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Return of History or Anti-liberal Revolution¹

Abstract: *The European Union, a unique entity on the global scene, is at a crossroads. The original blueprint to create a supranational entity is broken, under the pressure of the constitutional crisis (2005) and later the economic and financial one (the spectre of Grexit). The process sped up in 2014, when external security appeared on the agenda, followed by an unprecedented migrant wave coming to the EU in 2015. As a result, former Euroenthusiasm has been replaced by Euroskeptic forces, mostly of populist or nationalist nature, which was strongly confirmed by the British Brexit vote in June 2016. Those accumulated crises brought about many new division lines within the EU, well defined in this study – of political, economic, social, and even religious or cultural nature. The liberal mainstream, which has been dominant until recently, is retreating, while ‘illiberal democracy’, however it is understood, or even authoritarian solutions, are starting to flourish. This is an extraordinary era when the entire project of European integration is at stake. Time to react and sacrifice a lot to save it, if we do not want to retreat under the new challenges surrounding us. According to the author, the EU can be saved, even if it will be different than before.*

Keywords: the EU, European integration, populism, nationalism, liberalism, migrants, social security, external security

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Introduction

After more than two decades of huge optimism regarding the European integration project,² which had been synonymous with the European Union since the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992, in the mid-2010s the project found itself at a crossroads. Indeed, there is general consensus that the EU is currently facing a multidimensional crisis. Both the European Parliament elections and the polls conducted in the EU Member States confirm it: Euroenthusiasm is falling, Euroskepticism is on the rise.

According to the results of a survey conducted by the well-known American research agency Pew, in 2012–2015 the support for the EU's activities in Greece fell from 37 to 27 per cent, in France from 58 to 38 per cent, in Italy from 58 to 48 per cent, and in the UK from 54 to 44%. According to the same study, the highest support for the EU among the ten countries covered by the survey was recorded in Poland (72% of positive and 22% of negative opinions, while in Hungary it was 61% and 37%, respectively), while in Greece, or even France, an exactly opposite trend was recorded (with 27% and 38% positive and as much as 71% and 61% negative opinions, respectively).³ These figures lead to the conclusion that it is untrue that the current problems stem from the fifth and subsequent EU enlargements, in which much poorer post-communist countries of the former Eastern bloc were admitted to the EU. The reasons for the growing Euroskepticism and its sources are definitely much deeper and concern the entire continent.

There is already a noticeable and growing dispute concerning the number and order of importance of these crises – both in the EU and throughout the West. While the opinions of those who go as far as to talk about the 'Decline of the West', thereby referring to the once famous work by Oswald Spengler,⁴ are perhaps too far-reaching, the theses that 'liberalism found itself in a deep crisis'⁵ are most probably not exaggerated at

² For example: M. Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century?*, London 2005; S. Haseler, *Super-state: The New Europe and Its Challenge to America*, London 2004.

³ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/06/07/euroskepticism-beyond-brexite/> (last visited 27.12.2016). A critical analysis: <http://opinie.wp.pl/marcin-bartnicki-fala-euroseptycyzmu-w-calej-europie-polska-jest-jedynym-wyjatkciem-6016709581009537a> (last visited 27.12.2016).

⁴ R. Kuźniar, *Europa w porządku międzynarodowym (Europe in the International Order)*, Warszawa 2016, p. 202; O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, transl. by Charles F. Atkinson, New York 1991.

⁵ http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/co-laczy-kaczynskiego-z-trumpem-rozmowa-o-populizmie-i-kapitalizmie-z-prof-janem-zielonka,artykuly,400123,1.html?src=HP_Left_Section_3 (last visited 8.11.2016).

all. Even according to serious analysts and experts, the current crisis, or rather crises, strike at the very heart and core of the West,⁶ which makes this issue worth pondering on.

It seems that the phenomenon is even wider, since we are dealing with this situation both in Europe as a whole and, for example, in Hungary and Poland, where – according to the Pew survey – the societies still show positive attitudes to the EU, while policy-makers are strongly Euroskeptic. However, we are observing similar disappointment with liberal solutions also outside the EU, as evidenced by such diverse personalities as Donald Trump in the United States, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey. All these cases confirm the outcome of the analysis conducted by Thomas Piketty and then Branko Milanovic: the key reason is the domination of markets in our lives and the resulting unequal distribution of goods and excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of the existing elites.⁷

On the one hand, there is a wave of variously defined nationalism and populism, on a scale unprecedented in the recent decades, while on the other hand, we are observing the emergence of equally unprecedented anti-democratic tendencies and authoritarian aspirations. Instead of the previous wave of liberalism, we have an anti-liberal wave as well as an ideological ‘counter-revolution’ directed against liberal democracy, defined by Pankaj Mishra in the influential magazine ‘Foreign Affairs’ as ‘the globalization of rage’. According to this author, the situation is dire: ‘The world seems beset by pervasive panic, which doesn’t quite resemble the centralized fear that emanates from despotic power. Rather, people everywhere find themselves in thrall to the sentiment – generated by the news media and amplified by social media – that anything can happen, anywhere, to anybody, at any time’.⁸

Furthermore, the politicians who reach into the deep layers of human dissatisfaction, who are known by name and some of whom have been listed above, look for simple black and white patterns, adhering to a very Manichean worldview: populist politicians divide the

⁶ M. Cichocki, T.G. Grosse, *Oblicza kryzysu. Analiza zarządzania kryzysowego z perspektywy ekonomicznej i politycznej (The Faces of Crisis. An Economic and Political Analysis of Crisis Management)*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 6, 157.

⁷ T. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, transl. by A. Goldhammer, New York 2013, Introduction; B. Milanovic, *Global Inequality. A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge, MA–London 2016.

