effective way of addressing such imbalances created within the global political arena, as well as the international markets, by the policies of other powers is the establishment of global counterbalances. One of these counterbalances is a powerful, democratic European Union, with a strong democratic European Parliament and a strong, elected, central democratic government, as well as a powerful Ministry for Foreign Affairs and a Ministry for European Defence, as long as global issues require the existence of armies and armaments; above all, a European Union which will stand by the socially weak and constitute a power of solidarity, peace and safety, acting as a restraint towards the most aggressive powers of the planet; a force to place the management of world issues on a new basis and work towards the achievement of fair solutions to the problem of the planet's raw materials, world poverty, global energy reserves, the huge environmental and climate change problems, the migrating issue, Islamic terrorism and a series of other major and minor problems requiring to be addressed globally.

The Strategy of a 'Front of the Countries of the European South' against Northern Europe Constitutes an Impasse and is against the Interests of the Countries of the European South

We have been hearing from various sources, especially lately, that the countries of the European South must form an alliance, with a view to obliging the countries of the European North to change the policies implemented in the European Union. This approach has been articulated most emphatically during the last few years, in relation to the way the economic crisis should be dealt with. In analyses on the subject, we read that the policies pursued by the European Union are accountable for the strengthening of the forces fighting the European integration project and disruptive trends within the E.U., exemplified by the 'Brexit' case. According to the most extreme version of these analyses, the countries of the European North - Germany in particular - are to blame for the economic crisis still ravaging some countries of the Eurozone, such as Greece. The solutions, for these analysts, are either the 'Front of the countries of the European South', or the dismantling of the Eurozone and the E.U., for some others. Despite the plausible elements within these theories, in our view, the substance of the matter is that these analyses are an attempt to conceal opposition to the project of European integration, which is the common ground in all relevant analyses.

These Approaches Add More Fuel to the Most Extreme Anti-European Policies, Advocated by Forces Cultivating and Promoting Not Only the so-called Concept of 'Euroscpticism', but an Extreme Anti-Europeanism

These forces can be found on both ends of the political spectrum, should we wish to use a schematic representation of each country's

political forces. Such approaches are also advocated by some forces belonging to the pro-European camp, but some of their positions on the issue, such as the 'Front of the countries of the European North', only act as a strengthening of similar Euroscptic practices and behaviors within the body politic of each country. At the end of the day, these policies stand in opposition to the European construction and give rise to suspicion and animosity within the civil society in each country, undermining the most progressive concept in recent years as regards the European continent, i.e., the union and cooperation of countries and peoples after two bloody world wars, some of the protagonists of which are the driving forces of today's peaceful European integration. This is not a straight-line course, however; neither is it progressing in the manner hoped for by those who masterminded and continuously advocate this rapid progression towards the construction of a European federation with more democracy and social coherence, and less inequality. This progression, however, is neither untroubled nor unimpeded. National stereotypes need to be overcome, in order for a new European culture to be instilled among the citizens of Europe, where national interests will go hand in hand with European interests, and vice versa. In present-day global market conditions of cut-throat competition, we see no better option for European societies than a common course, so that they may rise to this challenge.

In one version of these approaches concerning the 'Front of the countries of the European North', delivered by, among many others, internationally renowned analysts [17], it is estimated that the only solution today, in order to address the economic crisis in Europe, is the disintegration of the Eurozone or the splitting of the Euro into a Northern and Southern version! Holding the countries of the European North, and especially Germany, responsible for this predicament, they are maintaining that, as long as there is no change in the policy of austerity, the countries of the European South are doomed to failure. In order to add force to this claim, they give Greece as an example of a country unable to escape the downward spiral of regenerative crisis, having been implementing programmes for fiscal adjustment for six years now. One does not need to be a Nobel Prize winner in Economics, though, to realize that the reasons for Greece's failure are not the programmes for fiscal adjustment, but the poorly and inconsistent implementation of these programmes, as well as the political irresponsibility, for the sixth year running, on the part of the country's political forces, which do nothing but compete in populism and anti-Memorandum rhetoric, postponing mature reformations and changes; also to blame is the reaction coming from Greek society, which refuses to accept measures and changes detrimental to everything they had acquired and achieved in times of plenty, which had been granted, though, without any correspondence to the wealth produced within the country [18].

