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CRISIS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE POLITICS OF INTEGRATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND DISSENT, 2008-2016

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ENGAGEMENT, AND DISSENT, 2008-2016

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

—————————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Social Sciences and Globalization

—————————————

by

Edward I.C. Reminiskey

June 2019

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Approved by:

Timothy Pytell, PhD, Committee Chair, History

Brian Janiskee, PhD, Committee Member, Political Science

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comprehensive interpretation of European political history in the periodization from 2008 to 2016. The history begins with an exploration of the intellectual and political origins of the post-World War II project of European integration and the development of, and opposition to, the early institutions that eventually formed the contemporary assemblage of the European Union. Following a traditionally structured history, this work is styled as a 'history of the present' that specifies the role of the European Union in precipitating and attempting to overcome the financial and monetary crises, foreign policy quandaries on its Eastern periphery, an unmanageable escalation in migration rates, and the materialization of Eurosceptic, populist, and anti-establishment political actors at European and national levels. The specific arrangement of this thesis intends to fulfill its ultimate purpose of identifying the dynamic circumstances that aided the outcome of the United Kingdom referendum to leave the European Union.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE:

THE CONVERGENCE OF POSTWAR EUROPE

The war that came to an end in 1945 was the costliest war in human history and dwarfed all previous military engagements. World War II took millions of lives and destroyed much of Europe's civilian infrastructure in less than six years – it was mostly a war of occupation; a civilian experience.[1] Despite the massive losses and widespread destruction, the war rearranged and transformed the international political order. Loosely speaking, the war represented an ideological battle between liberalism, communism, and fascism. The fascist element was buried at the end of World War II and seemingly overnight a hostile nuclear standoff developed between liberalism and communism, or the United States and Soviet Union. Thus, the year 1945 is only a relative watershed moment.[2] While half of Europe enjoyed a recovery unparalleled in human history, the other continued to suffer in the psychological, political, and economic chains of Soviet communism.

What was to come of Europe after the war? Nazi Germany and their collaborators wiped the European continent clean of the weak governments and political systems that existed in the interwar years. While World War I only had the significant consequence of ridding Europe of old dynastic empires, World

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1. Estimating the amount of lives lost is a difficult task due to the sheer scale of the conflict. Every major world power was involved, including their colonies and overseas possessions. In *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, Tony Judt gave the estimate for Europeans alone at 36.5 million lives, a "staggering" number as he stated it, even if conservative.
2. Tony Judt, "Nineteen Eighty-Nine: The End of Which European Era?" *Daedalus* 123, no. 3 (1994): 1-19.

War II and its aftermath directly displaced and reorganized entire populations of differing peoples.[3] Soviet 'resettlement' of the quite large German population outside of Germany was particularly the most brutal. The end of the war assisted in the implementation of the borders and nations that exist in the present day.

The Allied occupation of Germany positioned itself as the most substantial issue after the war and the most symbolic location of ground zero for the Cold War. Originally intended to suppress any attempt to reignite the war and to facilitate the process of denazification, the occupation became a point of contention not just between the occupiers and their respective zones but between the occupiers themselves – the United States, Britain, France, and Soviet Union. In what has been articulated first by German poet Hans Magnus Enzenberger and repeated later by British historian Tony Judt, a "collective amnesia" swept Europe.[4] It was obvious for the major powers that the new geopolitical situation was going to be a fight for influence in Central Europe. As 1945 drifted further away, the reconstruction and influence in Europe took priority over any repercussions for wartime grievances.

The most significant political figure in Germany of the postwar years was Konrad Adenauer, a former mayor of Cologne who was imprisoned several times during Nazi regime and after the war held a contemptuous attitude toward the continued occupation of Germany. He founded the Christian Democratic Union, a

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3. Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 92-130.
4. Judt, *Postwar*, 60-61.

political party that aimed to rebuild German politics after the war and restore

German sovereignty. By 1949, the Allied forces in the Western portion of

Germany (Americans, British, and French) had all withdrawn from their zones in

Germany except for the French protectorate in the Saar region.[5] Adenauer saw

that the path toward shedding the Nazi label for the newly established Federal

Republic of Germany (FRG) was cooperation and involvement in the

international arena. Balance of power defined the continent for centuries,

especially between France and Germany. Thus, from the perspective of

Adenauer, there was nothing to lose and everything to gain from fostering

positive relations with France and other European nations. Early in the postwar

years, Adenauer understood the need for a Franco-German rendezvous to

oppose the control of outside influencers.

Toward A Unified Europe

The concept of a unified continent is not unique to postwar Europe.

Empires have had their generous share of European history, first with the

incredible full extent of the Mediterranean society built by the Roman Empire in

late antiquity. The spread of Christianity by the Romans is noteworthy in and of

itself in subsequently unifying the peoples of Europe for hundreds of years, albeit

the with repeated schisms into religious denominations and holy domains.

Potentially the most ignored example among historians of European integration is

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5. The Saar protectorate was ceded to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1957.

the ambiguous Holy Roman Empire. Its system of imperial governance made it distinct from the rest of Europe. It bound itself together using a flexible legal structure and 'progressive fragmentation' of its complex hierarchy. Most importantly, the Empire was in part responsible for building the modern conception of Westphalian sovereignty.[6] It is no accident that a political invention like sovereignty emerged from the Thirty Years' War, the bloodiest armed conflict of the medieval era comparable to the two World Wars.[7] French general and statesman Charles de Gaulle himself referred to the 20th century skirmishes with the Germans as a second thirty-years' war, of course in his strict adherence to nationalist language (and at the same time participating in collective amnesia by failing to mention the existence of Vichy collaborators):

> The tragedy of the thirty-year war, which we have just won, has involved many adventures and saw many actors come and go. We French are among those who always remained on the stage and never changed sides. Circumstances may have compelled us to vary our tactics, sometimes in the light of the battlefields, sometimes in the night of the clandestine. But we only have one kind of veteran. Those of us who, in the past, attacked the Marne, the Yser, or the Vardar, differed in no wise from those who, yesterday, clung to the Somme, bent on Bir-Hakeim, took Rome, defended the Vercors or liberated Alsace. The painful victims of the martyred villages of the valley of Saulx fell for the same cause as the glorious soldiers buried at Douaumont. What would have been the character and outcome of this war if, from the first to the last day, she had been French at the same time as worldly? What would peace be tomorrow if it were not to be the peace of France as well as that of others?[8]

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6. Peter H. Wilson. "The First European Union," *History Today* 66, no. 4 (2016): 10-19.
7. See this perspective on World War I and II in Michael Howard's "A Thirty Years' War?" and Ian Kershaw's "Europe's Second Thirty Years War."
8. Charles de Gaulle, Speech at Bar-le-Duc, 28 July 1946, Digithèque de Matériaux Juridiques et Politiques, University of Perpignan.

De Gaulle's resentment toward the Germans defined most of that speech. Not long after the war, de Gaulle's sentiments were never fully realized in postwar politics, but he will surface as a key figure in restraining the lofty goals of the European project in the 1960s. Nevertheless, European affairs (in the West, at the very least) differed significantly from the past in that building the economy took priority over punishing the losers of war. The French found it more important to revive its industries and remain as a key player in postwar international affairs – which also happened to interact with the postwar goals of the Germans. The Americans, in conjunction with the British, desired to maintain a strong and economically prosperous Western Europe backed by the safety guarantees of NATO.

One modern-day conception of European integration came immediately after World War I by means of the Paneuropean Union association. Established in 1923 and led by its President, Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi, its stated goal was to advocate for a liberal and democratic European state. The loose association of intellectuals, artists, and other public figures of the time gave support for this idealist vision during the interwar years. These sentiments were written in Kalergi's manifesto, aptly titled *Pan-Europe*.[9] This movement was temporarily stalled by the rise of Hitler and Stalin, and as the continent focused more on the economic turmoil caused by the Great Depression. Hitler banned the organization in Germany and most intellectuals dropped their support in favor of

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9. Richard Nicolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1926).

the Soviet Union. While this organization held a minor status after World War II, many of its vague, primitive concepts were incorporated into the foundation of the Council of Europe in 1949.[10]

European associations advocating for unity, or at the very least against war, came and went in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the most noteworthy of these came in Mussolini's Italy with the founding of the *Movimento Federalista Europeo* (MFE, translated as European Federalist Movement) by Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi, and Eugenio Colormi. The historically interesting Ventotene Manifesto, named after the prison island they were being held for political reasons, was crudely drafted in 1941 by these three men.[11] After the overthrow of Mussolini in 1943, they were released and continued their federalist activism within the ranks of the *Resistenza*. Rossi and Colormi were killed by the Nazis in 1944, leaving Spinelli to be the most prominent federalist voice remaining from the group. Spinelli worked as a campaigner for European federalism after World War II, often interacting with *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC, translated as Christian Democracy) led by Alcide de Gasperi.[12] Spinelli, a former communist, believed that only integration of

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10. The present-day organization has a website with information on their history and present-day activities. Last accessed December 20, 2018 at: http://www.international-paneuropean-union.eu
11. Charles F. Delzell, "The European Federalist Movement in Italy: First Phase, 1918-1947," *Journal of Modern History 32*, no. 3 (1960): 243.
12. Many of the founders and advocates of European integration among the likes of de Gasperi and Adenauer were Christian Democrats. This group of political parties that emerged after World War II reconciled differences between Catholics and Protestants as well as ideological differences between the left and right. Christian Democrats were responsible for establishing prosperous social market economies in postwar Europe.

European defense and the economy in a federal structure would be able to stave off the intrusion of Stalin and his communist allies. While the spirit of his ideas was incorporated into the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and European Economic Community (EEC), his desires of full-fledged federalism, including defense and political communities and common currency, would not be realized in his lifetime.

These movements were not powerful in the sense that they had a huge hand in the actual execution of integration – they were only idealists at best. While their ideas did not fall on deaf ears, the trajectory of European integration was completely open-ended for much of the twentieth century. There was certainly a sense of urgency to do something to take control of European affairs, but in the end it never fully realized itself and the noticeable impacts were insignificant. However, in broader terms the end of World War II signaled the beginning of a renaissance of international affairs; a permanent fixation on striving for international dialogue that had failed during the interwar period. It was under these conditions that the Frenchmen Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman were able to make an effective case to establish the ECSC.

Building the Community and Early Eurosceptics

Arguably the most influential document on European integration transmitted in the postwar years was the Schuman Declaration, written jointly by French foreign minister Robert Schuman and political advisor Jean Monnet. It was finalized on 9 May 1950 and was presented to the Council of Europe later

that year. It called for the formation of a "cartel" that controlled coal and steel

industries between France, Germany, and other members under a supranational

"High Authority."[13] The integration of these industries directly removed the

incentives for Germany and France to outproduce one another and compete the

manner prevalent throughout the prewar years. Schuman and Monnet stated

their desire to finally resolve Franco-German militarism:

> The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of
> the age-old opposition of France and Germany. Any action taken must in
> the first place concern these two countries.[14]

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) emerged as the first

step of European integration. The ECSC consisted of France, Germany, Italy,

and the Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg). It was a key

moment, but only symbolic and is dwarfed in comparison to the scope and size of

the European Union that exists in the twenty-first century. However, the wish of

the idealists of the time was that integration in one area would eventually need to

spill over into other areas.[15] Then came the proposed European Defence

Community (EDC), an attempt to integrate militaries in the same way coal and

steel were regulated under the ECSC. However, this was very much at odds with

the mission of NATO and the enormous influence of the United States and

United Kingdom in European defense – a fact that sustains until the present day.

Subsequently, the EDC failed to materialize when the treaty was rejected by

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13. Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, Schuman Declaration, 9 May 1950, European Union.
14. Schuman and Monnet, Schuman Declaration, 1950.
15. See spillover in Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, (London: Stevens, 1958).

France, who at the time was still attempting to hold onto its overseas empire, keep its republic intact, and keep the FRG in check. Thus, in 1957 the original six gathered once again to establish the European Economic Community (EEC). The EEC was the vehicle for integration, not integration in and of itself. While the EEC did establish a customs union and common market, it only *proposed* the development of policy specifics. Herein lies the major problem for integration for decades to come: nation-states and their own interests conflicting with each other on top of their battle with technocrats and their schemes.

A common portrayal for the origins of Euroscepticism is that it began with Margaret Thatcher, which will be included later in this chapter. However, it is reasonable to suggest that Euroscepticism began before the time of Thatcher via Charles de Gaulle during his tenure as President of France in the 1960s. De Gaulle continuously ran against the supranational goals of the EEC, an institution in which he had very little involvement in its establishment. The 1966 'empty chair' quandary and the subsequent concessions given to de Gaulle are exemplary of his mission to rein in the powers of the European institutions and assert French interests. De Gaulle rejected, once in 1963 and again in 1967, the accession of the United Kingdom to the EEC on the grounds that they were incompatible with the continental economy:

> England in effect is insular, she is maritime, she is linked through her exchanges, her markets, her supply lines to the most diverse and often the most distant countries; she pursues essentially industrial and

commercial activities, and only slight agricultural ones. She has in all her doings very marked and very original habits and traditions.[16]

De Gaulle believed that by bringing the United Kingdom into the EEC, it would create an imbalance too large to correct, especially in the sensitive and contentiously settled Common Agricultural Policy. Also key in his opposition was his skepticism of the Atlanticism between the UK and the United States – a side-effect of the Cold War geopolitical realities. The inclusion of the British would eventually lead to complications when negotiating a future treaty on defense cooperation. Nevertheless, de Gaulle's type of opposition is significant because many British Eurosceptics reutilized his same arguments to leave in the 2016 referendum campaign. Nigel Farage, the most widely known British Eurosceptic since Thatcher, stated this quite well in the days before the referendum vote:

> As an independent country we would be free to cooperate and trade with our European neighbours whilst re-engaging with the wider world including our kith and kin in the Commonwealth.[17]

It should be noted that up to this point, European integration in reality consisted of just intergovernmental cooperation and strictly economic integration. Despite the varied viewpoints of its participants, this imperfect solution is what was manifested within the unique postwar and geopolitical situation. The mixed and rough road to establish *any* cooperation was unquestionably difficult to navigate politically. To the credit of the Europeans, it was an immense hurdle to

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16. "Press Conference held by General de Gaulle, 14 January 1963," *Western European Union Assembly-General Affairs Committee: A Retrospective View of the Political Year in Europe* 1963, (Paris: Western European Union Assembly-General Affairs Committee, 1964), 20-22.
17. Nigel Farage, "Why you should vote for Brexit this Thursday," *The Independent*, last modified 20 June 2016.

overcome and no reasonable scholar would suggest that *any* integration was going to be a politically convenient process. This is the major takeaway from the 1950s and 1960s – the project was and will continue to be a *political* project although originally advertising itself as being an *economic* one. As Schuman and Monnet stated in their declaration, the beginning of European solidarity was with France and Germany. There was no widespread support for a shared, common trajectory from that origin, as seen in the nationalist posture from de Gaulle. This will be important later in the twentieth century as enlargement and a more political union takes center stage amid the collapse of the Cold War geopolitical order.

Maastricht and 'Euro-phoria'

Heading into the late 1980s, much of western Europe was integrated into the European Communities (EC) – the EEC, EURATOM, and ECSC.[18] The United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland joined in 1973. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. The geographic groupings of these three enlargements is not just a coincidence – EU enlargement hinged upon regions and governmental change. If Country A who relied on trade from a nearby Country B joined, it is in the interest of Country B to join. On the other hand, accession to the EC became a goal if a country shed itself of its past, whether it be the British ending its empire after the Suez debacle or the end of the Franco

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18. EURATOM, or the European Atomic Energy Community, was integration of nuclear energy, a product of settling Cold War insecurities about controlling nuclear materials.

regime in Spain. The EC signified humanism and socio-economic progress. The enlargement agenda that began in the 1970s changed the dynamics of European integration. Rather than being a French-German project of intercontinental conflict avoidance based upon economic multilateralism, the EC became the 'endgame' for many countries on the outside. While the enlargement program was taking place, a new endeavor to expand integration into new spheres commenced.

Near the later years of his life, then-elected MEP Altiero Spinelli drafted several reports in the mid-1980s that encouraged a new treaty to reignite the bid for increased political integration. Finally, Spinelli's draft for a new treaty was adopted by the European Parliament.[19] This move inspired the European Council to relaunch the integration project. The Fontainebleau meetings led to the creation and ratification of the Single European Act in 1986.[20] This amending treaty proposed European exploration into integration of new areas, including a common foreign policy and common currency.[21] This renewed interest in the late 1980s is the most significant and concrete contribution by Spinelli, despite his long record of advocacy for European unity.

The passage of the Single European Act in 1986 also sparked a parallel vision for Europe that ran against centralization in Brussels and against more

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19. Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union, Bulletin of the European Communities, Office for the Publications of the European Communities, 14 February 1984.
20. Conclusions of Fontainebleau European Council, Bulletin of the European Communities, Office for the Publications of the European Communities, 24 and 25 June 1984.
21. "Single European Act," *Official Journal of the European Communities* 169, EUR-Lex, 29 June 1987.

transferal of sovereignty. The undercurrents of twenty-first century and

mainstreamed Euroscepticism initiated in the United Kingdom in the 1980s.