⁸ P. Mishra, *The Globalization of Rage*, “Foreign Affairs”, November/December 2016, p. 49. Also available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-10-17/globalization-rage> (last visited 27.12.2016).

society into the unblemished ‘ordinary people’ and the corrupt and self-indulgent elite. They eagerly present foreign capital and therefore also other European governments and the EU institutions as a new form of colonialism. The specifically understood ‘familiarity’ is contrasted with globalism, transnationality and supranationality pursued by the EU.⁹ As rightly pointed out by Milanovic: ‘Populism has thus entered fully into political life and has gradually moved toward displacing the mainstream – or rather, is becoming mainstream itself’.¹⁰

The Euroskepticism shown in a plethora of studies has not only merged with demagogy and populism but also brought to the foreground national slogans and national sovereignty, which is being praised in all possible ways. Populists, however understood and defined, have one thing in common: they want to destroy the existing system from within, either by means of direct democracy, namely referendums, or – which is even more dangerous – advocating more or less authoritarian solutions, invoking the will of the disgruntled or frustrated society. The new populist groups are building on the strong contrast to create a different, fresh division: into those who enjoy privileges and those who are deprived of them.¹¹ This forms a basis for various significantly increasing divisions between EU nationals, while it is more than obvious that the more of these divisions, the weaker the Union’s position in the global arena.¹²

In this article, I will attempt to answer the question: What has happened that there are so many political parties and groupings in the EU that openly draw on the dissatisfaction of the society and easily use negative stereotypes or prejudices against others for their own benefit? This will be followed by an attempt to define the most important crisis developments in the EU and in the international arena today, which requires taking a multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach (political science, economics, sociology, history, and even social psychology) and a preliminary suggestion of what should be done to address this difficult situation. It is more than certain that it is easier to define and describe the current state of integration – and often even disintegration (although there are fierce ideological and programme-related disputes on this particular point) – than to propose measures and ways out of this vicious circle. It is easier to diagnose than forecast. So far, however, there has been no solid diagnosis either; there have only been some partial attempts at explication, if any.

⁹ *Demokracja w obliczu populizmu (Democracy in the Face of Populism)*, Y. Mény, Y. Surel, J. Szacki (eds.), Warszawa 2007, pp. 24, 26.

¹⁰ B. Milanovic, op.cit., p. 210.

¹¹ *Demokracja w obliczu populizmu...*, op.cit., p. 42.

¹² *European Union on the Global Scene. United or Irrelevant?*, B. Góralczyk (ed.), Warsaw 2015.

1. The UE as a child of the ‘end of history’ era

Being the result of an already nearly 40-year long process of integration, the EU emerged in the global arena as an actor that had not been fully defined¹³ and at a moment when after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the bipolar system the United States dominated practically everywhere, imposing its will and vision on the entire world, even in the ideological and philosophical dimensions, as evidenced by the spectacular success at that time of Francis Fukuyama’s thesis that the collapse of communism was nothing else than the ‘end of history’, in the sense that there was no longer any ideological alternative to the domination of the market and liberal democracy.¹⁴ The EU was therefore, in a way, a child of the era of triumphing political liberalism and market dominance. As such, it quickly emerged as an important economic and normative power as well as a soft or civilian power,¹⁵ without military elements or the classic attributes of power as defined by the realist school, which include maintaining, consolidating and demonstrating power.¹⁶ Another drawback that has been clear from the beginning of the process of European integration is that verbal and normative assurances often have not found confirmation in facts and reality. Rules and regulations said one thing, and life went a slightly different way. In this context, the spectre of alienation and estrangement has appeared.¹⁷

The EU is a political as well as an economic project (as a matter of fact, it is usually perceived first as an economic project and only second as a political one because integration began with a free trade zone). Therefore, apart from the political situation in this grouping, we should just as much take into consideration economic issues and processes. In this particular sphere, however, after the collapse of the Cold War order, there was, on the one hand, a triumph – in the world markets as well as in the EU – of ‘market fundamentalism’, as referred to by scholars such as the

¹³ Some even called it an ‘intellectual puzzle’ or an ‘unidentified political object’. What everyone agrees on is that it has always been *in statu nascendi* – in the nascent state. D. Milczarek, *Unia Europejska we współczesnym świecie (The European Union in the Contemporary World)*, Warszawa 2005, p. 10.

¹⁴ F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* London–New York 1992, p. 311.

¹⁵ D. Milczarek, *Pozycja i rola Unii Europejskiej w stosunkach międzynarodowych (The Position and Role of the European Union in International Relations)*, Warszawa 2003, p. 184.

¹⁶ J. Czaputowicz, *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja (Theories of International Relations. Critical Remarks and Systematization)*, Warszawa 2008, p. 78.

¹⁷ Z. Czachór, *Kryzys i zaburzona dynamika Unii Europejskiej (The Crisis and Disturbed Dynamics of the European Union)*, Warszawa 2013, p. 454.

Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz¹⁸ (who was not alone in this view); and on the other hand, conditions were dictated by the insatiable and selfish American ‘Global Minotaur’,¹⁹ searching for new markets and resources to use. It was an era of absolute domination of orthodox neo-liberal markets and the so-called Washington consensus.²⁰ What is worse, the distinct ‘dictatorship of money’, also known as excessive commercialisation and even ‘financialization’ of the lives of societies and states, seems to confirm what Oswald Spengler discovered long ago is indeed true: ‘through money democracy destroys itself, after money has destroyed the spirit’.²¹

The EU, being the child of this age, proved to be a well-functioning commercial area and customs union, but it fell into trouble when – in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Maastricht – it started to implement the not yet fully prepared monetary union, in which fiscal policy and budgets remained at Member State level, with the banking union still in the nascent state. The paradox was that monetary centralisation met fiscal decentralisation, or even fragmentation, which eventually turned out to be a structural barrier to the entire integration process.²² Implemented for political and ideological reasons rather than economic ones, the mechanism began to fail after the Constitutional Treaty²³ had been rejected and when it turned out that harmonization of individual policies was impossible, as clearly shown by the great global crisis of 2008, which affected primarily Western markets.

In the political, ideological and institutional dimension, in turn, the Global Minotaur, that is the United States as the dominant power at that

¹⁸ J. Stiglitz, *The EURO. How a Common Currency Threatens the Future of Europe*, New York–London 2016, p. 10.

¹⁹ Y. Varoufakis, *The Global Minotaur: America, the True Origins of the Financial Crisis and the Future of the World Economy*, London 2013. According to the author, as a result of this mechanism we entered a state of aporia, i.e. of intense puzzlement caused by confused concepts and seeing the existing order crumble down, p. 3.

²⁰ E. Halizak, *Ideowe problemy globalnego ładu liberalnego w gospodarce światowej – rola i znaczenie Washington Consensus (Ideological Problems of the Global Liberal Order in World Economy – The Role and Importance of the Washington Consensus)* in: *Globalizacja a stosunki międzynarodowe (Globalisation and International Relations)*, E. Halizak, R. Kuźniar, J. Symonides (eds.), Bydgoszcz–Warszawa 2004, p. 23.