Analysts advocating the 'Front of the countries of the European South' support their theories by overstressing some individual incorrect estimations, such as the notorious 'IMF multiplier', which was responsible for the unreliable calculations regarding the effect of the adjustment measures on the economic depression. To a large degree, this is not the case, either, as inherent factors associated with the entrapment of Greece within the depression have had a stronger effect upon the country, than the miscalculating multiplier. These factors have to do with the lack of confidence in the Greek political class and the lack of political stability in the country, resulting in an inextricable network of state bureaucracy, stagnation in the judicial system and a string of other factors averting potential investors [19].

According to the strategy of the 'Front of the countries of the European South', an alliance of the Southern European countries would oblige the countries of the European North, and especially Germany, to review the 'tight' economic policy of austerity. First of all, it must be noted that there is no single policy of austerity in the E.U. We have many countries – both in the North and in the South – which increase their social spending, as long as this is possible, on the basis of their financial data. Therefore, the issue for the advocates against the imposing of an economic policy of austerity in the E.U. is (because the protagonists of the strategy of the 'Front of the countries of the European South' in speaking in general and vaguely about the disastrous policies of austerity, new 'Marshall plans', the 'Juncker package', and the like, are masking their main objectives) the economic surpluses of the countries of the European North. The economic deficits of the South are in essence, they say, due to the surpluses of the North. In reality, this is not the case at all, because, should these issues be examined in more detail, it will be ascertained that many Northern European countries create their economic surpluses through more exports to third countries and not by exporting to E.U. countries [20]. Advocates of the 'alliance of the South' consider that, by applying political pressure on the countries of the North, they will force them to dig deep into their economic surpluses in order to help the countries of the South, given the risk of disintegration of the Eurozone. This strategy takes no account of simple principles regarding the 'European acquis', such as the fact that policy is not pursued through blackmailing amongst partners, but on the basis of mutual respect, the relationships and balancing of interests within each country, and mainly the principle of mutual benefits, since the balancing and elimination of inequalities among E.U. countries constitutes the objective of the further integration and unification of Europe, mainly through reformation policies on the part of countries of the European South, whose economies are structurally, institutionally and operationally lacking, in relation to the countries of the European North. All this cannot be attained through policies of threats and blackmail. The strategy of the 'alliance of the South' may seem brave and particularly attractive to certain social strata, as well as parts of political elites within countries of the European South, but it has many drawbacks, namely, the fact that claims upon the surpluses of the North through similar policies add fuel to the most extreme anti-European forces within the E.U., which are increasingly gaining ground, as was demonstrated during the latest regional elections in Germany [21].

The strategy of the 'Front of the countries of the European South' also lacks realism. There is no evidence whatsoever that all governments of the countries in the south of Europe embrace such approaches. Each country in the south of Europe experiencing or being touched by the economic crisis in varying degrees, is not concerned to the same extent, while the crisis in question is not manifested in the same way in each country. The changes required in each country are not the same, while alliances formed and priorities set by each country are impossible to be identical, as can be judged by their positions and voting in the European Council of E.U. leaders, the European Parliament and the other E.U. bodies. Just because some countries in the South of Europe today share certain points as regards their European policy, does not necessarily mean that the solution to their problems lies in the formation of some kind of 'Front' in opposition to the European countries of the North, automatically obliging these countries to change their policies. The problem is much more complex. Particular individual alliances between countries may certainly be formed occasionally, on one or more issues, on the European or international stage, but this is something which cannot be

geographically specific or take centre stage. Above all, there can be no individual 'Fronts' of particular countries against certain others because, in this way, these very countries are undermining European integration. Certain countries of the European South cannot be fascinated by the Swedish model [22] on the one hand, and take an opposing stance, on the other, just because they cannot lay their hands on the Swedes' money! A few leaders even think that this is the solution to their country's problem, going so far as to view themselves as working towards the fulfillment of the European vision when they unilaterally and inexpensively ask for more economic resources, such as the doubling of the 'Juncker package' towards their countries, with priority given to the transfer of funds from the centre to Europe's regions; most importantly, not a word is being uttered concerning the way their country's ills will be combated [23].