When contemporary media pundits, academia, and naïve, inept observers of

British politics are surprised about the degree of Euroscepticism and distrust of

European institutions, they fail to look at the longer history of evidence that would

support the opposite of that view. While de Gaulle was concerned with British

incompatibility with continental Europe, Margaret Thatcher expressed the very

opposite position, specifically European incompatibility with Britain, in her later

years as Prime Minister. Aside from her legacy of neoliberal reforms to the British

economy, Thatcher's major legacy was warning about increased levels of

integration directed from Brussels, based on principles of supranationalism.[22]

This position on Europe was nuanced – she explicitly stated that Britain must

have a place in political, economic, and cultural Europe, but it does not have a

place in an "institutional" Europe. In possibly the most famous except from this

speech, she articulated the language that would become recurring among future

Eurosceptics:

> Europe is not the creation of the Treaty of Rome. Nor is the European idea
> the property of any group or institution... ...We have not successfully rolled
> back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a
> European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance
> from Brussels.[23]

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22. Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the College of Europe in Bruges, 20 September 1988,
Margaret Thatcher Foundation.
23. Thatcher, Speech to the College of Europe in Bruges, 1988.

The Treaty of Maastricht, ratified in 1992 and put into effect the following year, had little to do with economic integration. It had much more to do with the 'making' of Europe – a 'forward' looking Europe. This was the first time the European Union was referred to as such in an official capacity, a name change that signaled increased consolidation. The three existing organs, the ECSC, EEC, and EURATOM, fell under one 'European Community' and became coordinated with newly established bodies on justice affairs and foreign policy.[24] The European Union consisted of these three pillars, with the latter two maintaining an intergovernmental purpose. The most important features of Maastricht were the creation of European citizenship and procurement of the specific requirements for a common currency.[25]

The political reaction to Maastricht allows a more historical understanding of the treaty than the actual provisions of the treaty. The treaty was only marginally ratified in a French referendum and barely rejected in a Danish referendum. While the French government of Francois Mitterrand accepted this result, Denmark conducted a winning second referendum with several opt-outs. Maastricht served as a turning point. The integration agenda began to be marketed to the European voter as an attempt to democratize major alterations to the project. From 1992 to present, more referendums on the European Union

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24. In listing each founding 'capital' of the project, Tony Judt categorized Maastricht as where future decisions of the "thing" were negotiated – a jab at the increasingly decentralized appearance of European institutions. See Tony Judt, *A Grand Illusion?: An Essay on Europe*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 109-110.
25. "Treaty on European Union, signed at Maastricht on 7 February 1992," *Official Journal of the European Communities* 191, Vol. 35, EUR-Lex, 29 July 1992.

were conducted than in all previous years, even when excluding membership

referendums. Despite this, there still existed a democratic deficit – a

characterization that has been a popular focus of social scientists. Election after

election to the European Parliament and as more member countries joined,

abysmally low turnout among the whole of European citizens persisted well into

the new millennium.

Table 1. Overall Turnout in European Parliament Elections, 1979-2014[26]

1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
61.99%	58.98%	58.41%	56.67%	49.51%	45.47%	42.97%	42.61%

Failure to increase the powers of the European Parliament only compounded the

issue. The amplest of opportunities was squandered during negotiations for the

Amsterdam Treaty of 1999 – which ironically focused partly on easing potential

enlargement into the former satellites of the Soviet Union. Many of these member

countries have among the lowest turnout in European Parliament elections. It is

unclear if overall turnout will continue to hover where it has been for the past two

decades. However, what has become evident is that the European Union must

work to improve turnout in its elections if it wishes to hold itself to a high standard

of democratic legitimacy. The European elections since the new millennium have

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26. "Turnout, Results of the 2014 European Parliament Elections," European Parliament, 2014.

interestingly become ripe ground for hardline Eurosceptics to gain power and media attention.

The introduction of the Euro currency in 2002 was perhaps the biggest moment of the European project since its beginning in the 1950s. It was all but a dream among the European visionaries of the immediate postwar years. However, as what will be described in the following chapter, it has also become the most problematic element of the project, especially in recent years. While on paper a unified monetary union was supposed to stimulate a European identity among its members, this has never materialized. The Eurozone crisis that formed because of the overall declination of the global financial outlook tested the promises of European integration. Echoing the sentiments of historian Timothy Garton Ash, if one lucky person was to freeze themselves early 2005, they would be complacent with the state of the European Union.[27] His 'Euro-phoria' was unequivocally true *for that time*, but history is never linear and has never reliably operated in that manner.[28] History is a dynamic and volatile process that unfolds every second and every minute of every day. Likely the most overused example for this type of error is how the September 11 attacks and subsequent War on Terror humiliated Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis.[29] The era of

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27. Timothy Garton Ash, "Is Europe Disintegrating*?" New York Review of Books* 64, No. 1 (2017).
28. The term 'Euro-phoria' is borrowed from economist Joseph Stiglitz's use of the term 'Euro-euphoria' to describe people's perception Euro-led prosperity after 2002. See in Joseph Stiglitz, *The Euro: How A Common Currency Threatens the Future of Europe*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 114.
29. Fukuyama's thesis has been brutally maimed since its publication but remains as a perennial example of ahistorical thinking. See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, No. 16 (1989): 3-18.

European history that has taken place since 2008 works on this same presupposition – at the time of this thesis' publication, the European Union is not a closer union. Integration has stalled significantly despite the successes of the twentieth century. Therefore, this thesis begins with the first episode - the global financial crisis in the European Union.

CHAPTER TWO:

ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The beginning of the Global Economic Crisis was triggered by the burst of a seriously inflated housing and subprime mortgage bubble in the United States. Loose credit and deregulation allowed unqualified borrowers to purchase homes at inflated prices, many times for the sole purpose of flipping them and cashing in on the rising equity. This model of artificial economic expansion was repeated in many areas of the world, but in Europe it was primarily confined to countries such as Ireland and Spain. In the high velocity globalized world economy of the twenty-first century, contractionary business cycles and a loss of confidence in markets spread like wildfire within a short period of time. The crisis in 2008, and the years following, is further evidence that the world economy is being shaped by the forces of globalization.

This chapter intends to accomplish three tasks. The first is an exploration of why a crisis as dreadful as the one in 2008 would cause the Eurozone to fall into dysfunction. The fundamentals of the institutions that created the Euro are arguably the most responsible for the currency's failure. Secondly, it is important to understand the numbers of the crisis itself, if only to demonstrate how austerity measures did nothing to assist the recovery of the Eurozone's struggling members. Finally, this chapter begins a crucial discussion on the political shifts in Germany: a Eurozone member that emerged from the economic crisis both economically successful and more powerful in the European Union. These shifts

were almost entirely prompted by the Eurozone crisis, as opposed to the long-term trends that have already existed in European politics for decades.

Constructing the Euro in a Divergent Eurozone

Economic divisions have historically defined the European continent, typically standing alongside more essential divisions in ethnic makeup, culture, language, and governance. One can start in the North-South divide, where the Northern countries of Europe have generally been better off than their Southern counterparts. The East-West divide is perhaps the most recent economic division in memory, dividing the free market democracies from the authoritarian centrally planned satellites of the Soviet Union. This is also quite misleading, as the East was always historically distinct from the West.[30] Within nation-states themselves, there have unquestionably existed divisions between industrial-commercial centers, the "super-regions" of Europe, and the rest of the country – often outperforming political capitals. Catalonia is likely the most extreme example of economic "self-sufficiency," often intersecting with long-held feelings of linguistic and cultural nationalisms.[31] Since the economic downturn and political crisis in Spain, it was reasonable that advocacy for more autonomy or outright independence from Madrid intensified. In Catalonia and similar regions of Europe, it is common for independence to mean liberation from what separatists

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30. Referenced by Tony Judt in *A Grand Illusion?* on page 127, Larry Wolff argued that the East-West divides in the Cold War significantly predate 1945. See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford: 1995).
31. Judt, *A Grand Illusion?*, 112.

view as the outdated nation-state and entrance into the sphere of "Europe."[32]

This was the environment that the Euro was constructed within, and only

scratches the surface why the Euro was likely to fail upon its introduction.

In establishing the Euro, its founding visionaries did not fully think through

the potential negative, unexpected consequences of implementing a common

currency. Of course, there are infinite valuable qualities to having the same

currency across borders. The most obvious purpose is for travel through and

relocating between countries. If a European wanted to take an extended road trip

within the entire Eurozone, which at the time of its establishment included

Schengen rules, that traveler would not have to juggle national currencies. See

Table 2 for the list of currencies that ceased to exist following each Eurozone

member's adoption of the Euro. This does not include microstates and other

countries that use the Euro outside the Eurozone.

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32. Unlike the unsuccessful attempts made by Catalans over the years to gain more autonomy (and in 2017, to unsuccessfully declare independence), Scotland held a legitimate independence referendum in 2014. It was struck down by the "No" vote, but what was profound were the arguments made by the "Yes" voters. Those voting on the Yes side were anti-Unionist – but Pro-European, seeing themselves as more European than a part of Britain. An independent Scotland would have had to reapply for EU membership – and gain approval from all 28 EU members, including Spain.

Table 2. Eurozone Members and Their Former National Currencies.[33]

Country	Currency	Year Ended[a]
Austria	Austrian schilling	2002
Belgium	Belgian franc	2002
Cyprus	Cypriot pound	2008
Estonia	Estonian kroon	2011
Finland	Finnish markka	2002
France	French franc	2002
Germany	German mark	2002
Greece	Greek drachma	2002
Ireland	Irish pound	2002
Italy	Italian lira	2002
Latvia	Latvian lats	2014
Lithuania	Lithuanian litas	2015
Luxembourg	Luxembourgish franc	2002
Malta	Maltese lira	2008
Netherlands	Dutch guilder	2002
Portugal	Portuguese escudo	2002
Slovakia	Slovak koruna	2009
Slovenia	Slovenian tolar	2007
Spain	Spanish peseta	2002

a. Physical cash ended.

As Table 2 may suggest upon initial glance, the Eurozone is not an 'ordinary' monetary union, but an enormous area that extends over a diverse and large population of Europeans, each with differing national economies, histories, and cultures. Herein lies the first obstacle to the Euro. While it may have expedited travel and business between members, any feelings of unity between Europeans, a desire of the currency's founders, was not immediately realized nor was guaranteed to occur. A comparison to the United States illustrates this point

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[33] "Joining the Euro Area," European Central Bank, last accessed 15 January 2019.

best.[34] The Europeans, as much as they distrust the Americans, naïvely compare themselves to the United States, which uses a single currency. This is unwise for several reasons, but the most important is the unavoidable fact that the United States has a common national heritage and culture that is more concrete and unified than that of most European countries, regardless of where one might live. For this reason, an American moving from state to state will have a much easier time doing so – and if for economic reasons no reasonable American would have much concern. New arrivals in another state would certainly be welcomed and it would never have a net negative impact on the United States national economy.[35] Replay this scenario in the Eurozone, where say, young educated Italians are leaving a recessionary Italy for economic opportunity elsewhere – which did happen across the Mediterranean.[36] Not only would Italians still living in Italy have concern, but there is no assurance that an Italian will seamlessly establish themselves in another country or sense that they are "welcomed" by the culture or native born citizenry in that country. This scenario does not suggest a common experience or that efficient movement within Europe is outright impossible, but it should have been something for the founders to consider *alongside* the positive benefits of a common currency. In 1999, the incoming

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[34] Stiglitz, *The Euro*, 89-92.

35. Stiglitz uses a comparison of movement between a rural, underpopulated state like South Dakota and an urban, overpopulated state like California to make this point.

36. Lafleur, Jean-Michel, Mikolaj Stanek, and Alberto Veira, "South-North Labour Migration Within the Crisis-Affected European Union: New Patterns, New Contexts and New Challenges," in *South-North Migration of EU Citizens in Times of Crisis*, ed. Jean-Michel Lafleur and Mikolaj Stanek, (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017).

European Commission headed by Romano Prodi recognized this as something

not yet reached – a common European identity did not exist despite having the

most amount of integration the project has seen in its lifespan:

> We come from different countries. We speak different languages. We have different historical and cultural traditions. And we must preserve them. But we are seeking a shared identity – a new European soul.[37]

Referring to the previous discussion on the developments in European

politics during the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of multi-speed integration has

had an enormous impact on the cohesiveness of the European Union. Like the

adoption of the Schengen Treaty, not every EU member adopted the Euro

currency. Denmark and the United Kingdom opted out of the Euro during the

negotiation and ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty.[38] The United

Kingdom is the extreme case, being one of the largest economies within the EU.

Following the crash of the pound on Black Wednesday, the pound was pulled out

of the Exchange Rate Mechanism after only two years of membership.[39] The

economic turbulence of the early 1990s paved the way for a landslide result by

"New Labour" in the 1997 general election. Without adopting the Euro, the United

Kingdom experienced significant growth in their economy until the 2008 crash.

While the United Kingdom had difficulty due to economic confidence, the Danish

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37. Romano Prodi, Speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, 14 September 1999, European Commission Press Release Database.
38. Denmark received opt-outs after the No vote won a referendum in 1990. Another referendum was conducted in 1993 to approve the Maastricht Treaty including the opt-outs, with the Yes vote winning.
39. Larry Elliott, Will Hutton and Julie Wolf, "Pound drops out of ERM," *The Guardian*, 17 September 1992.

government had difficulty receiving popular support under the ardently pro-EU government of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen. The 2000 Danish referendum on joining the Euro resulted in a "No" vote; however, the Danish krone is still a member of the ERM. Debates on the EU and determining on entering the Eurozone continued to dominate Danish politics well into the 2000s and 2010s.

If it wasn't multi-speed integration that would hinder monetary union, it would be the design of the institutions themselves. The European Central Bank (ECB) has a significant flaw. It pays careful attention on price stability but maintains an ambiguous policy attentive to full employment. This is crucial in understanding why such a crisis that happened in 2008 and the years following would cause major suffering within the Eurozone. Its leading and *only* mandate is price stability, or inflation.[40] This is perhaps due to the focus on currency valuations leading up to the issuance of the Euro. Alternatively, it could be that heavy German influence on the founding of the ECB prioritized controlling inflation. Germany has had a fixation on inflation since Weimar-era hyperinflation. Also worth mentioning was the selected location of the ECB headquarters in Frankfurt. The ECB does have a mandate to control inflation, but most importantly lacks any other mandates such as full employment and economic stability. For example, in the United States the Federal Reserve was given a

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40. "On the Statute of the European System of Central Banks and of the European Central Bank," *Official Journal of the European Union* C202 (2016): 231.

mandate for full employment in 1946. Recently, they were handed an additional

mandate for economic growth following the Great Recession.[41]

The lack of a multi-dimensional and flexible agenda in the ECB screams

neoliberalism. The ECB is unique in that its founding took place after the rise of

neoliberal philosophy in economics, compared to the establishment of other

major central banks. The ECB accepted that it had social responsibility, but is

completely self-defeating in its sole reliance on using its mandate on price

stability to generate recovery and growth in the event of a severe catastrophe.

Compare this again to the United States Federal Reserve System, where it has a

dual mandate for both price stability and employment. While the actions of the

Federal Reserve might be divisive to some economists, it is beyond question that

it had a much better toolbox than the Europeans to deal with the crisis after

2008.[42] No such anticipation or preparation for an economic crisis was taken in

the Eurozone. Perhaps the Euro-phoria of the early 2000s was enough to squash

concerns. Nevertheless, the complete faith in the Euro currency, and more

broadly the market, underlines the governing philosophy of ECB officials.

Neoliberalism defined the ECB; thus, it would use neoliberal procedures to

correct the failures of its members. This will be discussed in the following section

in relation to the failures in the Greek government and economy after 2008.

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41. Stiglitz, *The Euro*, 146-148.
42. Stiglitz, *The Euro*, 157-163.

The ECB is also unique in that it is a standalone institution of the European Union. As discussed in Chapter One, the EU is an institution based upon integration and cooperation of specific functions previously under control of competing nation-states: one of the last major functions of EU members that was never integrated was social welfare. Therefore, there was a situation from the introduction of the Euro in 2002 onward where a Eurozone member used a common currency for taxation and government spending, but had no say about the spending behaviors of other members. The issue of economic integration outpacing political and fiscal integration is possibly the long-term issue at hand in the Eurozone.[43] This became a problem following the 2008 crisis for countries that were already spending well above their limits during the period of growth preceding the downturn. Ground-zero for this crisis was the Mediterranean, with the most notable Eurozone member, Greece. The following section of this chapter explains the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone with a specific focus on the Greek Depression.