²¹ O. Spengler, op.cit., p. 582.

²² J. Stiglitz, op.cit., p. 5.

²³ Which, as explained by the ‘father’ of this Treaty, V. Giscard d’Estaing, was supposed to answer the key question of why Europe meddles in everything, while frequently remaining ineffective. *Nowa Unia na półmetku (The New Union Crossing the Halfway Mark)*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 23.01.2003.

time, imposed its own checks-and-balances system, ensuring balance and mutual control of the main powers in the governance system. Post-communist countries surrendered to this dictate, with the Russian Federation at the forefront and China being the only significant exception.²⁴ Initially, the nascent EU also followed this liberal free-market orthodoxy, as evidenced by the Copenhagen criteria adopted in June 1993 and from then on imposed on all the candidate countries as a *sine qua non* for future membership.²⁵ This condition was in fact formulated because of the prospects of admitting post-communist countries, with their different historical baggage and very different political and economic experience.²⁶

It was an era of great triumph and optimism of the West, victorious after the Cold War, so it should come as no surprise that all the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, almost without exception, wanted to 'go to Europe', to join the ranks of the grouping that in the material sense (for instance, in terms of total GDP²⁷) was emerging as an important power centre on the global stage, in particular as regards economic and soft power. One argument in support of this thesis is that for a long time there was a parliamentary consensus in Poland on the pro-European direction after the fall of real socialism; this direction was first challenged only before the referendum on EU accession by the then extra-parliamentary, populist and demagogic Samoobrona (Self-defence) party, which tried to scare its compatriots by raising the spectre of Poland being dominated by German and Western capital.²⁸ At the time, nobody considered an anti-Union posture as a serious possibility, neither in Poland nor in other countries of the region. Everyone, including the largest mainstream political parties,

²⁴ As R. Kagan aptly put it: 'most Americans and Europeans believed China and Russia were on a path toward liberalism'. R. Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dream*, New York 2008, p. 5. In both cases this turned out to be a huge illusion and mistake: China has never adopted the neo-liberal Washington Consensus orthodoxy, while Russia rejected it after Vladimir Putin had risen to power.

²⁵ A. Menon, *Europa: stan unii (Europe: State of the Union)*, Warszawa 2013, p. 65.

²⁶ In most general terms, they include the requirements of adopting democracy, rule of law, market economy and the EU acquis: <http://www.neww.org.pl/slownik/opis/159,159.html> (last visited 23.12.2016).

²⁷ In 2014, the EU was responsible for 23.8% of global GDP, while the US for 22.2% and China for 13.4%. *The EU in the world. 2016 edition*, Eurostat, Brussels 2016, p. 79. Other available data are slightly different but still unequivocally confirm the role of the EU as one of the key poles of the world economy. See the useful comparison of World Bank, CIA and IMF data at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) (last visited 27.12.2016).

²⁸ For the full position of this party on the EU at that time see <http://samoobrona.org.pl/zrz/pages/04.Stanowiska/index.php?document=998.html> (last visited 28.12.2016).

regardless of their ideological views, as well as the majority of the population, was in favour of Europe (meaning, of course, the EU).

2. Why is Europe today not the same Europe that we have joined

The EU is a very special entity: neither a state nor a federation (not yet), nor a classic international organisation. It is a *sui generis* entity, or rather a process, which has developed for many years and decades of integration according to a characteristic pattern: ‘from crisis to crisis’, which means that breakthroughs happened only when barriers or obstacles appeared on the way. In addition, this special entity suffered from a kind of ‘cardinal sin’, as a product of the elite, which – just like the Global Minotaur in the world markets – dictated its own conditions and imposed its will on subordinate societies.

This ‘sin’ has revealed itself in all its glory when countries were asked not about their decision to access the EU but about the functioning of the Union: in spring 2005, the citizens of first France and then of the Netherlands rejected the draft of the joint Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Thus, **the Union fell into the first major crisis bearing the hallmarks of a structural, long-term crisis, which can be called a constitutional crisis.** This time, not only the ‘from crisis to crisis’ formula broke down but the fundamental integration project was undermined as well as so far it had been based on neo-functional principles, under which the ultimate solution, the *finalité politique* of the entire process, would be a supranational federal structure.²⁹ From then on, European federalists have been in retreat,³⁰ and at the time when this text is being written, towards the end of 2016, probably only some European liberals, with their expressive leader, former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, are still making such plans.³¹

Due to the failed constitutional referendums in France and the Netherlands in spring 2005, the path of integration, so far not without obstacles and problems but consistently going towards a single goal, apparently lost its direction. This led to something that can be called **the first national impulse**, slowly undermining this essentially supranational project. In

²⁹ *W poszukiwaniu finalité politique Unii Europejskiej. Aspekty teoretyczne i praktyczne (In Search of the Political Purpose of the European Union. Theoretical and Practical Aspects)*, L. Wojnicz, D. Rdzanek, M. Potkańska (eds.), Szczecin–Warszawa 2015, p. 17.

³⁰ *The Year of Living Dangerously*, “The Economist”, 24.12.2016–6.01.2017, p. 11.

³¹ G. Verhofstadt, *Europe’s Leadership Crisis*, “Project Syndicate”, 22.09.2016, available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/european-union-leadership-crisis-by-guy-verhofstadt-2016-09?barrier=true> (last visited 27.12.2016).

the strong words of the well-known Irish businessman and politician influential in European institutions, Peter D. Sutherland: 'Since the disastrous referendum in France on the European Union's constitutional treaty, the EU has been directionless and politically damaged in a fundamental sense'.³²

Once again, national policies and interests prevailed, and the Member States were not able to reach an agreement on the common vision of the future of their continent.³³ Heated debates on the future of the Union started among the governments, but it is clear that the first serious impulse in this debate belonged to nationalists, advocating both strong leadership and the strong state, which means a return to sovereignty and in fact the confederate form of cooperation between the participants of the project – the Member States. However, this new approach created a stumbling block undermining the formula of an ever closer Union, so far repeated like a mantra, of a constantly deepening and expanding Union, that was nevertheless working in close cooperation and internally coherent.