The imbalances within the E.U. are not addressed only by transferring funds from the richer countries to the poorer ones, but also through brave changes and reforms within these very poorer countries, in order to combat the constraints preventing these countries from coming out into the clearance of sustainable economic growth. A country belonging to the European South may need to co-operate on many issues with countries in the North, while on others it may have to collaborate with other Southern European countries. Even if all Southern European countries agreed today, and a unilateral alliance could be formed in opposition to Northern European countries, such a strategy would constitute a dead end, and would prove dangerous for the European integration prospect; those who inexpensively put forward such practices, at the very least, have not thought through the consequences in all their dimensions. At the end of the day, this strategy strengthens the position of certain circles within Europe and the global political arena, which are in favour of the E.U.'s disintegration, or the breakup of the Eurozone into North and South, a development which neither suits, nor is of any advantage to the countries of the European South. For if the strategy of the alliance of Southern European countries against those of the North is aimed at the transfer of funds from the North to the South then a breakup of the Eurozone not only does not serve this purpose, but, on the contrary, blows it apart. Even the propositions concerning a Northern and Southern Euro are far too flimsy and not based upon any serious argument. The countries of the South may have common elements within their economies, but these mainly pertain to the weaknesses inherent in these economies. Of what help would a common currency be to these countries, according to the proponents of this theory? Simply, it would help the common handling of their poverty. They would just have a massively devalued currency, since day one of its circulation, with simultaneous devaluation of all other values (salaries, pensions etc.), as opposed to more powerful currencies, the 'North Euro' included.

The other weak spot concerning the strategy of the 'Front of the South' is connected to the deliberate concealment, on the part of its advocates, of the reasons for the economic crisis in the countries of the South, which are actually associated with the domestic problems in these countries. This is because behind the excessive rhetoric about the false contrast between North and South we have the masked effort to downplay, and ultimately conceal, the internal specific local causes of this crisis in each and every country of the South. It is no coincidence that the latest economic crisis of 2007-8 influenced, more intensely, the weakest links in the Eurozone, among which Greece stands out, with its client list political party state, weak democratic structures for control and transparency, widespread corruption throughout all public services, a disintegrated production infrastructure, and all the

characteristics of such a society, which prevent it from facing reality and standing in opposition to its side effects. The political forces supporting the strategy of the 'Front of the South', as the solution to their country's problem, are hiding the internal causes of this crisis in the countries of the North, thus constituting the basic forces of resistance to each and every change and reformation sought to be implemented within the state and society by those forces in the countries of the South which believe profoundly in the European prospect.

'Brexit' was not the result of a lack of policies to combat the inequalities among the countries of the E.U. Far from it. The citizens of Great Britain decided – by a majority vote – for their country to leave the E.U. because they do not want to contribute to the E.U.'s common budget, which, as a rule, redistributes funds in favour of the poorer countries. Joseph Stiglitz is merely examining things axiomatically, ignoring their political dimensions, and is downplaying the actual economic results these policies bring about. However, the E.U. was established on the knowledge that the more powerful countries would enter into partnership with the weaker ones. And ever since the first agreement was signed, millions of euros have been transferred from the richer to the poorer countries, in order to remove inequalities. This has always been, and still is, at the core of European integration and the quest for a common course for the peoples of Europe. Currently, for example, Greece is implementing the 4th Community Support Framework, with a budget of over 25 billion euros, in conjunction with the programme for rural development, through which the country is completing its infrastructure, road network, telecommunications, integrated waste management, and so many more investment schemes, which in recent years have almost exclusively been financed from European funds, due to the fact that the Greek public investment scheme has been essentially abandoned. This is the political dimension of the project for European integration, prevailing over any other absolute economic axiom.

Of course, should we go about things in a cynical way, with an absolute economic commitment to the axioms of economic theory, minus their political dimension then perhaps Joseph Stiglitz is right in advocating the breakup of the Euro into a Northern and a Southern version. According to his theory, the poorer countries will have a weaker currency, corresponding to their economies. They will thus be in a position to tackle their problems in a better way, since the fundamentals of their economies as well as all values will be more in step with the real value of their currency. Above all, they will be able to issue their own currency, which will merely be an inflationist and devalued currency. Therefore, Joseph Stiglitz takes it for granted that the countries to adopt the Southern Euro will be obliged to live on the basis of the levels of their respective economies; that is, all will live much poorer than today and within the new inequalities to be established depending on the economy level of each Northern European country. Once again, the poorer countries will seek the transfer of funds from the richer ones. It will be a never ending process. Was that not – and is it not still – the true meaning of European integration? That the poorer countries should be assisted, through the transfer of funds from the richer ones, in order that they might be in a position to move on, hand in hand with the rich countries of the North, into the future? Is that not what has been going on for decades within the E.U.? Have the countries of Europe not been contributing to the E.U. budget on the basis of their wealth?