Southern Europe and the Greek Depression

The global financial crisis affected every European country, European Union member or not; Eurozone member or not. It showed the amount of globalization that had taken place just on the regional scale. Economic integration was advertised as a converging force, where the nations of Europe

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43. Stiglitz, *The Euro*, 51-53.

would have unified economies. However, the opposite was the case and has always been the case. For instance, there is no evidence that in the near future the Mediterranean can operate economically on the same level as the Northern countries. As shown in the previous section of this chapter, GDP varied not just between countries, but within certain countries. The global financial crisis aggravated these disparities and led to true divergence in the Eurozone, a monetary union founded on the basis that a common currency would uplift the lesser economies of its members.
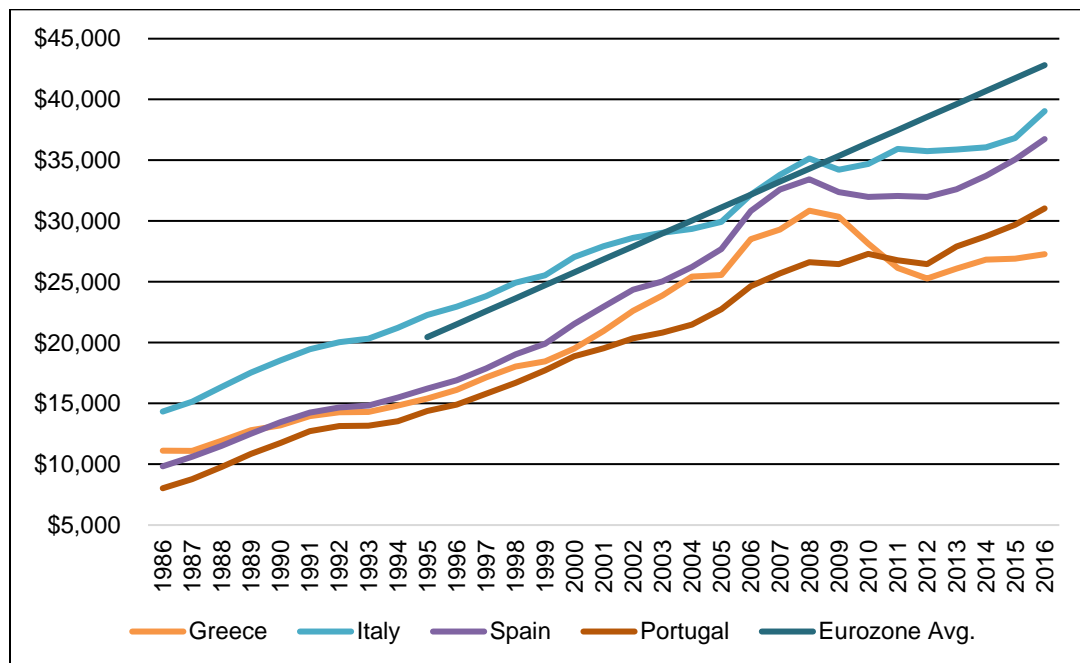

Figure 1. GDP Per Capita, Stated in United States Dollars for Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the Eurozone, 1986-2016[44]

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44. "Gross domestic product (GDP), Total, US dollars/capita 1986-2016," OECD Data, last accessed Feb 10, 2019.

Figure 1 shows this crucial point by looking at the historical trends of GDP in the Eurozone, compared to the Mediterranean. The global financial crisis was inevitable; however, it seems to be clear that being a member of the Eurozone did not help, but rather hurt the economic recovery of the Mediterranean. It was at this point these countries broke away from long term GDP growth trends.

The global financial crisis hit Greece the hardest out of any European country. Foreign direct investments that had inflated the Greek economy to unsustainable levels in the early-mid 2000s ceased to come to the aid the country in 2009. Combine this major impact on the Greek economy with an unreliable tax collection system and bloated government spending on salaries and pensions. See Figure 4 on government debt-to-GDP ratios for Greece, in addition to Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Most importantly, Greece was not under their own currency anymore, but the Euro. The Greek government came to a point where they could not raise the funds necessary to sustain their deficits. Investors were not confident in lending money to the Greek government, even at extremely high bond interest rates. This is on top of increased demand for government spending to offset the rise in unemployment. In late 2009, credit rating agencies S&P and Fitch downgraded Greece's credit rating from A- to BBB+ for the first time in about a decade.[45] Their credit rating would eventually

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45. Helena Smith and Ashley Seager, "Financial markets tumble after Fitch downgrades Greece's credit rating," *The Guardian*, last modified 8 December 2009.

be reduced to a C, or near-default, in 2011 and 2012.[46] Confidence in the Greek

government and governments across the Eurozone plummeted.

The European Union and Eurozone members came to an agreement to

set up a safety net to assist several struggling countries that were under the

pressure of the global financial crisis, including Greece. The European Financial

Stability Mechanism (EFSM) and European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF)

and were established by the European Commission and Council of the European

Union in May and June 2010.[47] Under the EFSF specifically, a pool of funds

accumulated from Eurozone member contributions would be used to make

bailout loans. Some were exempt from supplying to the fund (see Table 3).

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46. "Greece – Credit Rating, 1999 to 2018," *Trading Economics*, last accessed February 3, 2019.
47. "EFSF Framework Agreement, Consolidated Version," European Stability Mechanism, 19 October 2011, 1-41.

Table 3. List of Guarantor Euro-Area Member States with Their Respective Guarantee Commitments, European Financial Stability Facility, 2011[48]

Country	Commitments (Millions in €)	% of Total
Germany	211,045.90	27.06%
France	158,487.53	20.32%
Italy	139,267.81	17.86%
Spain	92,543.56	11.87%
Netherlands	44,446.32	5.70%
Belgium	27,031.99	3.47%
Greece[a]	21,897.74	2.81%
Austria	21,639.19	2.76%
Portugal[a]	19,507.26	2.50%
Finland	13,974.03	1.79%
Ireland[a]	12,378.15	1.59%
Slovakia	7,727.57	0.99%
Slovenia	3,664.30	0.46%
Estonia	1,994.86	0.26%
Luxembourg	1,946.94	0.25%
Cyprus	1,525.68	0.20%
Malta	704.33	0.09%

a. Greece, Ireland, and Portugal are "Stepping-Out Guarantors," meaning that they are not obliged to contribute funds to the EFSF.

The most important point to understand about the EFSM and EFSF is that they were *intergovernmental* as opposed to *federal*. National governments and the executive politicians at the European Union assumed sole responsibility for entering and implementing the safety net – not the European Parliament, nor the peoples of the European Union. European federalism and the hope of a democratic, unified Europe perished. Referring to the EFSF pool, accumulated

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48. "EFSF Framework Agreement," European Stability Mechanism, 19 October 2011, 38.

funds were used to bail out Greece, Ireland, and Portugal, hence why they were not obligated to provide funds. On the other hand, better-off Eurozone members, primarily Germany, shouldered most of the burden. This led to the perception that Germany was steering the Euro ship, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the helm. On paper this was not necessarily true, but the consensus at the time among the media, some politicians, and general European public was that German influence on bailouts was more substantial than what appeared on the surface. German economic growth and trade surpluses in the decade following the economic downturn emphasizes the credence of this perception.

With the establishment of the EFSM and EFSF, entering onto the stage were the Troika group. Consisting of the European Commission, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Central Bank (ECB), the Troika were the negotiators responsible for handing bailouts to national governments in financial crisis. As discussed previously in this chapter, the ECB is an institution characterized by inflexibility and neoliberalism. The IMF was no stranger to neoliberalism either. The IMF was responsible for bailing out several countries globally, with the most notable example in Argentina and their depression at the turn of the millennium.[49] The typical case for a bailout program was that there were strings attached to the loans, otherwise known as "conditionality." Bailout money was withheld until implementation of specific measures, with the most

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49. Joseph Stiglitz wrote an extensive critique of neoliberal-driven globalization, observing the actions of the IMF and other international institutions. See Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

destructive usually being reducing government spending, known as austerity.

These conditions would be applied in the case of bailing out Eurozone members

under the EFSF rules.

The Troika were responsible for administering two bailout programs to

Greece.[50] The first came in May 2010 under the Panhellenic Socialist Movement

(PASOK) government headed by George Papandreou, son of former Greek

prime minister Andreas Papandreou.[51] The bailout package consisted of €110

billion Euro. Following the implementation of austerity as required by the 2010

bailout, popularity of his government plummeted and animosity toward the Troika

skyrocketed. The 2010 bailout marked the beginning of the anti-austerity

movement in Greece. In order to shore up public support and show the Troika

that the bailout would be "owned" by the country, Papandreou promised a

referendum on the bailout package. This went against the wishes of the Troika

and subsequently, no such referendum was held, leading to more resentment

among the people.[52] Members of Papandreou's own party began openly revolting

against his leadership, leading to his resignation in late 2011. The year 2011

marked the worst year of the Greek Depression, as it was referred to as from

then on, with an extraordinary 9.13% decline in GDP growth (see Figure 4). 2011

was also the most violent year in anti-austerity riots and protests. With

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50. The Troika also handed out bailout programs to Ireland and Portugal under the EFSF (2010-2012).
51. "Statement by the Eurogroup," European Council and Council of the European Union, Brussels, 2 May 2010.
52. Helena Smith and David Gow, "Papandreou scraps Greek referendum as open warfare erupts in his party," *The Guardian*, last modified 3 November 2011.

Papandreou finally ousted from his post, a technocratic government was

established not long afterwards with the express purpose of implementing the

conditions of future bailout programs.[53]
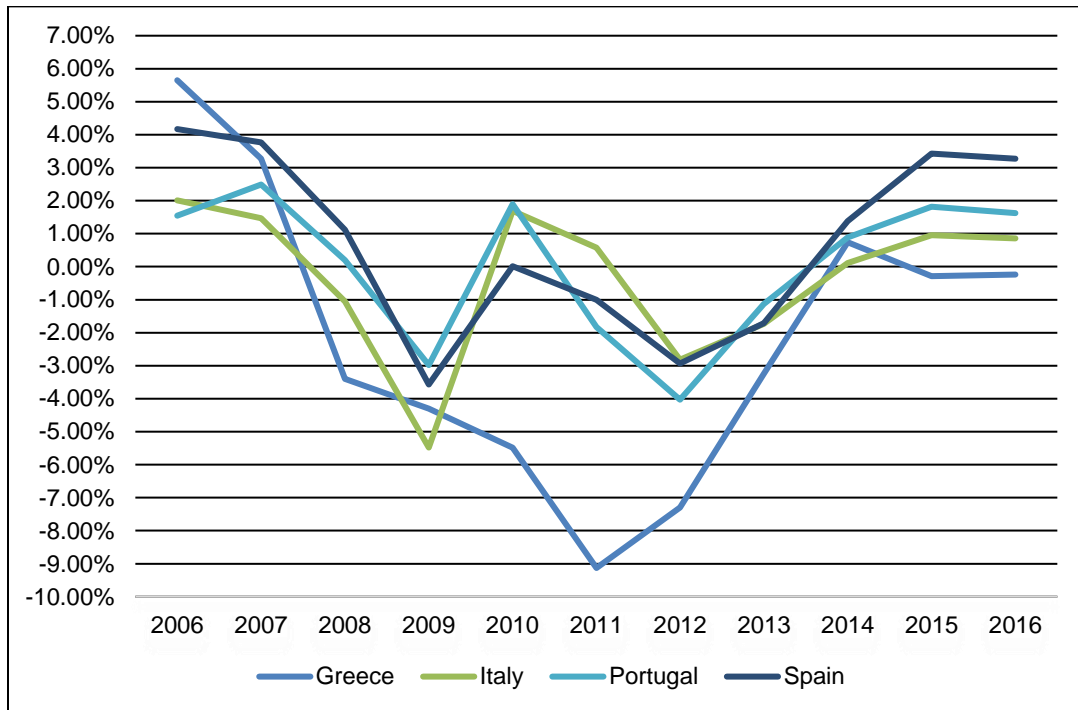
Figure 2. Annual GDP Growth (%) in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, 2006-2016[54]

The man to head the new technocratic government in Greece was former

ECB vice president Lucas Papademos.[55] Under his six-month tenure, he led a

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53. PASOK was not alone in their demise. The economic crisis coupled with increasing resentment toward globalization through free trade and immigration left social democrats crippled in most of Europe.
54. World Bank Open Data, GDP Growth (annual %), accessed January 20, 2019.
55. Greece was not alone in the ushering in of a technocratic government. Italy also formed a technocratic-national unity government led by Mario Monti, lasting from 2011 to 2013.

turbulent national unity government that included PASOK, New Democracy, and LAOS.[56] The relationship between Papademos and the political parties was contentious. Despite this, the government agreed to their second bailout program in February 2012.[57] This bailout package consisted of €100 billion and introduced a private sector involvement (PSI), which allowed private creditors to purchase Greek bonds with a voluntary option for a "haircut" upon maturation. Public reaction was violent and destructive as more austerity was imposed by the country's government. The second bailout resulted in the burning of more than 40 buildings in Athens and widespread rioting across Greece.[58] Austerity-exacerbated depression led to a long list of transformations in Greek society and politics. The back-to-back elections held later that year saw the growth of extremist elements in Greek society – most notably the outright fascistic and neo-Nazi political party Golden Dawn. A new political force in Greek politics known as SYRIZA came to power in Greece in 2015. SYRIZA, or the Coalition of the Radical Left, is an anti-austerity party that became responsible for fresh negotiations with the Troika for more bailout loans – and ironically the implementation of more austerity measures over the next few years.[59]

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56. Suzanne Daley, "Economist Named to Lead Greek Unity Government," *New York Times*, last modified 10 November 2011.
57. "Eurogroup statement," European Stability Mechanism, 21 February 2012.
58. Niki Kitsantonis and Rachel Dinadio, "Greek Parliament Passes Austerity Plan After Riots Rage," *New York Times*, last modified 12 February 2012.
59. An anti-austerity party committing to austerity might be indicative of how significant the fiscal problems in Greece were. Nevertheless, the damage has been done in Greece and other Eurozone members. The youth still suffer tremendously from unemployment, or even worse, dropping out of society altogether. It is not clear what other cards the Troika would have to play should the global economy contract in the future.
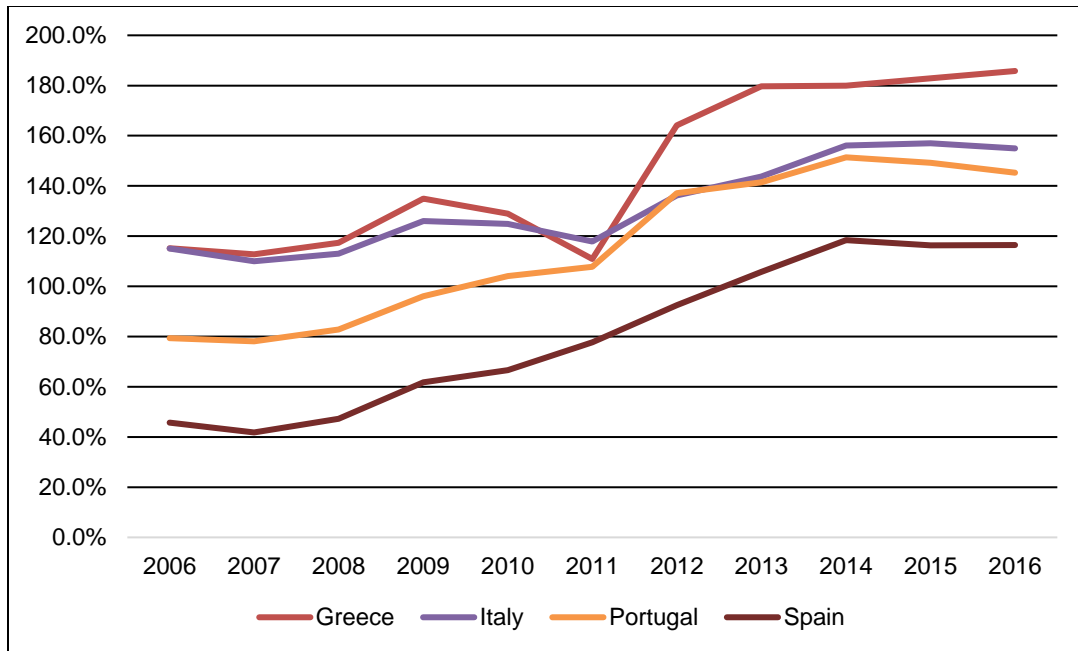
Figure 3. Government Debt to GDP Ratio for Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, 2006-2016[60]

While the violence gained media headlines and attention of observers on the outside, protests only represent the surface-level manifestation of the incredible suffering inflicted upon the Greek people. Poverty and unemployment ate away at Greek society and civility. Charts, graphs, and numbers will never fully capture this. Echoing the photography project in the United States during their Great Depression, a group of Greek photographers went about capturing the aesthetic and stories of the people who experienced the Depression.[61] This is perhaps the largest take-away from the Greek Depression – at the high political

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60. OECD Data, General Government Debt, accessed February 3, 2019.
61. A photography project of the Greek Depression called 'Depression Era' was created in 2012 to capture stories of Greeks suffering from the crisis. Accessible at: https://depressionera.gr/

level, politicians and EU bureaucrats carved up Greece, while the people themselves were left largely disinterested or powerless. Many left the country, like so many others in Europe, to find economic opportunity elsewhere. However, politics still lives on in the Eurozone. The following section will conclude this examination of the global financial crisis by assessing the political realignment that began to take place in Germany amidst the bailouts, protests, and social decay in the Mediterranean.