In this already not particularly favourable context, a deep crisis in the markets emerged, starting with the United States as early as 2007 to later flare up in mid-September 2008, triggered by the collapse of the well-established institution of the local financial system, the Lehman Brothers. It reached the EU with a delay and initially showed its most intense face in Greece. On the one hand, it spurred the ideas of Grexit, meaning either a possible financial meltdown or leaving the euro area, established in 1999; on the other hand, it highlighted the problems of the PIIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain, to which we could just as well add Cyprus, or even, as some argue, Finland). Thus the ongoing constitutional crisis was joined by a **deep economic and financial crisis**. The latter soon gave rise to serious social tensions and divisions, which according to some experts may not only lead to destabilisation and threats within the EU but can also affect the stability and balance of global markets.³⁴ It also brought about the **second national impulse**, to use the same terminology as above, providing another propitious opportunity to those who oppose excessive integration.

In the most spectacular way the new threats were revealed in the PIGS countries (Ireland managed to leave the group rather quickly), especially Greece, which was a kind of litmus test for the strategy of dealing with

³² http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/20/opinion/a-direction-for-europe.html?_r=0 (last visited 27.02.2017).

³³ A. Menon, op.cit., p. 70.

³⁴ Y. Varoufakis, *And the Weak Suffer What They Must? Europe, Austerity and the Threat to Global Stability*, London 2016.

the crisis. The European Commission, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB), known collectively in this context as the Troika, imposed a strict austerity and savings policy on Athens, which from the beginning was very poorly received by the Greek society. People in Greece were becoming ever angrier at Troika's methods, which they strongly believed to be linked with underlying interests of the largest entity, namely Germany.³⁵ It turned out that the first two tranches of assistance loans were in fact used to support and buy out bonds of German and French banks involved in the local market (it is estimated that some 90% of these funds were allocated to this purpose).³⁶ Only after these banks were bailed out, after the deepest crisis, which in early 2015 raised to power the left-wing anti-establishment Syriza coalition, attacking Berlin and Brussels, a slightly larger part of the funds from the third tranche was allocated directly to Greece and for Greece, although still under strict requirements of austerity policy, which was strongly criticised by some, for example by Syriza's former finance minister and eminent economist, Yanis Varoufakis.³⁷

The Eurozone crisis, in turn, fully revealed the structural shortcomings mentioned at the beginning of this text. It showed that the euro area was neither efficient nor effective, which led many authors, including such respected scholars or personalities as Josef Stiglitz or George Soros,³⁸ to the conclusion that it might be a good solution to either dissolve or completely transform it. Meanwhile, two Polish financial and banking experts, Stefan Kawalec and Ernest Pytlarczyk, advocate a 'controlled dissolution of the euro area,' adding, or even cautioning that: 'If the task of dissolving the euro areas not performed by pro-European and pro-market leaders of European Union countries, it is likely to be realised by their anti-European and anti-market successors. In the latter case, the European Union and the single market will also be destroyed'.³⁹

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 131.

³⁶ J. Stiglitz, op.cit., p. 203; Y. Varoufakis, *The Global Minotaur...*, op.cit.

³⁷ Y. Varoufakis, *Greece's Perpetual Crisis*, "Project Syndicate", 20.12.2016, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/perpetual-greek-debt-crisis-by-yanis-varoufakis-2016-12> (last visited 22.12.2016).

³⁸ G. Soros, G.P. Schmitz, *The Tragedy of the European Union. Disintegration or Revival?*, "Public Affairs", New York 2014, Preface.

³⁹ S. Kawalec, E. Pytlarczyk, *Paradoks euro. Jak wyjść z pułapki wspólnej waluty? (The Euro Paradox. How to Escape the Common Currency Trap)*, Warszawa 2016, p. 14.

3. The new dividing lines

The dictate of the Troika, Berlin and European institutions, which were not fully transparent (hence suggestions of another crisis, the so-called democratic deficit), unfortunately did not bring the expected results. On the contrary, if we take income levels in Greece in 2007, the last pre-crisis year, as 100%, then at the end of 2014 it was only 93%, and the country's public debt rose from just over 120% of GDP in 2010 to as much as 178% in 2015; all this with an over 20% unemployment rate, exceeding the 50% threshold for young people, including those who graduated from schools and universities.⁴⁰ No wonder that in the end this last group – young people finding it increasingly difficult to find a permanent job, start a family and settle down – was at the source of the protest referred to as the 'precarariat revolt',⁴¹ which since then has been constantly expanding to other EU Member States.

The 'Grexit' threat and the crisis in many Member States, mainly in the Mediterranean Region, provided another strong impetus to nationalistic forces as well as to the increasingly populist ones, invoking 'injustice against the people' exploited by the rich, enfranchised elites and foreign banks. **Populist nationalism appeared**, with extreme and extremist forces emerging in many countries, ranging from the almost purely fascist Golden Dawn party (*Chrysi Avgi*), openly calling for a rebellion against Greek elites, and even more against Berlin, despite the fact that, paradoxically, the party's programme included explicit references to Nazi ideology. The party is not only deeply Euroskeptic but also nearly emblematic in terms of the demands put forward by similar groups. The Golden Dawn advocates leaving the euro area as well as the EU, but it is also strongly anti-Western (mainly against the US and Israel) and anti-capitalist. Its demands include, among others, nationalisation of banks and of some partially unspecified 'national resources', understood primarily as islands, ports and factories, topping it all up with their flagship slogan: 'nationalism is not a crime'.⁴²

As we know, the Golden Dawn is unfortunately not an isolated case; it bears similarities to the Hungarian Jobbik and other nationalist groups throughout the EU with their populist slogans and programmes, which

⁴⁰ J. Stiglitz, *op.cit.*, pp. 69, 75.

⁴¹ R. Woś, *Dziecięca choroba liberalizmu (The Childhood Disease of Liberalism)*, Warszawa 2014, p. 126.