The European prospect has a future only as a single entity, and not through a potential breakup of the Eurozone or the E.U. The South

needs the North and the North needs the South, because no European country, however rich and powerful, can adequately stand against the U.S.A, the ever-increasing power of China, or any other emerging economic superpower. Only through the policies of European integration, and the efforts required on the part of the countries of the European South in order to make the necessary changes and reforms, will these countries be able to attain joint progress with the countries of the North. However many funds are transferred from the North to the South, the predicament of the Southern countries, such as Greece, cannot be resolved, for it is a problem of production and structure of the economy. It is as if one were emptying tons of water into a bottomless barrel. No matter how much money is transferred to Greece, and no matter how many billions of euros of sovereign debt is cut, if the country's economic model of production is not changed, and if the country does not proceed with the necessary changes and reforms to the state and its society, Greece will merely live through a temporary illusion of having found a solution to its problem, but this problem will remain and be reproduced perpetually [24]. The irony in the whole issue concerning the opponents of the Eurozone and the E.U. is the fact that they refer to the result of the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum as an argument, in order to add fuel to their theory of contrast between North and South. Those pointing to the 'Brexit' result, in order to support this theory of contrast between North and South, forget to mention the main argument on the part of those who advocate the U.K.'s exit from the E.U., i.e., the fact that their country contributes an excessive amount of funds in order that the imbalances and inequalities within the E.U. should be addressed! That is, the British decided to leave the E.U. because they disagree with the further integration of Europe and the transfer of funds to the E.U., and not because the U.K. or Germany have not contributed enough economic resources to the poorer countries in order to reduce inequalities. The exact same is the case with the continuous strengthening of the far-right political party by the name of 'Alternative for Germany'. These are political forces fighting against further European integration and the removal of inequalities through the transfer of funds from the North to the South of Europe.

Concerning Multiculturalism in Europe and some revisions

On the occasion of the recent terrorist attacks in European capitals, as well as the large migration and refugee flows, it could be said that European societies are experiencing a period of doubt concerning the multi-cultural society. During the previous century, and especially after WWII, multiculturalism in Europe was a reality. Millions of non-Europeans flooded European cities. Their integration and social inclusion was the main issue and objective [25]. This project was in great measure successful. The majority of European citizens believed in, and supported, multiculturalism during all the phases of European modernity, in opposition to any kind of xenophobia and exclusion, whether racist or nationalist. Today, however, we face new conditions, compelling us to re-examine some aspects pertinent to delicate issues, such as the circumstances under which diverse cultures, religious traditions, superstitions and biases – whether personal, social, or even national – can coexist in a modern European city; a modern European city which is completely different from that of a century ago. Then, the inclusion and integration of a different person in society was a major care not only of the European Welfare state, but society itself; and European societies were successful in this care, to a large extent. At present, however, after all the regional wars, the so-called 'Arab Spring', and the massive relocation of millions of non-Europeans to European

cities, these societies are much more different. These events, coupled with economic recession, the social exclusion and marginalization of large social groups and strata within many European cities, have triggered, fostered by an aggressive Muslim radicalism arising chiefly in the countries which experienced these regional wars even among second- and third-generation immigrants, emotions and an irrationalism deeply rooted within human consciousness. Thus, war moves to large European cities in the form of massive terrorist attacks. There is a lot at stake, which has to do with the so-called 'European acquits', i.e. freedom, justice, tolerance for diversity, a unified Europe without internal borders, the Welfare state, and the European Union in the final analysis. Therefore, some things need to be re-approached and perhaps revised, since the strengthening of the most extreme nationalist and xenophobic forces of Europe, threatening to thwart the European integration project, is grounded and fueled by these real problems of migrant and refugee inclusion.

Of course, one should be free to choose one's religion; one should also be free to have no religion at all if one wishes so, or be an agnostic, or even an atheist. One should also be free to declare and practice one's religion or not, as long as one does not bother or cause harm to others. No-one, however, is obliged by anybody, in any way, to express or declare one's religious beliefs. Not even the state has the right to ask of a citizen to declare their religious conviction, or the way in which one will take an oath. It is, for example inadmissible today, even after Greece's condemnation by the European Court of Justice, for a Greek judge to ask of the witnesses at a trial, whether they will take a religious oath or not. It is equally inadmissible, in public takings of the oath by officials serving in state institutions, to ask of these elected officials to state their manner of taking the oath and to have it recorded in the minutes of the particular ceremony! These issues should be resolved immediately by a law establishing for everyone the political oath on all levels of civic life. It is an open violation of citizens' rights concerning religious freedom and the lack of their obligation to state the nature of their religious conviction.