Germany and Anti-Euro Resentment

Perhaps the most noticeable change to appear out of the Eurozone and sovereign debt crisis was the intensification of national politics in member states. Ground zero for the crisis was arguably Greece, as explored in the previous section of this chapter. Therefore, the most radical changes in the political landscape took place in that country. Nevertheless, political unrest because of austerity and Troika decrees was broad and the strongest throughout the Mediterranean region of the Eurozone. On the other hand, anti-Euro sentiment assembled in unlikely, unscathed places in response to the measures taken by their governments to rescue the failing economies of the Eurozone. The purpose of this section is to touch upon the political realignment that picked up pace during the Eurozone crisis, namely the pervasiveness of an alternative political movement in Germany.

The *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) political party is very much an exception in contemporary European politics. The party is typically grouped into

the family of right-wing populist political parties found in Europe. While this categorization is problematic due to ideological discrepancies between parties, it clarifies the long-term and broader political winds that have swept through Europe since the 1990s. Chapter Four of this thesis will investigate the complexity of these types of movements and their impact on their respective countries and the European Union. Nevertheless, the AfD is unique in that it was only founded in 2013, primarily as an anti-Euro currency party and more significantly as a right-wing political voice against the Angela Merkel-led CDU. One of its founding members, Bernd Lucke, specified their political location at their first conference:

> We want to put an end to the flagrant breach of democratic, legal and economic principles that we have seen in the past three years, because Chancellor Merkel's government said there is no alternative. Now it is here, the Alternative für Deutschland.[62]

The AfD is the most successful national political party in Germany to run further right to the CDU since the founding of the FRG, surpassing the more extremist, neo-Nazi *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD). Under the leadership of Lucke, running from its founding in 2013 to his ousting in 2015, the party attracted a sizeable coalition of the German electorate on its anti-Euro platform.[63] In its first attempt to enter the Bundestag in the 2013 federal election,

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[62] Bernd Lucke, Speech to the First AfD Party Congress, 14 April 2013. Retrieved from Nicholas Kulish and Melissa Eddy, "German Elites Drawn to Anti-Euro Party, Spelling Trouble for Merkel," *New York Times*, last modified 14 April 2013.
63. One of the first studies on the ideology of the AfD voter base was conducted following the 2013 German federal election. See Nicole Berbuir, Marcel Lewandowsky, and Jasmin Siri, "The

its policy positions on European affairs were characteristically Eurosceptic, advocating for the elimination of the Euro and return of sovereignty to national parliaments, but limited in the defense of the common market:

> We call for an orderly dissolution of the Euro area. Germany does not need the Euro... ...We affirm a Europe of sovereign states with one common internal market.[64]

These types of policy positions reflected two specific sentiments of its founders: party members, and voter base. Firstly, it was a response to the undemocratic nature of the Eurozone, both in its initial implementation and contemporary maintenance of the crisis. The AfD had a particular issue with the CDU-FDP coalition's decision to ratify Germany's participation in the EFSM, EFSF, and later the ESM, without a referendum of the German people. Furthermore, their manifesto made in explicit terms that private financial institutions, not the German taxpayer, should bear the burden for rescue policies. Secondly, it sympathized with the plight of the debt-laden members of the Euro, proposing debt forgiveness and approval of referenda on Euro currency membership. While the AfD barely missed the required 5% threshold in 2013, they would later go on to gain seats as elected members of the European Parliament in 2014. In 2016, they scored several big gains in state elections, the most notable being in Saxony-Anhalt where AfD won second place in the popular

AfD and Its Sympathisers: Finally a Right-Wing Populist Movement in Germany?" *German Politics* 24, no. 2 (2014): 1-25.
64. Text in original form: "Wir fordern eine geordnete Auflösung des Euro-Währungsgebietes. Deutschland braucht den Euro nicht... ...Wir bejahen ein Europa souveräner Staaten mit einem gemeinsamen Binnenmarkt." The full text of party positions can be found in "Wahlprogramm Parteitagsbeschluss vom 14.04.2013," Alternative für Deutschland, 14 April 2013.

vote. From its founding in 2013 to present day, no other political party wishes to govern with the AfD, resulting in incredibly complicated and politically painful coalitions after state elections. Being such a young political party, these gains are impressive when compared to other right-wing populists who have contested in elections for decades.

No matter how successful the AfD will be in the future, the realignment has already occurred and there is no going back. Germany, a country long thought to be the bastion of European unity and most immune to right-wing populism, has made room for political outsiders and the radical right through its involvement in remedying the Eurozone crisis. It shall be noted that the AfD started as an anti-Euro party but quickly shifted to anti-immigration campaigning. This is what will be discussed in Chapter Four. The AfD along with so many other political forces across Europe quickly prioritized campaigning against immigration following the European Migrant-Refugee Crisis. However, in the following chapter, this thesis will first take a glance at the principal adversary of the European Union in the arena of foreign policy – Putin's Russia.

CHAPTER THREE:

RUSSIAN MEDDLING ON THE NEW PERIPHERY

OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Europe is a perennial battleground for the clash of major world powers. Adjusting for scale over the years, a balance of power on the continent has consistently been the norm. Competition between city-states and kingdoms evolved into competition between powerful nation-states and empires. A defining political characteristic of Europeans in their history is the propensity to make war over recurrent disruptions to the balance of power. Likewise, Europeans hold the role of being the peacemakers of their continent. While the breakdown of diplomacy causes war, it must be remembered that diplomacy ends wars. The end of wars either reinforce balance of power, incrementally shifts balance of power in a certain direction, or completely transforms international relations.

The most obvious transformation is the emergence of international conflict between the United States and Soviet Union towards the end of World War II. While the British and French held power in postwar global institutions such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), they were for all intents and purposes reduced to second-tier powers. The nucleus of interstate competition that had been present in Europe for centuries was supplanted by global international conflict between two new superpowers. On postwar defense policy, many European armies scaled back their militaries and relegated this responsibility to

the outside superpowers, either voluntarily or against their will.[65] The North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a collective defense alliance formed in

1949 and led primarily by the United States. It includes most of the European

countries held within the American-British-French sphere of postwar influence at

the end of World War II.[66] As its name suggested, NATO created an Atlantic

military alliance defined by Atlanticism. This was very different from military

alliances of the past, where the United States was adamant in their attempt to

maintain neutrality. On top of this relationship was the Marshall Plan, or the

European Recovery Program, where the United States sent large amounts of

direct relief to Europe, even those becoming increasingly under the thumb of the

Soviets.[67] Some Europeans were ambivalent to the extent of assistance, which

were reflected in major splits within politicians in the postwar era.

While the Marshall Plan assistance expired in the 1950s, the continued

intrusion of the United States into European affairs remained contested among

the Europeans. As alluded to in Chapter One, the ECSC was an attempt for

Europeans to take control of their own postwar destiny and accept responsibility

for their own continental affairs.[68] Despite the EEC being established following

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65. Another key component to reduction in military was the scaling back of European empire. Decolonization began immediately after World War II and lasted well into the postwar years.
66. "North Atlantic Treaty," in *United States Treaties and International Agreements: 1776-1949*, edited by Charles I. Bevans, Library of Congress, accessed February 29, 2019.
67. Many countries were prevented from attending the meetings associated with the Marshall Plan, or dissuaded from accepting the aid from the United States. This fits into the larger postwar narrative of increasing tension between the US and USSR.
68. Another strong example of moving away from Atlanticism and Europe taking responsibility was when Adenauer and de Gaulle signed the Élysée Treaty in 1963. See "Treaty between the French Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany on French-German Cooperation," *Western European Union Assembly-General Affairs Committee: A Retrospective View of the*

the Treaty of Rome in 1957, there were still some voices of support for expansion into other areas, such as defense and security. Some were enthusiastic, and some were skeptical about further integration. The EDC was abandoned when the French voiced strong opposition to such a radical surrender of sovereignty, and even then its establishment would be met by American protest. Thus, NATO was reluctantly accepted as the hegemonic defenders of Europe that we still see today, well after the collapse of its opposite Soviet assemblage of countries inside the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (Warsaw Pact).

The collapse of the USSR did not shift the balance of power in Europe, or in the world for that matter. The Russian Federation (or Russia) was not guaranteed to succumb to the influence of the West, nor change views on important issues such as respect for human rights, preference toward democratic rule, and market liberalization. Russia's status as the number two proprietor of nuclear weapons cannot be overlooked, a fact that many unfortunately overlook or outright forget. However, most importantly is the regime of Vladimir Putin, whose presence in international relations is epitomized by boisterous alarmism or uninformed lethargy. As this chapter will propose, Putin has managed to resuscitate intercontinental conflict in Europe, mostly in an attempt to counter the aforementioned intrusion of what he views as Western influence invading the

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Political Year in Europe 1963, Paris: Western European Union Assembly-General Affairs Committee, 1964.

'Russian sphere.' Traditionally this type of European conflict has been presented as simply the 'West' versus Russia. This chapter takes a different perspective and defines the major conflict as a developing struggle between the European Union and Russia. International relations scholars might disagree on which power holds more justification in their behavior and action, but what is clear is that history will show that as the European Union expands its own sphere, it does so into a diminished Russian space.

The Russo-Georgian War and the Revival of Geopolitics in Europe

The first major reassertion of Russia in Europe after the termination of the Soviet Union came in August 2008 in what would be called the Russo-Georgian War. While this war was brief, lasting only five days, and was clearly one-sided toward the Russian military, it stands as a key component in the larger picture of international relations in the European region after the Cold War. Before understanding the actual war and the pretexts for conflict, it is important to set the stage as to why Russia, under then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, would have the motivation to war with the small country of Georgia.

Unlike the largely peaceful revolutions in Europe that brought an end to Soviet-directed communist governments, Georgia's independence from the actual Soviet Union was not without conflict between the various ethnic groups that reside within its borders. Throughout its history under Soviet communism, the regime that governed the Georgian SSR attempted to establish an efficient command economy amongst competing ethnic groups while pleasing their Soviet

bosses. Similar to the Balkans, the North Caucasus region is home to various

ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups that don't necessarily fit together in perfect

nation-states. In the late 1980s, extreme nationalism flourished in the two

autonomous SSRs within the Georgian SSR: the Abkhazian ASSR and South

Ossetian ASSR. Amid the backdrop of Gorbachev's reformism under *glasnost*,

the governments of these two autonomous republics within Georgia were

emboldened to demand more autonomy at the same time as the Georgian SSR

proper desired to gain its own independence. The early 1990s were the most

violent years, where Abkhazian and Ossetians in both these regions ethnically

cleansed and displaced thousands of Georgian people.[69]

 Upon gaining independence, Georgia sought to eliminate autonomy for

Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This immediately enflamed already-prevalent

hatred toward the Georgian people and government. After brief wars marred by

atrocities and intermittent Russian involvement on behalf of the separatist cause,

a peace agreement was brokered in 1992 between Russian and the Georgian

governments to end the South Ossetian conflict.[70] The next year (1993) a

ceasefire was also brokered between Abkhazia and Georgia.[71] The outcome was

that these two regions would be de facto independent, but internationally

observed as part of Georgia. While the United Nations was responsible for the

69. Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmüller (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 224-225.
70. "Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgian – Ossetian Conflict, Sochi, 24 June 1992," *United Nations Peacemaker*, accessed March 3, 2019.
71. "Agreement on a Cease-Fire in Abkhazia and Arrangement to Monitor its Observance, Sochi, 27 July 1993," *United Nations Peacemaker*, accessed March 3, 2019.

Abkhazia-Georgia buffer zone, Russia was responsible for peacekeeping

between South Ossetia and Georgia. The peacekeeping situation in South

Ossetia became important when considering some of the causes for the Russo-

Georgian War. The major result immediately after the ceasefires was that

Abkhazia and South Ossetia became de facto independent states, but de jure

recognized as Georgian territory. The tension in the region, much like most inter-

state ethnic conflicts seen around the world, remain sensitive for many years

afterward.

While Putin's ascendancy to power in the 2000s altered the status quo

between Georgia and Russia, significant transitions in Georgia were more

profound and ultimately changed the course of international relations in the

region. In 2003, the Georgian presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze was met with

mass protests following unfair parliamentary elections and extensive corruption

within the government.[72] These peaceful, nonviolent protests were led by Mikhail

Saakashvili, a pro-Western opposition leader to the Shevardnadze regime. In the

Rose Revolution, Georgia shed itself of its Soviet-defined and contemporary

Russian-oriented government in favor of closer ties with the West, fundamentally

expressed by interest in NATO membership and accession to the European

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72. Shevardnadze was former General Secretary for the Georgian Communist Party from 1972-1985, leading several anti-corruption campaigns and reforming the Georgian economy. However, he was more known globally from his tenure as the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Soviet Union from 1985-1991, where he fought against anti-Gorbachev hardliners in pursuit of more sensible foreign policy, such as withdrawing from Eastern Europe.

Union.[73] Fresh elections in 2004 saw the Saakashvili become President of

Georgia and his party United National Movement obtaining a majority in the

Georgian Parliament. The new government sought to reintegrate the lost

republics in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, an issue that needed to eventually be

rectified if seeking membership status of NATO or the EU. Likely not

coincidental, Saakashvili's election to President in 2004 happened in the same

year as the single biggest enlargement of the EU in its history. In one year alone,

ten countries joined the EU, with seven being former members of the Eastern

Bloc (see Figure 4). In addition to joining the EU, the ardently anti-Russian Baltic

states also signed up for NATO, the first time Russia proper shared a land border

with NATO.[74]

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73. These so-called 'color revolutions' also took place amongst other former Soviet republics, including Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. A big concern of Putin was Russia having a color revolution of his own, which is just one motivating factor for scrupulous maintenance of high popularity and suppression of any dissent.
74. Excluding the border with Kaliningrad (a Russian exclave) and Poland, who joined NATO in 1999.
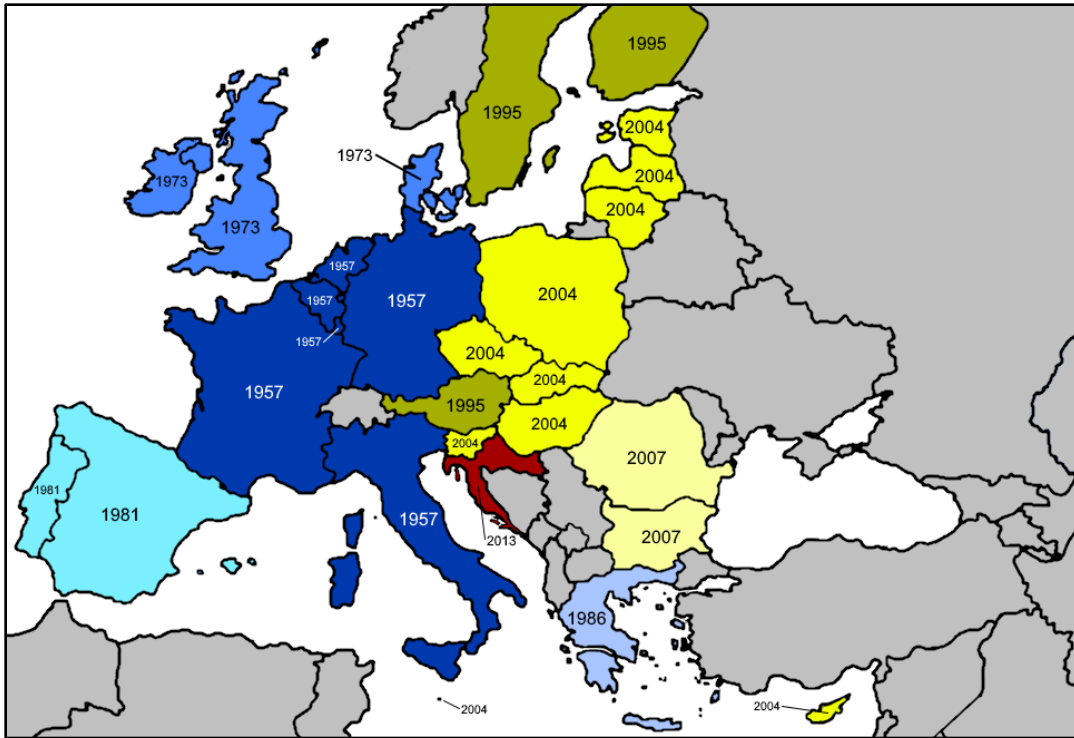
Figure 4. Enlargement of the European Union, 1973-2013.[75]

This was the larger geopolitical context behind the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. At the regional level, tensions would incrementally escalate between the Russians and Georgians, as well between the South Ossetia and Georgia in the mid-2000s. The opposing Georgian-backed leadership within South Ossetia signaled that Russian recognition of South Ossetia would mean a return to war. Things would come to a head when South Ossetian leader Eduard Koikoty expressed his desire to be recognized and annexed by Russia that in July

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75. Not shown in figure: East Germany (1990).

2008.[76] Furthermore, tensions were exacerbated by attacks on police forces from South Ossetia and Georgia. In the first few days of August, women and children were evacuated to locations in the immediate North. Initial media reports alleged that shelling was started first by the South Ossetian separatists and Georgia retaliated by bombing the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali. Russian interference was also alleged before August 8. Later, these allegations turned out to not be the case, first in cables leaked by WikiLeaks, and further confirmed in an independent fact-finding report funded by the European Union.[77] On the contrary, Georgia was deemed responsible for firing first by bombing separatist-controlled areas on the night of August 7, 2008. Also important was that the Russian government was not intent on going to war; at the time of war breaking out, Medvedev was in Belgium and Putin was at the opening ceremony of the Summer Olympic games. However, Russia was very prepared if war with Georgia occurred.