⁴² See the group's official website: <http://www.xryshaygh.com/en> (last visited 22.12.2016).

have clearly gained strength after 2010.⁴³ This is happening not only on the periphery of the Union, but also in its very core, as evidenced by the activity of Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), or Geert Wilders' Party of Freedom in the Netherlands. Also noteworthy is the rising popularity of the Alternative for Germany (created, which is important, only in 2013) and the Italian Five Star Movement (*Movimiento 5 Stelle*), members of which have occupied increasingly important posts and positions in the state since 2013, and which after the fall of the cabinet of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi at the end of 2016 started to be considered as a serious candidate for the government, or at least for co-governing the entire country in a coalition.⁴⁴

The deep economic and financial crisis in the EU after 2010 led to the emergence or revival of essentially populist and usually right-wing nationalist parties and groups that decided to take advantage of favourable conditions to zealously promote their programmes. In addition, it created a deep and unsettling rift on the continent along the **North–South axis**. The North, starting with Germany, emerging after the crisis as the hegemon, is generally rich and more stable, while the South, including Greece, is poorer and confronted with more challenges. It was clear from the beginning that the rift was not a good development in the context of EU values and principles, such as solidarity, complementarity and subsidiarity. Once again the foundations of the previously applied concept of an 'ever closer Union' started crumble and have since then been constantly and consciously undermined.

As if this was not enough, new crises reached Europe in 2014–2015. Just like the one in 2008, they came from the outside. One of them is the **security crisis** (mainly concerning external security), revealed, on the one hand, in Ukraine, and on the other hand, by the formation of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL, Daesh – the last being an acronym in Arabic). The other one, which is the main focus of this volume, is the **refugee and migration crisis**, often associated with the threat of terrorism. According to official data, in the crucial year 2015 alone it brought up to 1,322 million people into the EU,⁴⁵ mostly from the Middle East but also from Africa and even Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri

⁴³ A good analysis can be found in *The Rise of Populist Extremism in Europe*, "Chatham House Report", <https://www.chathamhouse.org/media/news/view/178303> (last visited 27.12.2016).

⁴⁴ *Italian Movement That Could Remake Europe*, "Politico", 1.12.2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/italys-5star-movement-referendum-sunday-matteo-renzi/> (last visited 28.12.2016).

⁴⁵ *The EU in the World...*, op.cit., p. 31.

Lanka. Both crises have highlighted the long identified main weakness of the EU: the lack of fundamental categories and institutions that are so important for a strong international actor, such as police, customs and border services, not to mention the armed forces and military power.⁴⁶

Under pressure from an unprecedented (since the end of World War II) wave of migrants, the EU has clearly found itself on the defensive and on top of that once again strongly divided, this time not only along the North–South axis but also along the revived **East–West axis**, once so dangerous and still evoking bad memories. The migration and refugee threat triggered two emblematic responses: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, eagerly using a variety of nationalistic slogans and playing the ‘defend our sovereignty’ card, has built a barbed wire entanglement and fence on the border with Serbia and on minor sections of the border with Croatia;⁴⁷ while German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in turn, proposed a *Willkommen Politik*, the policy of welcoming people coming from outside Europe. It soon turned out that the Chancellor’s liberal-spirited approach was a bit reckless and rather short-sighted, because nobody had realized how big the wave coming towards Europe would be. In September 2016 Chancellor Merkel herself admitted that her approach had been ‘wrong’.⁴⁸ By contrast, the Hungarian Prime Minister not only was not ostracised in European high society and elites but even celebrated his triumph at home, proving that his principled anti-refugee position had been by all means appropriate. What is more, he found followers and supporters of this policy, within the Visegrad Group, for example.⁴⁹

These events provided the **third national impulse**, so to call it, not only reinforcing nationalist trends and groups but also giving permission for openly xenophobic and often racist slogans. This time, a range of arguments referring to culture and civilization is being openly used, creating the image of the enemy as an outsider ready to waylay our prosperity and peace and on top of that, having not only a different skin and face but also professing another faith, especially Islam.

⁴⁶ A. Menon, *Europa...*, op.cit., p. 213.

⁴⁷ A subject for a broad range of academic works; for example, one interesting analysis can be found at: <http://www.worldcrunch.com/opinion-analysis/how-orban-is-trying-to-take-europe-away-from-merkel> (last visited 27.12.2016).

⁴⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/angela-merkel-refugees-germany-lost-control-crisis-would-turn-back-time-a7320726.html> (last visited 27.12.2016).

⁴⁹ <http://www.dw.com/en/visegrad-leaders-merkel-meets-european-critics-of-her-refugee-policies/a-19504957> (last visited 27.12.2016).

In this context, taking advantage of the uncertainty and even fear of citizens across the continent, an important debate has started probably across all EU Member States, albeit with varying intensity. It concerns European identity, the need to defend the values dear to our civilization, but also – perhaps for the first time on this scale in the history of integration – the need to seal our external borders and ensure external security. The nature of the political and public discourse has changed significantly. Instead of growth, markets and prosperity, we now talk more about security and the related threats, stemming from the conflicts in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Libya, Daesh), from the increasingly assertive behaviour of Russia in the international arena (in Ukraine and Donbas, also in Syria) as well as from the need to protect our own borders considering the relaxed internal controls inside the Schengen Area. In this context, some analysts go as far and deep as to quote Edward Gibbon and his classic work *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in which he argues that one of the main reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire was simply the lack of proper border protection and underestimation of the dangers coming from the outside.⁵⁰

In this context, much attention has been devoted to the quite common awareness of risks to internal security. Thus emerges the **third dividing line** on the continent, having several aspects: reaching back to the theory of Immanuel Wallerstein and his division into **the centre, the periphery and the semi-periphery**,⁵¹ which in the EU currently takes the form of a division into **Germany and the rest**, and at the same time an urban–rural split between the capital, with other large cities, and the countryside,⁵² which was so well defined in the Brexit referendum but has been observed also outside the United Kingdom. Naturally, we could also easily include or exclude another, completely separate category of division – **into ‘Our Own’ and ‘Others’**, however the latter are defined (although Islam and Muslims are most often mentioned in this context).

We are therefore dealing with a completely new, unprecedented situation of a variety of overlapping distinct crises, to which the previous ‘from crisis to crisis’ strategy can no longer be applied as they are too many and too serious. This time we are dealing with something that can be called, without much

⁵⁰ Gibbon wrote: ‘Dazzled with the extensive sway, the irresistible strength, and the real or affected moderation of the emperors, [the Romans] permitted themselves to despise, and sometimes to forget, the outlying countries which had been left in the enjoyment of a barbarous independence’. E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, 1776, p. 35.

⁵¹ I. Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein*, New York 2000, p. 86.