A recent matter of concern for certain European societies has to do with various symbols or characteristic dressing customs, referring to a particular religion. There is a lot of discussion today in many European societies regarding the hijab (Muslim headscarf or veil). Of course, no-one's attire must bother anyone, as long as it does not publicly violate elementary rules of co-existence and equality for all, or constitute the provocative promotion of a religious belief or doctrine. A female student, for example, cannot go to school or a school's national parade dressed in the hijab, or demonstrably wearing a huge Christian cross.

These issues should be resolved and settled once and for all, after a large-scale open discussion within European societies, without allowing the setting of any precedent for some kind of legitimacy, and preventing also the prevalence of any racial or xenophobic perceptions. At the same time, there needs to be a complete separation of the function of schools, and each European state in general, from the dominant Christian Church, which of course we honour and respect as a tradition, and not just that, but thus far. The Church must play no part in education, the country's administration, local government bodies, or court houses. The school subject of Divinity, wherever it is still taught in schools across Europe (e.g., Greece), should evolve into a school subject of the study of the History of human religions, with the participation of all students, without anybody being interested in anybody else's religious denomination; the morning prayer, wherever practiced, should be substituted by a text or an exhortation on the part of the school's headmaster or a senior teacher, to be delivered on the

occasion of an actual event pertaining to the school's life, to function in a pedagogic manner.

There are many objections raised concerning the function of Islam, as a judicial system, as it likes to be self-defined, for the Muslim citizens in various European societies. And this is exactly the most serious problem with Islam; that it aims at functioning as a system governing all human relations within society and the state, and not only in matters regarding the religious faith of each and every Muslim European citizen. The speeches delivered, and texts written, by even the most moderate representatives of Islam, manifestly show Islam claiming a part in settling matters referring to Muslim citizens of a European country, far exceeding, though, what would be normal for a religious doctrine. It is inadmissible in European countries, which have made large sacrifices, in the form of hundreds of thousands of victims, in religious wars and the barbarity of the Inquisition during the religious Christian Middle Ages preceding the European Enlightenment, for persons or even institutions such as the Grand Mufti to be allowed to resolve matters of civic or family differences applying the Muslim law (Sharia). As a point in case, the role and function of the Muftis in Northern Greece needs to be reviewed. Today the Muftis in this part of Greece make decisions applying Sharia law over differences between Greek Muslims. A well-known case is the decision of a Mufti in Thrace not to acknowledge the inheritance left by a wife's husband and rule in favour of his relatives [26]. And since Greek law recognizes, without being able to intervene, the rulings of the Muftis, some of these cases have been referred to the European Court of Justice. An end should be put to all this, and all differences should be resolved according to the laws of each country, as is the case with all the other non-Muslim citizens of each particular country. The issue of reforming the European institutional framework, as regards the role of religious doctrines within European societies, constitutes a challenge as well as a huge step forward towards European integration and the peaceful social coexistence of all citizens within the E.U.

There are open issues regarding some aspects of the function of the multi-cultural European society of today, which, in our view, need to be revised. Especially where religious doctrines come into the picture, which not only wish to function on an egalitarian basis with the other religious doctrines (which is totally legitimate), but claim a special institutional and judicial role in our societies for citizens who have otherwise chosen to be naturalized as European citizens, or at least wish to co-exist with us. Eventually, Europe should tell these people – migrants and refugees – before they even set out on their torturous, on many occasions, journey, that there are certain regulations and laws in the countries of Europe, which they may perhaps not agree with, but must abide by ref. [27].

Is the E.U. project doomed to failure?

Several analysts, belonging mainly to the Anglo-Saxon economic school, maintain that the E.U. project is doomed to failure. This is due, in their view, to the E.U.'s fundamental founding principles. Following the recent global financial meltdown, they included as reasons for the perennial problems facing countries such as Greece, the two main requirements set for a country's participation in the Economic and Monetary Union of the E.U., that is, apart from conversion rates, interest rates and inflation, the country's government deficit, which should not exceed 3% of the country's GNP, while the sovereign debt should amount to 60% of the country's GNP. However, the following questions arise: Is it necessary for a monetary union experiencing the deficits of the Eurozone to set standards for a country's participation?

We do not think that there is one sensible person to claim otherwise. Therefore, the problem does not lie in percentages and limits. It is well known that in many cases a flexible policy was pursued, as far as the absolute compliance with these standards was concerned, either regarding a country's admission to the Economic and Monetary Union of the E.U. (e.g., Greece), or in order to escape financial audits and supervision (e.g., France). In fact, in the event of the Economic and Monetary Union of the E.U. evolving into a complete economic union, then it is certain that the standards will multiply and become stricter. This is the logical thing to do when countries integrate their economies, as well as other activities, and map out a common route.