As predicted, Russia used this provocation as the best chance to cripple the capacity of the Georgian military and move the situation in their favor. While small advances into South Ossetia were made by Georgian forces on the morning of August 8, the Russian military advanced from North to South and pushed them well back into Georgia, nearing Tbilisi by August 11. Atrocities were

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76. Hans Mouritzen and Wivel Anders, *Explaining Foreign Policy: International Diplomacy and the Russo-Georgian War*, (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 59.
77. See the downloads for the full International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG) report, Volumes I to III, at
http://www.mpil.de/en/pub/publications/archive/independent_international_fact.cfm

committed by both sides.[78] A second front was opened on the Black Sea and through Abkhazia. On August 12, a ceasefire was successfully put into effect. The agreement essentially ended the fighting, and Russian forces had to withdraw back into Abkhazia and South Ossetia (see Figure 5). The brevity of this war cannot be stated enough; however it had major implications on the trajectory of EU (also nominally NATO) expansion and its role in international relations.

Figure 5. Map of Georgia with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, 2019.

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78. Ian Traynor, "Russia and Georgia set to share blame for South Ossetia conflict," *The Guardian*, last modified 30 September 2009.

The Russo-Georgian War, while being a minor skirmish with limited casualties, concluded with the Russians emerging with more victories than any other participant. The Georgian military and infrastructure were decimated, thus stopping the expansion of NATO into Georgia and the South Caucasus. As discussed in previous chapters, the backbone for defense of the EU is NATO; EU accession of Georgia was politically and geographically distant. Russia gained more of a foothold in the Black Sea and built military installations in the two breakaway republics, both officially recognized by Russia soon after the war. Domestic approval of the Russian government skyrocketed. The war taught Russian leadership, primarily Putin, that opportunities should be taken under the best possible moment, so much as to not risk full out war with the other nuclear powers, but making an impact large enough to expand Russian interests abroad and boost his popularity at home. Also important was the co-opting of Western-style geopolitical strategy and history of military interventions with the result of turning it against them. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said that the bombing of South Ossetians in Tskhinvali by the Georgians was comparable to the history of genocide and course of contemporary action surrounding Kosovo, and was deserving of Russian involvement to stop the alleged genocide from taking place:

> This situation has undergone dramatic development for 17 years now. For 17 years the Russian Federation has been carrying out a peacekeeping mission, helping to maintain peace and calm there, preventing the killings that have taken place there since the start of the 1990s, and trying to preserve the unity of the Georgian state. But the aggression and genocide unleashed by the Saakashvili regime have changed the situation. Our

main mission was to prevent a humanitarian disaster and save the lives of people for whom we are responsible, all the more so as many of them are Russian citizens. We therefore had no choice but to take the decision to recognise these two subjects of international law as independent states. We have taken the same course of action as other countries took with regard to Kosovo and a number of similar problems.[79]

The logic stated by Medvedev was characteristic of Putin's approach to foreign affairs, and Medvedev's presidency had virtually no effect on the political contiguity of this worldview. It would not expire with the end of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, but only strengthen into the 2010s.

As a blanket statement, the European Union did not succeed in this situation, but it did not necessarily fail either. While having the appearance of a major economic and political power, the EU alone lacked the authority or military prowess to intervene in the negotiation process. The EU had a foreign policy – in this case, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) that included Georgia – but did not have the military to protect its interests. A fundamental component to diplomacy is having a military force, otherwise what country would take the EU seriously? Additionally, Georgia was not a member of the EU or NATO, therefore there was no clear international justification to become involved militarily. The High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana did communicate his worry to both foreign ministers from Russia and Georgia, but note his deference to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the international community:

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79. Dmitry Medvedev, "Interview with BBC Television, Sochi, 26 August 2008," *President of Russia*, last accessed March 1, 2018.

> I am deeply concerned over the dramatic situation in Georgia and I deplore the loss of human lives and the suffering inflicted on the civilian population. I spoke with Sergey Lavrov and Eka Tkeshelashvili and called on both to spare no efforts to obtain an immediate cease-fire. We will continue to work relentlessly with the parties and the international community, in particular the OSCE, to help find a peaceful way out of the crisis.[80]

However, during the time of the war, the Treaty of Lisbon was still not in effect until 2009, which provided new provisions that expanded the powers of the High Representative. Thus, French President Nicolas Sarkozy entered the fray and brokered the ceasefire deal on behalf of "Europe." While Sarkozy was the current President of the European Council that was constantly on rotation, it is unclear if he was representing the EU, France, or France's description of a 'European' foreign policy. The radical position held by some was that he was solely acting as the French President and the EU took a back seat. One of the few to articulate this in the European Parliament at the time was Nigel Farage:

> Mr. President, I address my remarks to the President-in-Office of the Council. President Sarkozy, it was your own energy, dynamism and initiative that sent you off to Georgia and Russia to try and broker a deal. You did it off your own bat. You were not acting on behalf of the European Union. It is a delusion if anybody in this place thinks you were. There had been no Council meeting, there was no resolution and there was no mandate. You did it as the French President, and well done to you.[81]

Sarkozy responded to, or rather dismissed, Farage's comments:

> Mr. Farage, I did not have a mandate – that is undeniable – but, quite frankly, neither did the Russian troops when they entered Georgia. You

80. Javier Solana, "EU High Representative for the CFSP calls for urgent efforts to end the violence in South Ossetia, Brussels, 8 August 2008," *Council of the European Union*, last accessed March 1, 2019.

81. Nigel Farage, Plenary Debate in the European Parliament, 21 October 2008, Strasbourg, *European Parliament*, last modified 29 October 2009.

are one of those people who, for years, have denounced Europe for a lack of political will. I had a choice: I could ask for everybody's opinions and take no action, or act and then check whether the others agreed. I prefer action.[82]

Regardless, it is a debate on whether negotiations were truly handled by the EU. President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso accompanied Sarkozy in his talks with Medvedev, but Sarkozy received the credit and criticism for the negotiated deal. It is also rather interesting that Sarkozy, a proponent for a 'Mediterranean Union' to prevent certain countries from joining the EU, was called upon to negotiate this ceasefire deal that would salvage a country outside the EU. Sarkozy was a known opponent to Georgian membership of NATO.[83] The response to the Russo-Georgian War, regardless of French or European political standing, was done by Sarkozy, the President of an *intergovernmental* institution of the EU, and without a mandate from any other EU institution or national government. What other option was there? There was clearly none, but this example of diplomacy is indicative that the EU aggressively pursued expansion but did nothing to aggressively defend it.

The conclusion of the Russo-Georgian War was just a taste of what was to come as the EU focused itself on expanding into the outer fringes of the Russian sphere. For Putin, the 2004 expansion into the Baltics was enough. Putin was not willing to allow Ukraine, who shares a fairly large border with

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82. Nicolas Sarkozy, Plenary Debate in the European Parliament, 21 October 2008, Strasbourg, *European Parliament*, last modified 29 October 2009.
83. Mark Tran, "Enter Sarkozy the peacemaker," *The Guardian*, last modified August 12, 2008.

Russia and has a sizeable Russian linguistic minority, succumb to what he viewed as unjustified 'imperialist' expansion from the West. The crisis in Ukraine from early 2013, 2014, and beyond was a repeat of the kind of themes surrounding the Russo-Georgian War, but different circumstances allowed the conflict to drag on eternally with no clear solution. Russia took a more active and immediate role in perpetuating its presence in Ukraine. Compared to the already-existent ethnic conflict in Georgia that saw a quick, practical solution to end the war, the conflict in the Ukraine will attempt to copy the template of inter-ethnic conflict in Georgia but involve more complex, ideologically motivated, and artificially induced methodology to contest EU expansion.

<p style="text-align:center">The Ukrainian Euromaidan and the Russian Response</p>

The crisis that unfolded in Ukraine is arguably a repeat of the Georgia debacle in 2008, but should be considered fundamentally different in its ambiguous outcome and long-term impression on the European continent. The situation in Ukraine beginning in early 2013 was the second episode of Russian involvement, and similarly to Georgia, there is a specific chain of circumstances that occurred over a period of about a decade. Putin's motivations for interfering in Ukraine are quite clear, but several vital alterations in his strategy should be noted and are important in understanding why the conflict at the time of this thesis' publication is still unresolved.

Ukraine, similar to Georgia and other former Soviet republics, has a post-independence history of egregious kleptocratic governance, electoral fraud, and

<p style="text-align:center">54</p>

the circumvention of legal and economic systems. The wave of protests that hit

Georgia in their 2003 Rose Revolution that encouraged Western-style

liberalization and economic reforms, also had the same impact in Ukraine in their

2004 Orange Revolution. The Orange Revolution, which was triggered by an

ambiguous second round presidential election result between Viktor Lushchenko

and Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, was a period of peaceful protests and

demonstrations against the government's handling of the election. President

Leonid Kuchma and his government backed by parliamentary support from

Yanukovych were alleged to have fixed the election against Lushchenko. This

was predominantly the case, both in the media coverage and actual election

processes.[84]

Lushchenko, despite his status as an established insider of the government brief

tenure as Prime Minister, was more inclined to support closer ties with the West,

including NATO membership and initiation of the process toward EU accession.

His electoral base consisted of mainly the Ukrainian-speaking, Western oblasts

of Ukraine.[85] Yanukovych, like Lushchenko, was also well established within the

apparatus of Kuchma, but held more power and influence as Prime Minister. He

was viewed more positively by Russia and was more in line with Kuchma's

orientation on positioning Ukraine between Russia and the West. However,

Yanukovych was not as charismatic compared to Lushchenko, and it would take

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84. Lincoln Abraham Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions*, 1st ed., (Philadelphia: University of
Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 49-51.
85. Ibid.

an extraordinary amount of weight to produce a result with Yanukovych as the winner in a second round.[86] Ukraine was far from a liberal democracy already, but the reaction to this election via Orange Revolution was indicative to how much the Ukrainian kleptocracy was willing to risk in order to put one of their cronies in power.

Perhaps the only aspect of the Orange Revolution worth mentioning was that it was largely peaceful and ensured that a fraudulent election would be annulled and rerun with a proper outcome. Lushchenko was not out of the woods, and Ukraine was not going to radically transform out of its post-Soviet shell. Internal division between the victorious parties of the Orange Revolution and more of the corruption and baggage from the Kuchma years disrupted the stability of the Ukrainian government. This is one condition that made Euromaidan in 2014 unavoidable: instability. The average Ukraine citizen wished nothing more than stability, whether it be in one direction toward the West and EU, or toward Russia. The differences between the two electoral spheres between the Western oblasts and the South and East oblasts would continue well past the 2004 election. The presidential election in 2010 resulted in Yanukovych winning based not on popularity among the whole country, but the electoral math needed for more than half of the votes coming from his electoral and regional base in the East and South. This was the second condition that

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86. Lincoln Abraham Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions*, 1st ed., (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 49-51.

made Euromaidan possible; that the Orange Revolution had not succeeded and the very person the Orange Revolution was intended to oppose took the presidency. With the presidency secured and a government in the Verkhovna Rada later confirmed, albeit fraudulently, in 2012, Yanukovych had the political power necessary to reorient Ukraine's international standing.

In the most forthright sense, the Euromaidan Revolution that began on 21 November 2013 and ramped up in the early months of 2014, was a continuation of the many issues demonstrated in the Orange Revolution. The protest began as a small, peaceful demonstration in Kiev's *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), protesting Yanukovych's decision to permanently shelve the association agreement between the Ukraine and the EU from Russian pressure.[87] In recent years, Russia has had excessive influence over the Ukrainian economy. One significant example is in natural gas inflows into the country. Russia has used this as a bargaining chip, most notably in 2010 when Yanukovych agreed to a 30% reduction in gas prices in exchange for extending the lease on Russia's naval base in Crimea.[88] This is one component of Putin's so-called 'Special War' that has been conducted upon not just post-Soviet countries, but also on the rest of the European continent.[89] The alternative for

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87. Ian Traynor and Oksana Grytsenko, "Ukraine suspends talks on EU trade pact as Putin wins tug of war," *The Guardian*, last modified 21 November 2013.
88. Luke Harding, "Ukraine extends lease for Russia's Black Sea Fleet," *The Guardian*, last modified 21 April 2010.
89. Glenn-Iain Steinback, "Russia in Transition: A Political and Social History of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, Evolution of Capitalist Reform, and the Creation of Putinism, 1985-2015," *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*, California State University, San Bernardino, Paper 158 (2015): 204-205.

Ukraine, instead of the European Union, was planned entrance into Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Russia's authoritarian, state-capitalist model for economic integration, later formalized in 2014.[90] Ukraine, not by choice, was unfortunately the geopolitical location for the clash between these two supranational organizations. One major consequence of Euromaidan was aversion from the path toward the EAEU, but as this section will later explain, it will come at a cost.

By the end of that last week of November, demonstrations were encouraged by opposition political parties and their leaders, especially using the Internet and social media (See Figure 6). Online communication and accessible digital technology played a key role in the development of the Euromaidan protests, both in the Ukraine and the coverage abroad.

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90. The EAEU is undoubtedly Putin's resurrection the Cold War-era 'Comecon' economic area under clear domination from the Soviet Union, however the fundamental difference here is 'appearance.' EAEU institutions are similarly structured to the EU, except as camouflage for Putin's agenda.
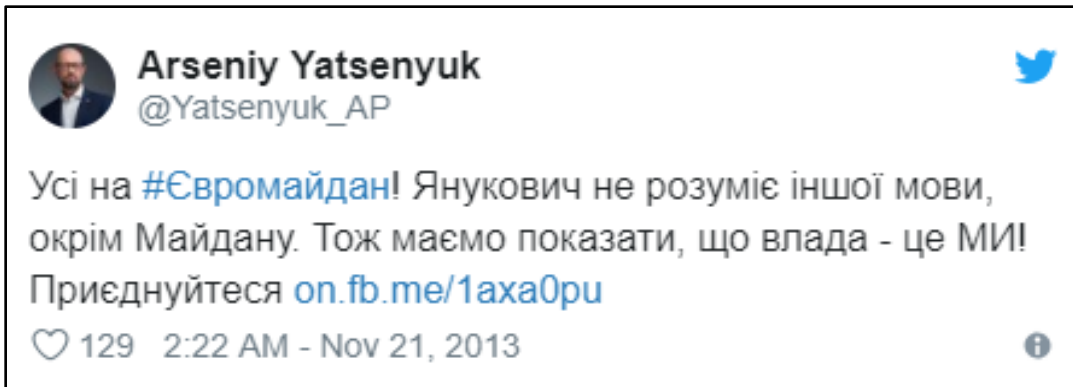
Figure 6. Tweet from Arseniy Yatsenyuk on 21 November 2013.[91]

The violence from the police upon the growing crowds of Ukrainians in the

Maidan, and vice-versa only compounded the protests. In the end, they were a

clear channel for the decades of frustration with Ukraine's oligarchic government

structure and the absence of the rule of law.[92] This was perhaps most evident in

the mainly pro-European opposition leaders and their supporters coordinating

revolutionary and defensive efforts with ultranationalists and outright fascists that,

surprisingly to some observers, hate Russia.[93] The main objective was to remove

Yanukovych from power, which did happen only after months of police brutality

against the revolutionaries in Kiev and the situation in Ukraine became too

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91. Translation reads: "All at #Euromaidan! Yanukovych does not understand any other language except Maidan. So we have to show that the power is us! Join!" Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Twitter Post, November 21, 2013, 1:22 AM.

92. Timothy Snyder, "Integration and Disintegration: Europe, Ukraine, and the World," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 4 (2015): 703.

93. The ultranationalists in Ukraine, unlike several Eurosceptic, radical right-wing to far-right parties in Europe such as the Rassemblement National (formerly Front National) in France and others, see Russia as the clear enemy and the Ukrainian oligarchs as enablers of Russian influence over Ukrainian sovereignty.

dangerous for him to continue as President. Not surprisingly, the ideologically and linguistically divided nature of Ukraine led to a counterrevolution in areas that statistically identify more as Russian than Ukrainian: the Donbas and Crimea. Russia took advantage of this opportunity to invade Ukraine.

Once Yanukovych abdicated his position as President, Russia invaded Crimea and heavily assisted separatists (some of whom were Russian nationals) in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine.[94] While the takeover of Crimea was rather seamless, the Donbas became an essential stalemate between Russian military-backed separatists and the Ukrainian military. Comparable to the situation in Georgia, this war became a foreign policy issue largely of Russian creation. From Putin's perspective, a full-blown invasion of Ukraine was not a card he could play for fiscal reasons and to not provoke an actual war with Western powers. Sanctions from the international community was a price he could pay, or indeed, circumvent completely. By keeping the Donbas as an ambiguous zone of control for a fiscally low-cost, perpetual war, Putin can preserve European participation in his diplomatic game, or indeed, his Special War.[95]

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94. The Donbas region is known as geographically the basin that contains the Donets River, but politically are considered the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts of Ukraine. The names of the two de facto independent states are the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in the West and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) in the East (see Figure 7).
95. Glenn-Iain Steinback, "Russia in Transition," 204-205.