⁵² M. Janicki, W. Władyka, *Bunt prowincji (Revolt of the Countryside)*, “Polityka”, No. 52/53/2016, pp. 24–36.

exaggeration, an **existential crisis**. As rightly put by another Polish author, as a result of these accumulated crises the European Union is now blamed not only for its own imperfections, naivety and sins but also for the collapse of the world of rich, well-fed and stable societies – the beneficiaries of the international order of the last 200 years (Western Europe), 100 years (Scandinavia) or 25 years (Central Europe).⁵³

4. Brexit and other challenges

The British referendum on leaving the EU⁵⁴ should act as catharsis and a catalyst for a serious and profound debate on the state of integration, its current situation and, above all, on dealing with the challenges encountered in recent years by Brussels and EU institutions. Without this, one can hardly draw appropriate scenarios for the future, which are so difficult to outline right now and yet so necessary.

The key question: ‘Where are we now?’ can be answered in many ways but any consensus is unlikely because the discourse is inherently heavily biased by the moral judgement, the worldview and the position of each participant, regardless of who it is: a politician, a representative of the media or even an educated academic, who – after all – also has his or her own beliefs and values, even if he or she tries to be objective and impartial. With the deep polarisation that has emerged, the chances for a fully objective debate are slim.

After making these reservations, we should say that the first and basic reason for Brexit (as well as for the aforementioned third dividing line, i.e. between the centre and the periphery) is the increasingly apparent revolt against excessive commercialisation of life, domination of markets and emerging plutocracy, combining economic dominance with political power. This opposition stems directly from the earlier excessive optimism and belief in the ‘objective’ market forces. We are dealing both with the aforementioned ‘precariat revolt’ of the young generation with its high aspirations that it is unable to meet and with a rebellion against the noticeably growing inequalities that Joseph Stiglitz, referring to Abraham Lincoln’s famous idea of ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’, defined as ‘the rule of the 1 per cent, by the 1 per cent, for the

⁵³ P. Borkowski, *Unia Europejska – Kryzys egzystencyjny* (*The European Union – An Existential Crisis*), “Rocznik Strategiczny”, Vol. 21/2015/16, p. 183.

⁵⁴ A thorough analysis, revealing many behind-the-scenes details about the Brexit referendum, can be found in D. Korski, *Why We Lost the Brexit Votes*, “Politico”, 24.10.2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/why-we-lost-the-brexit-vote-former-uk-prime-minister-david-cameron/> (last visited 27.12.2016).

[privileged] 1 per cent',⁵⁵ which incidentally also provides a good explanation of the 'Donald Trump phenomenon' in the United States, which is not a subject of this study but is a closely related issue.

This revolt against the dictatorship of money and the market triggered a wave of social discontent that is so eagerly and diligently used by many politicians, starting with the British UKIP and Nigel Farage. It is well known and empirically proven that populism feeds on resentment and dissatisfaction of 'the people', and the parties and movements based on it claim to directly represent the will of the masses⁵⁶ and shine up to this inherently broad electorate. Meanwhile, as the sociologist Jerzy Szacki proved rather well already years ago, just after the collapse of the previous system, liberalism in politics and neo-liberalism in the economy after the fall of communism was nothing else than 'inverted Marxism', an 'anti-dictatorship' or 'communism *à rebours*' and even became the 'new faith' in these areas.⁵⁷ And because it was imposed by the then hegemonic United States and the US-dominated institutions of the Bretton Woods system – the World Bank and the IMF – it spread and prevailed throughout the globe (with some exceptions, like the PRC), and most certainly in the Western world, starting with the EU.

Populism stems from one other source as well: withdrawal from social obligations that the state has towards its citizens.⁵⁸ Viktor Orbán was perhaps the first European leader to understand this, so when he returned to power in the spring of 2010, he not only proposed a new institutional, legal and constitutional model for his country, which he himself later defined as 'illiberal democracy',⁵⁹ but also based this new model on a different set of

⁵⁵ J. Stiglitz, *The Great Divide*, London–New York 2015, p. 88.

⁵⁶ T. Krawczyk, *Populizm we współczesnych demokracjach Europy. Perspektywa krytyczna wobec obecnego stanu badań (Populism in Contemporary European Democracies. A Critical Perspective on the Current State of Research)* in: *Populizm w Europie. Defekt i przejaw demokracji? (Populism in Europe. A Defect or a Sign of Democracy?)*, J.-M. De Waele, A. Paczeński (eds.), Warszawa 2010, p. 62.

⁵⁷ J. Szacki, *Liberalism after Communism*, transl. by Ch. A. Kisiel, Budapest, London, New York 1995, pp. 73,74. More on this subject: B. Góralczyk, *Unia Europejska jako podmiot globalny: ryzyka i szanse (The European Union as a Global Actor: Risks and Opportunities)*, in: *Geopolityczne powiązania Europy, a system polityczny Unii Europejskiej i możliwe kierunki jego ewolucji (Europe's Geopolitical Connections in the Context of the EU Political System and the Possible Directions of Evolution)*, J. Niźnik (ed.), Warszawa 2016, pp. 33, 34.

⁵⁸ P. Żuk, *Czy każda krytyka neoliberalizmu jest populizmem. O pułapkach demokracji w Polsce (Does Any Criticism of Neoliberalism Equal Populism? On the Pitfalls of Democracy in Poland)* in: *Populizm w Europie. Defekt i przejaw demokracji? (Populism in Europe. A Defect or a Sign of Democracy?)*, J.-M. De Waele, A. Paczeński (eds.), Warszawa 2010, p. 127.

⁵⁹ More on illiberal democracy and the process of building the new system: B. Góralczyk, *Axiological Disintegration of the EU? The Case of Hungary*, "Yearbook of Polish European Studies", Vol. 18/2015, pp. 81–109.

values than the previous one. He challenged the Copenhagen criteria applicable in the EU and heavily tilted the checks-and-balances system towards the dominance of the executive branch and himself as the charismatic prime minister. Thus he triggered a new, axiological crisis in the EU, and if not a crisis, then at least a major debate about the applicable values, especially since it turned out that Orbán has found many followers, of whom perhaps the most distinctive ones can be found in Poland after the October 2015 elections. What we are dealing with is therefore not an isolated case but a general trend that all the more requires careful attention, analysis and academic investigation. Quoting Mishra once again: 'Demagogues are still emerging, in the West and outside it, as the promise of prosperity collides with massive disparities of wealth, power, education, and status. Militant secessions from a civilization premised on gradual progress... are once again brewing within the West and far beyond it: and as before, they are fuelled by a broad, deep, and volatile desire for destruction'.⁶⁰

With these new developments, we now have a completely different set of values, under which the state once again replaces free market, the economy and governance are being centralised or even nationalised, elites are changed, and the concept of 'nation' replaces an idea of supranationality in the hierarchy of values. With this, there is a return to tradition, recent history is being redefined, there is a search for new points of reference and new heroes, and state authority is associated with faith and the Church. Family, children and social support for the poor are at the centre of interest of the state authorities. This whole 'national' programme is not only populist, as pointed out by its opponents, but also highly conservative and certainly Christian and nationalistic. 'Christian values', however understood, are in vogue, and the liberal code that has been binding so far (the Copenhagen criteria) is now in retreat, much criticised, attacked, and often outright persecuted.