The progressive political forces in Europe must consider recent developments, such as 'Brexit', the migration problem and Islamic terrorism and press on with the next steps towards European integration. Any kind of delay contributes to political stagnation, adding fuel to the forces fighting for the nullification of the European prospect. In matters concerning the furtherance of the integration of Europe, there have been serious theoretical studies on the part of the advocates of the process of such integration [26]. The theoretical basis of these studies is that a truly integrated European civil society cannot continue its evolution within the modern world fragmented behind the national barriers of each individual country. The E.U. cannot continue to constitute a total of nation states. It needs to be present and involved in the process of European integration, and fight with all its might in order to exert as much influence as it can in this direction, as well as in the completion of the democratic integration of the E.U. This entails a single economic policy, a single foreign and defence policy, a single European policy in all areas of European society and economy within the framework of a process which brings closer European peoples and nations.

The basic constituents of a European policy are: the deepening of democracy within the bodies and institutions of the E.U.; the promotion and strengthening of a progressive and peaceful role, as well as a single representation of the E.U. in the modern world and all international organizations within a globalized environment; the promotion of solutions to all major social problems and the defending of the economically weaker social strata; the elimination of inequalities between countries and societies - not through the transfer of funds from the richer countries to the poorer, but through the implementation of the necessary reforms in those countries lagging behind; sustainable development and the strengthening of the civil society within the decision-making centres. The political forces which do not view the addressing of modern issues through the lens of European integration, will continuously slip into a nationalistically distorted viewpoint.

Conclusions

In an intertwined and interdependent world, the global financial meltdown of 2007 could not but knock on Europe's door. Thus, the weaker links in the Eurozone, such as Greece and the other countries hit hard in one way or another, depending on the specific features of each country, also demonstrated and highlighted the gaps within the European construction. Unfortunately, when things go wrong, people do not worry or think about the future; neither does the Eurozone. As long as we had high growth rates, the leaders of the E.U., instead of considering and preparing the next step, remained indifferent or watched the tide of trouble coming, without, however, ensuring that the appropriate measures were being taken. Actually, the structural problems of the Eurozone countries which faced serious issues during

the economic crisis, presenting a risk not only for themselves but the Eurozone itself and the E.U., were well known to the E.U. officials. Even the political class in each country knew exactly what the situation was, but were indifferent. This means that the national governments are mainly to blame for the course of each country; thus, the E.U. and Eurozone officials bear their fair share of the responsibility. However, the problem might be deeper. It pertains to the institutional deficit of the E.U. and the Eurozone. Many analysts have demonstrated and highlighted the shortcomings of the Eurozone. A monetary union of independent nation states, which must function according to certain rules, cannot go very far, even if these rules are abided by. What are the chances then, of this union going far, when these rules are not abided by, or are not abided consistently by all the countries within the union? This was manifested during the global financial meltdown of 2007-2008. It is necessary for Europe to take the next step, which is none other than its democratic integration, as well as its economic, fiscal, tax, and banking unification. And this is something which cannot be attained without its political unification, with a view towards its federalization. The United States of Europe [27] must become the political plan of all those forces which see and feel Europe as their home. The prevalence of nationalism and the 'restoration of national sovereignty' will constitute a major setback for Europe, with incalculable consequences for the peoples of Europe - and beyond. The only convincing answer to anti-Europeanism, which is fueled by the populist political forces of the far-right and far-left in Europe, is the strengthening of democracy and the resolute promotion of European democratic integration. But for that to happen, the European political plan for integration must be embraced by the large majority of the European democratic political forces, which must, in turn, convince the societies of Europe, so that the climate of Euroscepticism and questioning prevalent in large parts of the European public will change. This requires huge steps forward on the part of everyone, as well as necessary compromises. The rich and powerful European countries are too small within the global economic competition, and only through a broad and single E.U. will they be able to hold up. In the long term, they will also benefit from supporting their poorer partners, thus bridging the gap between them. At the same time, the smaller and poorer countries and their leaders must realize that they have no prospects outside the E.U., and that they should speed up the necessary structural changes and reforms, in order to find common ground with their more powerful partners. The steps to be taken, then, cannot be unilateral. The greater good of all countries, rich and poor, Northern and Southern, Eastern and Western, requires a single, democratic, European political plan: the building of our future common European home - the United States of Europe.

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