Figure 7. Map of Ukraine with Crimea and Separatist Republics, 2019.

As stated previously, the European and more broad international response was condemnation of the annexation of Crimea and interference in the Donbas. It is in Putin's better interest in his geopolitical strategy to hold off on recognizing the separatist republics and play that card when the least risky opportunity arises. Recognition of Donbas as separate from Ukraine undermines his long-term strategy to keep Ukraine contested as long as possible. Thus, what was the EU to do about the crisis? The successor to Javier Solana as the EU High Representative was Catharine Ashton, serving from 2009 to 2014.

Notwithstanding her meetings with the "stakeholders," her efforts came across as weak, indecisive, and underwhelming.[96]

> We want to underline very clearly that there is still time to avoid a negative spiral and to reverse current developments. We call on the Russian leadership not to take steps to annex Crimea and instead to take steps to deescalate this crisis.[97]

Ashton's incompetence in the Ukraine situation might be the result of general inexperience with diplomacy, which was one point of critique of her 2009 appointment. On the other hand, she was able to reconcile Serbia and Kosovo in their relations, which ironically is one pillar of disgust in Putin's worldview.[98] There was to be no reversal and Putin was not going give up Crimea on his own will, both for practical reasons as well as the popularity boost he received from the annexation. It should always be recalled that Putin is a realist, compared to the idealist EU. Under the same breath of those comments from High Representative Ashton, most of the action done on behalf of the EU in this situation was in economic sanctions put on Russia throughout 2014.[99] As stated beforehand, Putin was willing to bear the cost of sanctions if that meant he could keep Ukraine contested via the occupation of Crimea. Economic sanctions and

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96. Ashton literally used the term 'stakeholders' in one of her statements, which is arguably a poor choice of language for resolving issues surrounding sovereignty and borders. Under the research conducted, finding the specific statement was quite difficult; the link to the statement was broken and only by obtaining an Internet-archived version was the document retrieved. See Catharine Ashton, "Statement by EU High Representative Catharine Ashton on the developments in Ukraine's Crimea," *European External Action Service*, 1 March 2014.
97. Catharine Ashton, "3304th Council Meeting Press Release Main Results of the Council, Ukraine," *Council of the European Union*, 17 March 2014, 2.
98. Piotr Smolar, "Serbia and Kosovo sign historic agreement," *The Guardian*, last modified 30 April 2013.
99. Catharine Ashton, "3304th Council Meeting Press Release Main Results of the Council, Ukraine," *Council of the European Union*, 17 March 2014, 2.

diplomatic pressure on Russia, and assistance to the Ukrainian government were

the only options the EU pursued.[100] This may be the reason why calls for a

European Army have grown since then (see Figure 8). While Crimea under firm

Russian control via the succession of military occupation, questionable

referenda, and annexation as part of the Russian Federation, the conflict in the

Donbas continued to persist.
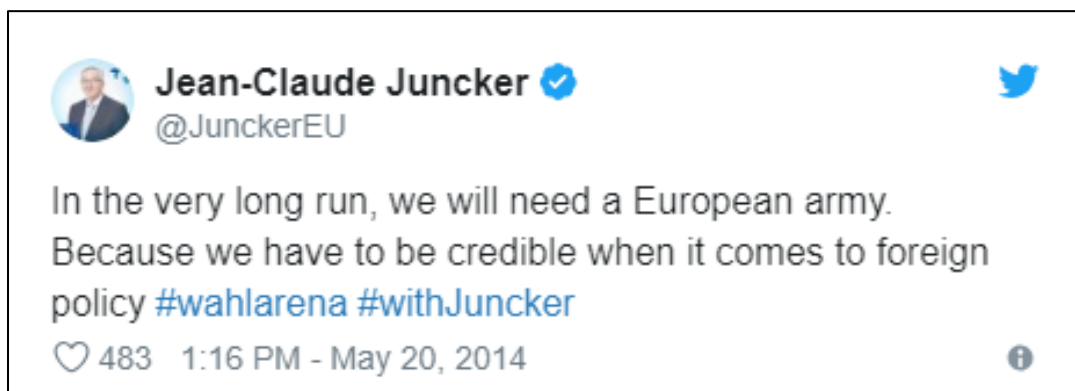
Figure 8. Tweet from Jean-Claude Juncker on 20 May 2014.[101]

The War in Donbas closely resembled the Abkhazian and South Ossetian

conflicts in Georgia, both in execution and in attempted resolution by European

leaders. Negotiations for the first Minsk Protocol (Minsk I) were conducted

between Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE, and unofficially the separatist leaders from

Donetsk and Luhansk. Minsk I called for a slew of ceasefire provisions, more

local control of separatist areas, and restrictions on foreign involvement through

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100. "EU Restrictive Measures," *Council of the European Union*, 29 April 2014, 1.
101. Jean-Claude Juncker, Twitter Post, May 20, 2014, 1:16 PM.

military assistance or equipment.[102] Separatists broke the agreement and fighting

started once again. There appears to be a relationship between the similar timing

of the betrayal of Minsk I and the ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association

Agreement in the week following the first Minsk summit. Fighting continued and

the line of control between the Ukrainian military and separatists became more

violent with more casualties.

The second Minsk Summit in February 2015 intended to once again

resolve the conflict, this time on a multilateral basis including participation from

President Lukashenko of Belarus, President Hollande of France, Chancellor

Merkel of Germany, President Putin of Russia, and President Poroshenko of

Ukraine. The agreement, known as Minsk II, included many provisions of Minsk I,

but also expanded to address humanitarian issues, respect of Ukrainian

sovereignty, and vague promises for more autonomy for the separatist-controlled

areas.[103] Despite these two peace arrangements, the fighting in Donbas

continued. Complex issues understandably require complex resolutions. The

passive role of the EU in the Donbas situation likely compounds the crisis, but at

the same time diplomatic efforts might not be taken seriously. They were forced

to relegate that diplomatic responsibility to the OSCE, a non-EU but European

affiliated intergovernmental organization. Instead, the EU has prioritized in

actively assisting the Ukrainian government on their way toward potential

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102. "Protocol on the results of consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group (Minsk Agreement), 9 September 2014," *United Nations Peacemaker*, accessed March 5, 2019.
103. "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, 12 February 2015," *United Nations Peacemaker*, accessed March 5, 2019.

accession. This assistance was clear in the ratification of the EU-Ukraine

Association Agreement throughout 2015 and 2016, which allowed Ukraine

access to the European common market. There is change occurring in EU

attitudes toward Russia. Compared to her unimpressive predecessor, High

Representative Frederica Mogherini appears to be more nuanced and active in

her approach to EU-Russian relations. The EU has long been an adversary of

Russia, while at the same time individual countries have built bilateral

relationships with Putin. EU leaders will quickly realize that Russia is needed for

economic and energy cooperation, thus it is important to have some compromise

with Russia in the near future. Nevertheless, as long as each side remains

entrenched in their negotiating positions, Ukraine will continue to go down the

road of being designated as a perpetual frozen territorial conflict, much like

Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

For now, Putin's strategy has been successful in the Ukraine and Georgia.

The forced establishment of pro-Russian 'gray zones' in several candidate

countries for EU accession or NATO membership complicates processes related

to joining these intergovernmental organizations and alliances.[104] Ukraine, while

an EU free trade associate, will not have the ability to join NATO in the near

future as long as the situation remains the status quo in Donbas. Full-fledged

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104. The term 'gray zone' was used in an academic collaboration on the less-talked about
peoples who live on the borderlands of the European Union and in these internationally
unrecognized territories. The primary inspiration for the term was Holocaust survivor Primo Levi's
categorization for those not entirely complicit with or victimized by the Nazi agenda. See Ida
Harboe Knudsen, et. al. *Ethnographies of Grey Zones in Eastern Europe: Relations, Borders and
Invisibilities*. (London: Anthem Press, 2015).

Ukrainian EU membership seems less likely for the time being, especially since oligarchs maintain their influence on the government despite the Euromaidan. While the geopolitical situation on the EU periphery has transformed, the next and final chapter of this thesis will examine political dissent of the EU that was brewing on the domestic front and culminated in the United Kingdom leaving the EU project altogether, which has been the largest shakeup in Europe since 1991.

CHAPTER FOUR:

OPPOSING THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE MARRIAGE OF

EUROSCEPTICISM AND POPULISM

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the European Union is not without

its critics, some of whom are ironically elected members of the European

Parliament. The intricacies of opposition politics became as complex as the

European Union. As the EU project marched towards an ever closer union and

the democratic deficit continued to widen since passage of Maastricht in 1992,

the volume of the dissent became louder and more plentiful. This section is

dedicated to analysis of the positions of those opposed to union, and how they

were able to put pressure on their national governments and the EU under times

of crisis.

While the history outlined here is primarily focused on the periodization

following 2008, it should be remembered, and as alluded to in Chapter One, that

the EU has a mixed track record with referendums since Maastricht. Rejection of

European institutions in popular referenda was quite common, and from most

surprising member states. Most referenced by Eurosceptics, the defeat of the

Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (European Constitution) in 2005 by

France and the Netherlands, two founding members of the ECSC, was a pivotal

moment in European integration. If it had been implemented, the Constitution

would have been a significant step toward federalization of the European Union

and the gradual abandonment of the 'treaty' framework that led the integration

process in the past. Instead, the French and Dutch referendums indicated that a significant portion of Europeans were not willing to make that transition. After the two 'no' results, the brakes were applied on the Constitution and all future referendums regarding the Constitution were cancelled. It would be futile to proceed with referendums in the rest of the EU when two substantial members had rejected the matter.

In contrast to the structural framework of the European Constitution, further integration had no other option but to continue down the previously utilized treaty framework and more emphasis was placed upon ratification through national legislatures as opposed to national electorates. This culminated in the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, which allowed specific institutional reforms that would have been implemented had the Constitution been ratified in 2005.[105] Specifically, it would remove the processes that would require referendums for amendments to the Rome or Maastricht treaties. Lisbon was decisively the triumph of intergovernmentalism in the EU. It was ratified quite easily by all member states with the exception of the referendum in Ireland, which despite its rejection in the first of two attempts, was eventually approved. Following the initial 'no' vote in Ireland, European leadership did not consign Lisbon to the same fate of the Constitution. Instead, a second referendum in Ireland was called after minor changes were made to the text of the Irish

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105. "Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007," *Official Journal of the European Union* C306 (2007): 1-271.

Constitution that allowed ratification of Lisbon. This sequence of rejections and

subsequent maneuverings around rejections are seen by some Eurosceptics as

a 'betrayal of democracy.' Nigel Farage had made this point clear time and time

again in the European Parliament about how the EU leaders have a particular

issue with referendums that do not go their way:

> Madam President, nobody else has said it, but I will: well done the Irish! And yet, before the official result was out, there was Mr. Barroso, holding a press conference in Brussels, looking as shifty and as dishonest as anybody I have ever seen, saying – despite what the rules of the club are – that the Treaty is not dead and we continue. Frankly, it was a disgusting display; it was an insult to democracy. It is perfectly clear that the ratifications should stop now and the implementation of the Treaty should stop now.[106]

And after the second referendum, Farage cited that the EU dumped money into

Ireland to ensure the likelihood of a 'yes' vote:

> Mr. President, well, it is all terribly simple really, isn't it? We have had one vote against the Treaty in Ireland and one vote for the Treaty in Ireland, so if we have any sort of sporting sense, we ought to make this the best of three; but the difference is that with a third referendum, let's make it a free and a fair referendum. Because what has happened in Ireland most certainly is not that! In fact, I hope you are all very proud of yourselves because what you have done is you have taken the littlest boy in the playground, got him into the corner and given him a good kicking. This is a victory for the bully boys; it is a victory for big money and a victory for bureaucrats. The whole thing was a travesty![107]

The controversy surrounding the European Constitution and Treaty of

Lisbon is just one instance of dispute for Eurosceptics in the European

Parliament. However, as preliminarily recognized in Chapter One and Two,

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106. Nigel Farage, Preparation of the European Council following the Irish referendum (debate), 18 June 2008, Strasbourg, *European Parliament*, last modified 21 October 2008.
107. Nigel Farage, Preparation of the European Council following the Irish referendum (debate), 7 October 2009, Brussels, *European Parliament*, last modified 2 December 2009.

critical opposition to the EU appears in many different forms and from different member states – referendums are just one avenue. This chapter aims to explain the phenomenon of Euroscepticism as a political force and how its marriage with populism became effective in precipitating change (or none at all) within the European Union.

Identifying Eurosceptics and Populists

In Chapter One, this thesis identified French President Charles de Gaulle and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as two significant voices that exemplified skepticism toward the European Union as it expanded into its present-day institutional scope and sequence. The disparate but like-minded perspectives of these two individuals are characteristic of Euroscepticism itself. De Gaulle can be considered as an inward Eurosceptic; a stubborn intergovernmentalist and champion of French superiority within the European project. Thatcher, the opposite, was more or less an outward Eurosceptic; wishing to defend British interests from intrusion from a growing European bureaucracy.[108] The complexity of just these two individuals' perspectives is only scratching the surface, as they both were politically on the right-wing and were fundamentally well-recognized members of the established political order. Sincere opposition to the European Union, termed Euroscepticism, would only

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108. The inward-outward labels were realized by several of the authors whose pieces appeared in Hubert Zimmermann and Andreas Dür, *Key Controversies in European Integration*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

gain steam just as Thatcher was on her way out in the late 1980s and early

1990s. Euroscepticism is regarded as a catch-all, comprehensive term to

describe a distinct type of skepticism and criticism of the European Union and its

institutions and the overall trajectory of European integration.

Identification of anything usually requires determining what it is not. If

Euroscepticism was expanded to include *any* criticism of the European Union,

this would arguably comprise some of the most enthusiastic, marginally fanatical,

supporters of the EU who believe action on the European level has not gone far

enough. This would include many individuals in the upper echelons of European

politics, including some in the European Parliament. Former Prime Minister of

Belgium and leader of the Liberal group in the European Parliament, Guy

Verhofstadt, epitomizes this class of political actors, as seen in just one fiery

speech in the European Parliament:

> Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, I think that either Europe will become
> federal or it will cease to exist. The choice is as simple as that. We must
> stop being afraid of words and afraid of using the word 'federal' when we
> talk about the future of Europe. It is, in fact, a federal solution that is
> needed, a solution that will give us a real economic government, which we
> need, real democratic control, which we do not have at the moment, a real
> European treasury and a real federal budget, and, why not, in the future, a
> solution that will lead us one day towards a real European army. We have
> no choice. European federalism is the only way of integrating ourselves
> into globalisation, the only way of negotiating on an equal footing and the
> only way of maintaining our economic and political role. It is also the only
> way of protecting our social model in Europe.[109]

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109. Guy Verhofstadt, Future of Europe (debate), 9 May 2012, Brussels, *European Parliament*,
last modified 9 May 2012.

Verhofstadt has proved to be a foremost proponent of increased integration and equally the most willing to challenge Eurosceptics in many European Parliament sessions, often debating the likes of Nigel Farage. It would be a miscalculation to group these two individuals, Verhofstadt and Farage, as belonging to the same category of politicians. For these reasons, this class of individuals who are *positive* critics of the EU cannot be considered as Eurosceptics.