The proponents of illiberal theories hold one more accusation against the elites that have ruled since the system change of 1989/90, which boils down to what has formally been called a 'democratic deficit' and in practice is yet another dimension of the accumulated split between the elites and the nation, or rather the society, because in Europe the population of one country can be made up of several nationalities. Another subject of serious – and largely justified – charges is the overly technocratic approach of Brussels and European institutions to the ongoing processes and developments, without proper social sensitivity and empathy for vulnerable social groups or classes. Similarly, yet another subject of serious criticism is the

⁶⁰ P. Mishra, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

non-transparent decision-making in EU institutions and the fact that many of their decisions are dependent on lobbyist pressure, which leads to the conclusion that ‘the legislative process escapes public scrutiny’.⁶¹

All this is part of yet another process, one that is potentially dangerous – the population ageing in Europe, well reflected in statistical figures. These concerns about the lack of a sufficient labour pool were also presumably (because it is not certain) at the source of Chancellor Merkel’s *Willkommen Politik*.

5. Scenarios for the future

The EU has been plunged into many crises and is on the defensive. Once again it turns out that fear sells better than hope, which is particularly noticeable in the context of the migration crisis in 2015. However, it should be strongly emphasised that although serious and requiring careful studies, the migration crisis is not the most sensitive and crucial one from the point of view of the EU’s future. Although it is a structural crisis and therefore inherently long-term and complex, it only contributes to the previously revealed fundamental problems of this structure, starting with the clear lack of vision after the collapse of neo-functional concepts and the lack of strong and effective leadership at the level of EU institutions.

The institutions and authorities in Brussels face a growing problem of how to address the nationalist and populist challenge, defined in the present study in many ways, often having deep roots, and offering ad-hoc justifications. At this major turning point in history, probably the most significant one since the fall of the Soviet Union and the Cold War order, we have to redefine many elementary issues and problems, such as sovereignty, the role of the state in the international arena, marketization and commercialization, attitude to one’s own and foreign values, and even matters as simple and basic as solidarity, empathy and the ability to cooperate with others.

A partial and most certainly belated answer (as usual, one would like to add) to the growing challenges was proposed on 1 March 2017 by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in his special White Paper on the Future of Europe. The document contains the following five scenarios of the future of the EU: 1. ‘Carrying on’ (or not to change anything); 2. Do ‘nothing but the Single Market’ (i.e. return to the roots of integration and the FTA structure); 3. ‘Those who want more do more’ (which means: a multi-speed EU); 4. ‘Doing less more efficiently’ (i.e. the return

⁶¹ In the opinion of the *Politico* portal and journal: <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/politico-tak-umiera-europejska-demokracja/c9fpm1h> (last visited 27.12.2016).

to a hard core is probable) or 5. 'Doing much more together' (i.e. finalise the federation scenario).⁶²

Nobody, including the European Commission and the other institutions in Brussels, has any doubt that currently, towards the end of the second decade of the 21st century, we are dealing with a serious disease in Europe, and especially within the EU. The question is whether recovery can be achieved just by assembling a new Consilium, say, a new Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), and if by chance this body does not turn into another entity whose members will fight for the legacy of the previous one, which would of course mean a revolutionary, or counterrevolutionary – according to some – change in the continent. At least until the outbreak of the migration crisis in 2015, Brussels and European institutions clearly pursued a kind of 'ostrich policy': sweeping problems under the carpet, waiting and abstaining from action. Now, however, this policy will achieve nothing; it is simply counterproductive. The risks are too big and too serious to bury one's head in the sand.

On this wave of re-nationalisation, it is increasingly often said that we are 'returning to intergovernmentalism' based on national sovereignty,⁶³ which is not and does not necessarily have to be a bad thing in itself, provided that it will not cause the EU to disintegrate into nation states and atomize into small entities. As the latter scenario would naturally push it back to the role of a minor actor on the global stage, one unable to stand up to such giants as the United States and China or even the assertive Russia and the increasingly dynamic 'emerging markets', such as India or Turkey, the latter being so crucial in the European migration crisis.

The unique process of European integration has brought about a period of peaceful coexistence, unprecedented in the history of the European continent, which is a great value in itself. Excluding the three brutal Balkan Wars after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s or the local shocks and breakthroughs in individual states, mostly in the former Eastern Bloc (e.g.: in 1956, 1968 or 1981), the rest of Europe – as the founding fathers of European integration had intended – has not experienced war for more than seven decades. This is definitely the greatest value of the integration process, in addition to great prosperity and normative achievements, which are the products of this peace. This value is clearly more important

⁶² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-385_en.htm (last visited 12.03.2017). Comments in brackets from the Author of this text.

⁶³ What is symptomatic, in May 2016 the Eurosceptic-dominated Polish Parliament adopted a special resolution in defence of Poland's sovereignty: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/Sejm8.nsf/komunikat.xsp?documentId=CDCB6F44963B63E5C1257FB900579C69> (last visited 28.12.2016).

than any other currently applicable code of values – whether liberal or Christian nationalist – which is what the parties to the conflict seem to keep forgetting, lost in their ideological struggles with each other.