Euroscepticism is dynamic in that it is fundamentally both a catch-all term and politically exists as a profoundly divided cohort in European politics. In the broadest sense possible, Eurosceptics on the right tend to focus on issues related to culture or national sovereignty, such as immigration. The EU's stance on free movement of peoples has unmistakably spawned more Euroscepticism on the right. On the other hand, Eurosceptics on left commonly emphasize economic issues related to how, for instance, the EU facilitates neoliberal interpretations of free market capitalism and profoundly caters to the interests of multinational corporations. Even this portrayal of ideological differences is problematic, as many Eurosceptics on the right quite often make sovereignty arguments in economic terms, such as criticism of the EU's monopoly on free trade arrangements with foreign powers. Likewise, some Eurosceptics on the left see the EU as a threat to the effectiveness of the nation-state social democratic welfare systems. These divisions are apparent in the European Parliament, where to their disadvantage Eurosceptic groups lack cohesion even as their numbers grow (see Figure 9).
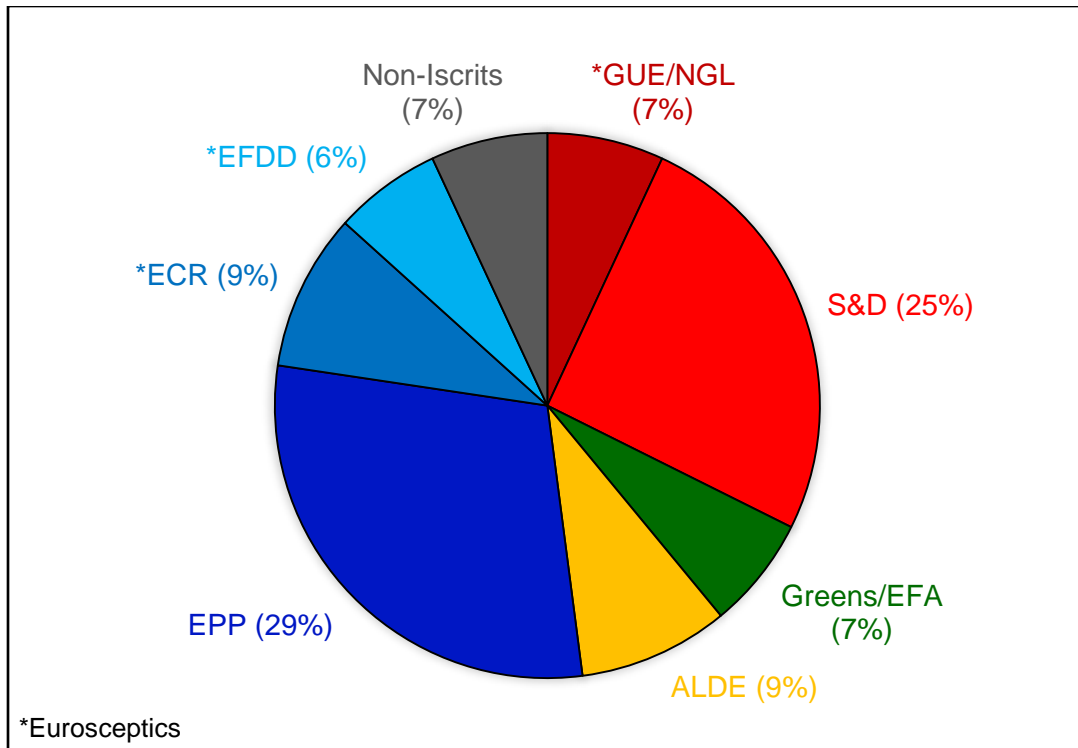
Figure 9. Composition of the First Session of the 2014-2019 European Parliament.[110]

Even Eurosceptics on the right, who are more numerous and louder than those on the left, have the most divisions in the European Parliament.[111] At the beginning of the 2014-2019 European Parliament, the two biggest groups on the right who are considered Eurosceptic, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group, are separate only because of longstanding differences on how to

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110. "Results of the 2014 European elections, 2014 opening session," *European Parliament*, last modified January 7, 2014.
111. For the most part and with mixed perspectives on European integration, left wing Eurosceptics reside in the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). For the purposes of this thesis' argument, focus will not be directed on this group.

approach the EU.[112] Divisions within individual groups regardless of their political

orientation also occur. The Hungarian political party Fidesz led by Viktor Orbán is

a member of the federalist center-right European People's Party, yet hardly

subscribes to that group's stance on European integration. Orbán and his party

only continued to exist within that group to take advantage of its influence in EU

government.[113] More often than in national parliaments, Members of European

Parliament (MEPs) are not always tied down to groups and sometimes defect to

others, thus slightly altering the composition of the European Parliament between

elections. New groups may form. In 2015, a sizeable portion of the Non-Iscrits,

which make up MEPs that do not belong to any group, formed a new Eurosceptic

group called Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) not depicted in Figure 9.[114]

Under the leadership of Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders and their respective

French and Dutch political parties represented in the European Parliament, the

ENF group comprised several right-wing to far-right MEPs from across Europe.

The 2014 European Parliament was the most Eurosceptic in the 35 years

of its history, mainly as a result of the low turnout described in Chapter One, but

also the Eurozone crisis described in Chapter Two. Despite these divisions,

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112. The ECR and EFDD groups are also not unified due to their leadership, which to a degree mirrors political division on the right in the United Kingdom. ECR was founded following the 2009 European Parliament election. ECR was led in the 2014-2019 European Parliament by the British Conservative Syed Kamall, while the EFDD was led by UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage. This division will be made clearer later in this chapter.
113. As this thesis is being written in early 2019, Fidesz was suspended from the EPP after years of continued campaign rhetoric against EPP leadership and the domestic policies of Orbán related to migration issues and rule of law.
114. Alissa F. Rubin, "Far Right Parties Form Coalition in European Parliament," *New York Times*, last modified June 16, 2015.

Eurosceptics have been able to grow within the European Parliament. If Eurosceptcism is a metaphorical bludgeon to EU politics, the populism displayed often by Eurosceptics is a vital driving force behind that bludgeon. Populism is not an ideology, rather it is a campaign strategy; a particular projection of one's political beliefs. It is rhetoric that exploits political and socio-economic divisions within a liberal democracy and reduces politics to 'the people' versus 'the elite.'[115] While some who espouse populism would disagree and especially self-identified right-wing populists, populism mimics the economic basis of Marxism that pits the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.[116] While populists are not calling for violent revolution per se, they are messengers of radical interpretations of liberal democracy and attempt to convey prescriptions to advance change. The most irrational component of populism, which alludes to the same degree in criticism of Marxism, is the fact that 'the people' are just not well-defined just as 'the proletariat.' Who are 'the people' when not all people within the electorate support a populist party? This is just one intellectual exercise in populist logic and how it functions in Western liberal democracies. Regardless of its apparent fallacies and similarly its critics, populists gain power when traditional political forces fail.

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115. For a contemporary and well-rounded definition of the populism discussed in this thesis, see Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*, (Penguin Random House, 2018).

116. The forgotten, but arguably best example for contemporary populism resides with the rise of the Dutch academic turned politician Pim Fortuyn, active the early 2000s Dutch politics. He is interesting not just for his ability to interact effectively with the media to promote his anti-establishment, anti-immigrant agenda. Before his rise, he was an avowed Marxist and member of the Dutch Labor Party.

In the case of Eurosceptics, this already effective populist strategy is compounded by the fact that the European project is relatively young, open-ended, and encourages division between its member states. Populist rhetoric fits the structure of the EU perfectly, especially at times of crisis where both national and EU institutions are ineffective. Eurosceptics are able to voice concerns about how 'the elites' of the EU in Brussels are detached from the interests of 'the people.' The marriage of Euroscepticism, a rather mundane approach to European politics, with populism proved to be a politically lethal force to the political establishment in times of crisis. With respect to the EU, Eurosceptic right-wing populists tend to have more success than their left-wing counterparts because the EU is perceived as a threat to national sovereignty, a fact that plays more intensely to the interests of the political right. The European project since its beginning has existed to keep its members pinned down.[117] Contrary to some observers' views that contemporary populism is something brand new resulting from the post-2008 crises, right-wing populists have existed and been successful in Europe for quite a long time in the postwar period (see in Table 4). Populism is not a new phenomenon nor a long-standing European political tradition.

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117. For example, the ECSC and Common Market was intended to keep the Germans in check in the immediate postwar years. Later on, Germany promised to sacrifice its national currency for a European currency in exchange for German reunification in the early 1990s.

Table 4. Nationally Active and High-Profile Right-Wing Populist Political Parties in the European Union.[118]

Country	Political Party	Years of Inclusion in Parliamentary Government[a]
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	1970-1971 1983-1986 1999-2006
Denmark	Danish People's Party	2001-2007 2015- Present
Finland	Finns Party	2015-2017
Greece	Independent Greeks	2015-Present
Hungary	Fidesz	1998-2002 2010- Present
Italy	Northern League	1994-1996 2001-2006 2008-2011
Latvia	National Alliance	2011-2015
Lithuania	Order and Justice	2012-2016
Netherlands	Party for Freedom	2010-2012
Poland	Law and Justice	2005-2007 2015-Present
Slovakia	Slovak National Party	1992-1998 2006-2010 2016-Present
Slovenia	Slovenian Democratic Party	1990-1996 2004-2008 2012-2013

a. Some parties included in the chart were not historically considered populist, but for the purpose of demonstrating that these groups existed long before 2008, all years of previous government participation is shown.

118. The chart only includes governments that were led by or included right-wing populist political parties before 2016. Chart data was gathered from government websites and corresponding newspaper articles. Noticeably absent from the chart are the French National Front, UK Independence Party, and Alternative for Germany, all of which have exerted different forms of political pressure in their respective democracies before and after 2016. The chart does not include dissolved political parties.

A reasonable explanation for the lack of collective wisdom regarding

populism's relatively effective record could be that it was not truly developed in

the Anglosphere, principally in the United States and United Kingdom, until

recently. In 2016, the United Kingdom referendum on EU membership and the

election of Donald Trump to United States President, with the former contributing

to the conclusion of this chapter and this thesis as a whole, were two 'shock'

events that put contemporary right-wing populism on the map in those respective

countries. The UK Independence Party, ascendancy of Nigel Farage as a key

political disruptor in British politics, and pressure on the political establishment to

allow a referendum on EU membership are discussed later in this chapter.

Regional differences between right-wing populists are a note of special

interest. It is no accident that most of the countries listed in Table 4 were formerly

governed by communists. Most profoundly in Poland and Hungary, Eurosceptic-

streaked populism is utilized by powerful parties such as Law and Justice and

Fidesz respectively to assert their desires for more independence within the EU.

At the same time, Poland and Hungary benefit more than others from their EU

membership, thus developing a peculiar relationship with European institutions.

More economically developed EU members such as Austria and the Netherlands

contain right-wing populists that are critical of EU and national stances on cultural

liberalism and relaxed immigration controls. In particular, the Dutch Party for

Freedom led by Geert Wilders, an unapologetic critic of Islam and its

compatibility with Western culture, has such radical positions on immigration and

assimilation. Wilders and many similar to him will benefit electorally from issues such as Islamic terrorism both in Europe and abroad. Their highly controversial perspectives will string together immigration and terrorism issues to attack both their national governments and European leaders' supposed incompetency to secure Europe.

The political parties discussed above were all represented in the European Parliament groups discussed earlier. They were able to broadcast their messages in plenary sessions and across alternative forms of communication such as the Internet and social media. It cannot be stated enough that the intense globalization of political communication over the past few decades benefited those who could use it effectively. Whether it be Euromaidan in Ukraine, or the Arab Spring revolutions in 2010 onward, tools of communication originally intended for social networking were rapidly adopted as platforms for political communication. Nevertheless, a demonstrable turning point for Eurosceptic populist factions occurred in 2015: the year that saw large and unsustainable amounts of economic migrants and refugees inundate the European Union. This crisis, which will be briefly described in the following section, provided terrain for radical political actors to capitalize on the EU's indecisiveness..

Turning Point: The European Migrant Crisis

The European Union is no stranger to refugees; a notable example was in the early 1990s where moderate numbers of them fled persecution and violence

in the former Yugoslav republics.[119] The EU is not unfamiliar to economic

migrants either. One of four pillars of the EEC was to allow the free movement of

persons between member states, as established in the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

The Schengen Treaty in 1985 removed all internal border checks among its

ratifying member states and created an external border check system called

Frontex.[120] Large numbers of Europeans from former communist states in search

of better economic opportunities took advantage of these regulations (or lack

thereof) as their countries were accepted in the EU. To its credit, the EU was

able to perfect its internal borders. Geographic proximity and an EU that was

smaller and more cohesive proved to have invaluable advantages in handling

these situations. The proximity of World War II also played a decisive role, as

Germany stepped up to bear the burden of migrants as a means to redeem itself

from its past atrocities. These situations, the Yugoslav crisis and fall of the

communist governments in the East, involved European people as opposed to

people from elsewhere. While there was skepticism from right-wing populists

within countries about the influx of foreigners, these foreigners were, at the very

least, of European origin and national governments responded accordingly.

Immigration and refugee issues were already well established in the political

culture of many EU member states by the end of the 2000s.

119. Henry Kamm, "Yugoslav Refugee Crisis Europe's Worst Since 40's," *The New York Times*, July 24, 1992.
120. "Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985*," Official Journal of the European Communities* L239 (2000): 19-62.

The crisis that should be referred to as the European Migrant-Refugee

Crisis took shape at the beginning of 2013. Observers made the mistake of

identifying it as either a migrant crisis or refugee crisis, when in reality it

encompassed both, which are not the same. All refugees are migrants, but not all

migrants are refugees. In most literature and media coverage of migration issues,

scholars mention push and pull factors. For the purpose of this thesis, this

framework is slightly modified to describe the factors that caused a large volume

of people to leave their countries of origin and the reasons why the EU was not

prepared to receive them.

The push factors, or the reason for the mass volume of people that

evacuated the Middle East and North Africa, is separated between long-term and

short-term factors. The global, long-term trend in migration since the end of

World War II is movement from the global south to global north. Most of the

global south are developing countries with weak governments, unstable

economies, and a high propensity for violence. In many of these countries, wars

have taken place over the course of decades and the flow of refugees has

persisted as long as the wars have continued. Afghan, Palestinian, and Somalian

refugees comprise the vast majority of refugees in recent years.[121] While the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has existing

structures to facilitate the settlement of refugees from these specific countries, it

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121. "Detections of IBCs," *Frontex: European Border and Coast Guard Agency*, last modified
April 3, 2019.

is largely unsustainable for the sheer scale of the problem. It is not surprising that many of the refugees that ended up trying to get into Europe were from these countries.

Short-term factors are the most complex, and ultimately led to some of the difficulties in how the EU responded. The Arab Spring, or the period of revolutions in Middle Eastern countries that overthrew several autocratic dictators, led to the sort of conditions necessary for an unmanageable migration crisis. While some of these revolutions changed politics in several Middle Eastern countries, in others the insurgents were either unsuccessful or at odds with each other in civil wars. Syria became engulfed in a dreadful civil war between the government of Bashar al-Assad and a wide swath of armed groups. Daesh, or colloquially known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, was the most radical group to emerge from the Syrian Civil War. Daesh became responsible for causing immense suffering upon the peoples within the borderlands of Iraq and Syria in addition to conducting a professional propaganda campaign that was responsible for inspiring numerous terrorist attacks around the world. Following NATO intervention in Libya to assist the overthrow of autocrat Muammar Ghaddafi, the power vacuum left behind warring rebel factions and what essentially amounted to a failed state. Libya and Syria served as two potential points of departure for those migrating to Europe.

A fair perspective is that Europe was unprepared for the crisis as a matter of geography. As discussed previously, the European Union was able to perfect

its internal borders through the Treaties. However, external borders of the EU are immense and complex. The European continent itself is only a small extension of the larger Eurasian continent; in the most basic sense it is peninsula of peninsulas.[122] The EU land and oceanic borders are most 'clean' in the North and West. The United Kingdom and Ireland are excluded from the Schengen area, but non-EU members Switzerland, Norway, and several microstates are participating in Schengen rules (see Figure 10). In the Northeast, the Schengen Area only borders the four non-EU countries of Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova. The Balkan Peninsula is the most complex land border configuration in the whole of the EU, with Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania outside Schengen, but Greece included. Several former Yugoslav republics are neither in Schengen or the EU.

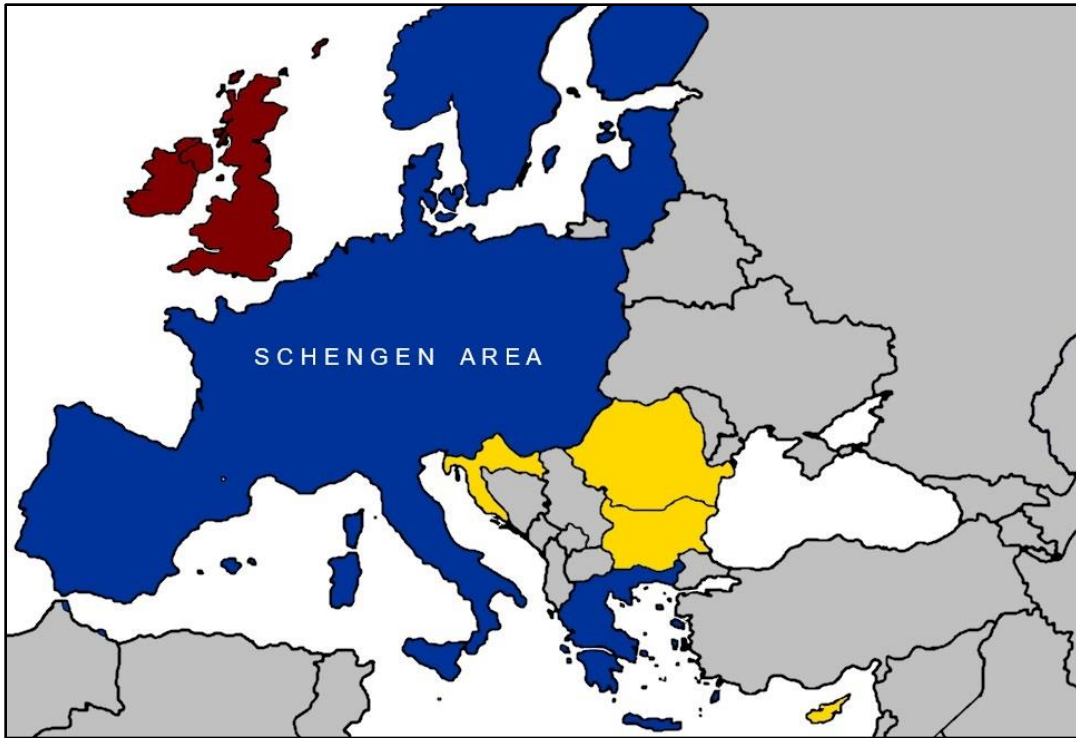122. Tony Judt, *A Grand Illusion?: An Essay on Europe*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 45.