This leads us to the ‘second mortal sin of neglect’, which is the lack of proper efforts and effective action to develop a common European identity, strongly exposed to great trials by the huge influx of migrants and refugees who have different experiences, beliefs and faith. Again, like in the Middle Ages, Europe and the European Union became fragmented, as the attempts to build shared values among its societies have failed, even though terms such as solidarity and equality have been at the core of the EU’s values.⁶⁴

Let us keep in mind that, first, these values were not properly implemented in the EU Member States, and then, because they were not sufficiently embedded in the societies as well. Second, due to the activities of ever-growing populist and nationalist groups, those values were not applied - for obvious reasons - also to migrants and refugees. In result, while some, like UKIP politicians or Donald Trump in the United States, speak of economic and social factors as the basis of the threat to their identity, others, for example some groupings in the countries of the Visegrad Group, focus on religious and cultural factors. They are the ones who turned the mantra of **‘the economy above all’, commonly repeated in the past, into another: ‘security above all’.**

This line of thinking can lead to completely opposite future scenarios. ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ formula, as prescribed in the Gospels, seems to be at the moment less likely. It is rather on the contrary: ‘Give no quarter to the infidel’ prescription and the emergence of another Bulwark of Christianity (*Antemurale Christianitatis*), known in Central and Eastern Europe as an important political programme already back in the Renaissance in the context of the challenges originating from the Ottoman Empire that have quickly resurfaced.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, much seems to indicate that in the current context the second, less optimistic scenario is more likely. Within it, once again Turkey could play the leading role, but this time as a potential source of migrants and refugees and at the same time a state that has clearly tilted towards Islamisation and autocracy since the failed military coup attempt in mid-July 2016.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Z. Czachór, op.cit., p. 367.

⁶⁵ L. Hopp, *Az “antemurale” és “conformitas” humanista eszméje a magyar-lengyel hagyományban (Humanist Ideas of ‘Antemurale’ and ‘Conformitas’ in the Polish-Hungarian Tradition)*, Budapest 1992.

⁶⁶ B. Góralczyk, *Turcja Erdogana: islamizacja, autokracja i antyzachodni dryf (Erdogan’s Turkey: Islamisation, Autocracy and the Anti-Western Drift)*, Autumn 2016.

The debates initiated long ago and strengthened after the Brexit vote lead to different scenarios for the future. If nationalist forces win, **the attempts to build a federation may be replaced by a loose confederation.** It depends mainly on the most powerful EU member, Germany, whether or not its old idea of *differentiated or gradual integration* will return to the agenda, with Germany as the core country. It cannot be excluded that also the former French idea of *variable geometry* or *concentric circles* will be back on the agenda. In both cases, post-communist countries can easily fall out of the main group and fall to the second and even third league. It is worth taking this into consideration given that such scenarios and perhaps derivatives or variations thereof are more and more often seriously discussed among the European high society. A true battle for the future of the EU and thus the whole continent has begun.⁶⁷

Various options are being considered and different solutions are possible at this turning point for the EU. We can already see quite clearly that somewhat *à rebours* to Francis Fukuyama's optimistic predictions of the early 1990s and the moment of probably the greatest triumph of liberal democracy and the markets, the exact opposite has happened: history is back on the agenda – and let us hope it does not take too much of a toll on us.

Conclusions

The list of deficiencies, complaints or questions concerning the real existing EU is fairly long, and in the recent years, as a result of the challenges and crises described above, it has grown even longer, to an unprecedented scale. The original contested ideas have been joined by new threats and challenges. The claim that the EU was a project of the elites and that they have been attempting to build a supranational superstate, or a federation of sorts, with no clear social acceptance, is now accompanied by contestation of ultra-liberal values and free market economy as well as dissatisfaction with the tardiness and incompetence of the authorities in Brussels, with their technocratic governance and detachment from the society, called the 'democratic deficit'. All this, at least since 2005, has served as a basis for nationalist and populist groups, on which they have built their – unfortunately constantly growing – capital, eagerly taking advantage of the broad arsenal of Manichean divisions into 'Our Own' and 'Others', offering simple black-and-white solutions to the frustrated and dissatisfied electorate.

According to the analysis presented in this text, after 2005, for many reasons, the EU and the entire European continent saw the emergence of

⁶⁷ More on this subject: T.G. Grosse, *Can 'Differentiated Integration' Lead to a Federation in Europe?*, "Yearbook of Polish European Studies", Vol. 18/2015, pp. 15–38.

serious cracks and divisions, both along the North–South axis (mainly in economic and social matters) and, more recently, again along the East–West axis (because of ‘dependent development’⁶⁸ as well as aversion to strangers, fuelled by unprecedented migrant wave and later by some politicians). Another dangerous split that is currently reappearing is the one between the European centre and the periphery, as evidenced by the scenarios drawn up after the British referendum on Brexit, which often involve either a return to the ‘hard core’, i.e. to the original six members that initiated the process of European integration in the mid-1950s or – more likely – the euro area. Should this happen, we would have hard evidence that the plans of the founding fathers of European integration have failed and that many serious mistakes have been made in the process, starting with too far-reaching attempts to privatise economies and countries.

There is no doubt that the growth of populist movements was facilitated by the withdrawal of states from their social obligations to citizens. At first, therefore, the causes were internal, stemming either from the rejection of the proposal for a common Constitution or from excessive emphasis on market solutions, as highlighted by the crisis in the global markets, which, in turn, had come from the outside. Later, two other external challenges appeared: the security crisis and finally the migration crisis. Together, all these crises have led to an unprecedented amount of new challenges for the entire European integration project and generally put it into question, which is happening, in fact, for the first time since it was in fact initiated in the Treaties of Rome in March 1957. When this text is being written, the political climate is dominated by incertitude and lack of clarity and there is a real risk that the overlapping crises might develop a synergy, which would for the first time seriously shake the foundations of the integration process or even undermine it.

Thus, apart from the existing visions and strategies of further integration, for the first time we have to include the concepts and ideas of disintegration in our agenda (especially in the context of the ongoing Brexit procedure) and even take into consideration the risk of chaos. This is obviously not an optimistic scenario, but it is simply hard to present a different set of solutions given the present reality. What remains is to hope that all this together will not lead to a systemic and thus existential crisis. Whether it will be so or not, depends on the will, vision and strategy of

⁶⁸ The notion of ‘dependent development’ is not examined and analysed in this article but is of great significance, especially for Central and Eastern Europe. An excellent analysis can be found in K. Jasiołkowski, *Kapitalizm po polsku. Między modernizacją a peryferiami Unii Europejskiej* (Polish Capitalism. Between Modernisation and the Periphery of the European Union), Warszawa 2013.

pro-European politicians, who unfortunately, in recent years, have found themselves on the defensive and in retreat. It should therefore not be surprising that this study ends with one big question mark: Will they be able to change this unfavourable trend?

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