Figure 10. Map of the Schengen Area Including Non-European Union Member States, 2016.[123]

The geographic contours of the Mediterranean Sea form the entire

Southern border of the EU, with the exception of two Spanish holdings in the

African country of Morocco and a small land border between Greece, Bulgaria

and Turkey. The Mediterranean is directly adjacent to the Middle East and just

one step away from sub-Saharan Africa, two of the most violent regions on Earth.

The purpose of the European Neighborhood Policy was not just to send much-

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123. The UK and Ireland depicted in red are EU opt-outs of Schengen. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania shown in gold are candidate EU members for Schengen. Iceland, while not shown, is also part of the Schengen Area but is not an EU member state. Andorra, located on the border of France and Spain is the only European microstate not in the Schengen Area.

needed economic assistance to countries surrounding the EU, but also to keep favorable relations with their leaders so that Europe did not share borders with unstable countries. When Libya and Syria fell into disarray, so did their ability to keep the 'cork in the bottle' on the migration from areas that border them.[124] It is fathomable to suggest that the breakdown of diplomatic relations and ongoing conflict in these two countries intensified the European Migrant-Refugee crisis. Thus, human traffickers were able to flourish in the Mediterranean (see Figure 11).

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124. The phrase 'cork in the bottle' is borrowed from Wikileaks founder Julian Assange in a 2016 interview where he described the role Libya played in allowing increased migration from Africa. The removal of Gaddafi and the subsequent power vacuum allowed Libya to become a failed state, reaching to the point of a second, lengthy civil war beginning in 2014. Assange used this phrase in his larger criticism of 2011 NATO intervention in Libya to remove Gaddafi, but it illustrated the bigger picture of why migration existed in the central Mediterranean Sea, arguably the most dangerous route.
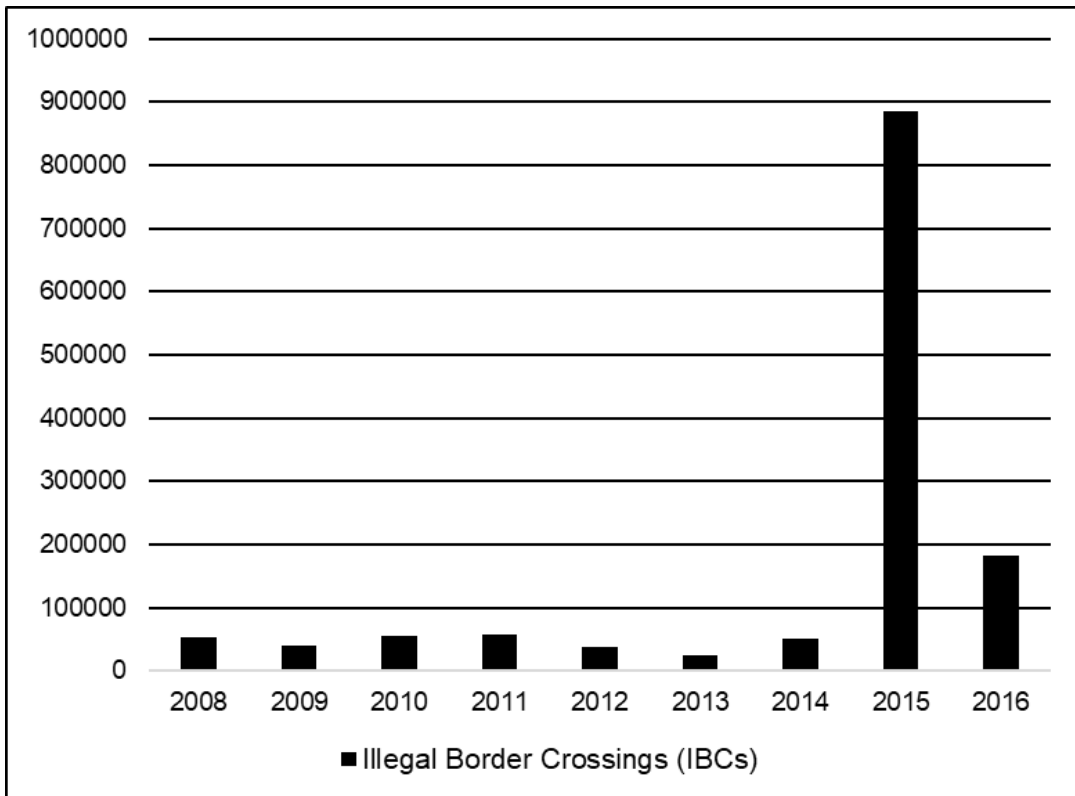
Figure 11. Illegal Border Crossings (IBCs) on the Eastern Mediterranean Route, 2008-2016.[125]

If it was not geography that predestined Europe and the EU to have this sort of crisis, it was the inconsistency of the messages coming from within the European Union. Common asylum policy has been a matter of debate between old and new member states over the course of many decades and many different situations. Dublin III Regulations signed by most EU members in 2013 governed

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125. Eastern Mediterranean Route is defined by Frontex as land and sea arrivals in the Eastern Aegean Sea and Greek islands. On their website, data from other routes is available, but are incredibly miniscule compared to the Eastern Mediterranean. "Migratory Routes, Eastern Mediterranean Route, Trends prior to 2017," *Frontex: European Border and Coast Guard Agency*, accessed 5 April 2019.

asylum applications, stating that a refugee must apply in the first EU country they

arrive.[126] When Germany under the directives of Chancellor Angela Merkel

suspended these rules in September 2015, countries on the external border of

the Schengen Area and the EU constructed fences along those external borders.

Hungary was the most notable example. Viktor Orbán was unwilling to capitulate

to German demands to allow arrivals to move *through* Hungary without

registration, a violation of the Dublin arrangements. The border fence was

portrayed as Orbán's so-called 'strategy' to not allow arrivals to settle in Hungary

in defense of his position on European and Hungarian culture. He defended the

fencing in a press conference as a measured response to protect the external

border of Schengen, as well as stated that the burden of asylum applications was

problematic for Hungary:

> The German Chancellor and Austrian Chancellor said clearly: nobody can
> leave Hungary without being registered. So that is the regulation. We have
> to register everybody. We can't let anybody from Hungary to go to Austria,
> to Germany, without being registered. So it's not strategy, its slow
> enforcement.[127]

In the same press conference, he referred to the whole situation as a 'German

problem,' reminding the press that it was the Germans who promised policies like

quota systems and de facto opened the whole of Europe to migration. Hungary

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126. "Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June
2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for
examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a
third-country national or a stateless person," *Official Journal of the European Union* L180 (2013):
31-59.
127. Ian Traynor, "Migration crisis: Hungary PM says Europe in grip of madness," *The Guardian*,
last modified September 3, 2015.

was just one of several culturally conservative former communist countries and their governments who acted subversively against the requests of the EU and its most powerful members.

The enormity of the European Migrant-Refugee crisis aggravated Eurosceptics and gave a breath of fresh political air for populists to assemble against EU and national institutions. Particularly in Germany, it enabled the Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD), a political party that was already critical of Merkel's handling of the Eurozone crisis, to assume more hardline stances on culture and immigration issues. The departure of Bernd Lucke from the party in 2015 indicated the party's shift from a moderate, conservative, anti-Euro platform to radical, nationalist right-wing politics and anti-Islam activism.[128] In a similar process, the AfD's dominant voter base shifted from disenchanted conservatives in the West to politically dispossessed voters in the East. Conservative-leaning East Germans who had previously remembered the CDU as arbiters of the reunification process soon found themselves at odds with their tendencies to form grand coalitions and moving toward the political center. Even under the indecisive leadership of Frauke Petry and Jörg Meuthen and party infighting, the AfD managed to produce key electoral breakthroughs in 2015 and 2016 that rattled German politics, long thought to be the most stable out of all postwar democracies.

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128. "German AfD founder leaves party decrying xenophobic shift," *Reuters*, last modified July 8, 2015.

What was to be done about the incoming migrants and refugees? If the political pressure was not enough, it was the sheer humanitarian issue of people putting their lives in the hands of human traffickers to makes that dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea. To the European Union's credit, the Council managed to find a diplomatic solution in the Eastern Mediterranean in March 2016, and in the Central Mediterranean later on in 2017.[129] Negotiations with Turkey resulted in essentially EU access for Turkish nationals and EU money for refugee settlements in Turkey in exchange for drastically enforcing controls on their land and sea borders with the EU.[130] This settlement, while having some criticism from EU members, solved the immediate crisis of human trafficking and related deaths, as well as relieved some of the pressures put on Frontex and their affiliates in the Aegean.

No matter the attempts to solve the external border crisis, the political damage had already been done by the beginning of 2016. Eurosceptics and populists took advantage of the situation by intensifying their rhetoric against the 'establishment' and in the direction of migrants and refugees. While here it was not discussed, ISIS-inspired terrorism gripped the continent and added a complex layer to the crisis. It was an unfortunate situation that groups like Daesh simultaneously forced people from their lands and radicalized European

129. A similar agreement was reached in March 2017 with Libyan authorities, known as the Malta Declaration. From the Frontex data, it appears it has worked to help stop the flow in the Central Mediterranean. Even so, as this thesis is being written the crisis continues and illegal crossings have grown substantially in the Western Mediterranean from 2016 onward.
130. "EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016," *Council of the European Union*, last accessed 5 April 2019.

nationals. In particular, the terrorist attack against French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015 stood out as the most symbolic of the European struggle between religious tolerance and freedom of speech; and the debate on how precisely to maintain a secure society. Ultimately the issue of immigration, migration, and secure borders dominated in political campaigns across Europe. Perhaps the most significant political campaign in all of postwar Europe took place in the United Kingdom – the campaign to leave the European Union.

Hyperdemocracy and the Road to Brexit

There is much to be said about Brexit, the colloquial expression used to describe the Britain's exit from the European Union (or the related 2016 referendum). The amplified visibility of news coverage on British politics since the referendum is arguably equivalent to the amount of academic literature published on the referendum. It would be an understatement to pronounce that the referendum on EU membership was a watershed moment. Brexit is a decisive issue in European politics. This thesis takes the position that Brexit could have only happened in light of the problems discussed throughout the preceding sections and chapters. In particular, the Eurozone crisis and European Migrant-Refugee Crisis had a significant impact on British politics. However, those problems alone are not sufficient for that conclusion. In truth, Brexit was the culmination of a perfect storm of the long-term factors discussed briefly in Chapter One and short-term factors emphasized in this section *on the backdrop* of the issues discussed in the thesis as a whole.

For some years, Brexit and the course of contemporary British politics was *je ne sais quoi*. The phenomenon was difficult to describe because nothing equally comparable to it had occurred in the past. In reality, the roadmap for understanding Brexit, or at least its 'cognitive' place in politics, was already existent. The theoretical discussion of 'hyperdemocracy' raised by British political theorist Stephen Welch provides the missing link. Hyperdemocracy, or as Welch defines it, is the intensification of democracy.[131] The mechanisms of democracy become democratized themselves, and every level of society itself becomes afflicted by politics.[132] In the case of Brexit, the referendum took a central, well-marinated issue in British politics and allowed the electorate to supposedly 'once and for all' determine their country's relationship with the EU.

How can hyperdemocracy be illustrated through Brexit? Intensification of democracy does not necessarily mean more elections, but in the case of Brexit, the related issues – namely issues surrounding immigration and national sovereignty – took center stage across multiple elections. Specifically, the issue was most intense in the 2014 European Parliament elections and 2015 general election, both of which were instrumental in conducting a referendum. The 2014 European Parliament elections, as discussed at great length in this thesis, resulted in the most Eurosceptic European Parliament to date. In Britain, the rejectionist Eurosceptic, right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP) led by

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131. Stephen Welch, *Hyperdemocracy*, (New York: Palgrave McMillian, 2013), 1-4.
132. In many ways, hyperdemocracy questionably gives credence to the idea of the late controversial right-wing U.S. political commentator Andrew Breitbart that "politics is downstream from culture."

populist juggernaut Nigel Farage won these elections with a plurality of votes and thus, held the largest number of British seats in the European Parliament. Rather than focusing who should represent Britain at the European level, the election was quite literally a debate on 'in' or 'out,' as characterized by the BBC and LBC debates between Farage and then-Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democrats. While being a highly divisive political figure, Farage came out on top in these key debates and the election result reflected this. The low turnout 2014 election nevertheless became a powerful 'strategic' vehicle for the mostly Eurosceptic electorate to express their frustrations with British politics.[133]

The year 2014 represented a fundamental shift in British politics and indicated that a referendum on EU membership was a convincing possibility at that moment. For a lack of a better term, the 2014 elections 'spooked' the British Conservatives led by David Cameron. Under the leadership of Cameron, the party consistently attempted to project an image favorable to the young, middle-class, urban dwellers while quieting the concerns of hardline, Eurosceptic backbenchers represented by the European Research Group (ERG). Pressure from this minority within the Conservatives resulted in Cameron giving his infamous Bloomberg speech in 2013 where promises were made to renegotiate

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133. Prior research suggests that European Parliament elections in the United Kingdom allow politically frustrated voters to vent their displeasure with the political establishment, as the election results do not have severe repercussions in the domestic arena of politics. See Robert Ford, Matthew J. Goodwin, and David Cutts, "Strategic Eurosceptics and Polite Xenophobes: Support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the 2009 European Parliament Elections," *European Journal of Political Research* 51, no. 2 (2012): 208.

Britain's place in the EU and a referendum on membership itself.[134] While this speech satisfied the likes of the ERG, it had virtually no effect on relieving the pressure from UKIP and Farage the following year. David Cameron had the impossible task of maintaining his party's place in government, sans Liberal Democrats, in the leadup to the 2015 General Election.

Luckily for David Cameron and the Conservatives, no such electoral catastrophe occurred in the 2015 election. Despite having only 37% of the popular vote, the convoluted, constituency-restricted electoral system in the United Kingdom produced a majority Conservative government to the surprise of the pollsters and media. Even with the rise of UKIP and perceived weakness on the campaign's dominance of issues of concern to the political right, Cameron was able to produce a victory for his party. The 2015 result guaranteed that Cameron was able to fulfill his promises in the 2013 Bloomberg speech and suppress the concerns of the Eurosceptic members of his party. The same year, the British Parliament passed the European Union Referendum Act 2015 and a referendum became legally required beginning in early 2016.[135] The referendum on membership was supposed to complement Cameron's negotiations with the EU, under the assumption that the result would be in favor of remain. In a February 2016 speech, Cameron announced that the referendum would take

134. David Cameron, "EU speech at Bloomberg," *Government of the United Kingdom*, last modified January 23, 2013.
135. "European Union Referendum Act 2015," *Government of the United Kingdom*, published December 2015.

place on June 23, 2016 and confirmed that he would support to Remain a member of a 'reformed' European Union.[136]

Brexit transcended normal politics, both from the political baggage that came with the issue and from technological developments in political campaigning and communication. A train of endorsements lined up behind the Remain and Leave campaigns. Rather than being confined to media outlets and newspapers, endorsements came to encompass corporations, businesses, academia, international figures, and so on. Populism fed into this, enabling Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson, and similar political figures to condemn alarmist endorsements on the Remain, establishment-oriented side as 'Project Fear,' a term borrowed from the Yes Scotland campaign from the failed 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Regardless of their characterizations, Brexit was definitively a precarious exercise of democracy. Equally, Brexit is not as simple as supporting a certain political party or politician, it is inherently kaleidoscopic.

By the time of the referendum in 2016, radical change in how an individual interacted with politics on a daily basis reflected the multivariate, complexity of Brexit politics. The social media phenomenon, not just in politics but in larger socio-cultural situations, significantly alters the cognitive perceptions of its users. Social media allows the individual to perceive that they have a complete grasp over politics, when it is merely a façade orchestrated by user bias or the

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136. Rowena Mason, Nicholas Watt, Ian Traynor, and Jennifer Rankin, "EU referendum to take place on 23 June, David Cameron confirms," *The Guardian*, last modified February 20, 2016.

'Algorithm.' In the sphere of social media, politics happens instantaneously between its users and never, ever ceases. Traditional media outlets are weighed down in that they are limited by program scheduling in the case of television, or a writer has to construct an article, and have it published in the case of newspapers. Thus, social media can be easily manipulated by politically-oriented actors and operatives to disseminate information (or misinformation) to the users.

United Kingdom membership in the EU can be deemed as the mother of all questions in postwar European politics, perhaps surpassing German reunification. It is unlikely that one referendum would be able to grasp this loaded question, but that is precisely how the campaign was conducted on all sides. The campaign focused scrupulously on the *why* but left the *how* virtually unknown until after the referendum. Hyperdemocracy explains that the intensification of democracy is unsustainable – democracy undermines itself. In this respect, a single question in one referendum is not able to fulfill its intended democratic objective. The narrow 52-48 (Leave to Remain) result of the referendum is for all intents and purposes split right down the middle; neither side could honestly say that they had decisively won. Not only is this the case, but it is unclear if it is politically possible for a government that officially supported Remain to support the Leave result of the referendum in good faith.

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of the European Union is about as open-ended as the project itself. As long as the political core of France and Germany remains committed to the project, as they did in the immediate years after World War II, it is apparent that the EU will continue to be a powerful force in Europe for decades to come. Decades of progress shown by various treaties and cooperative endeavors have bound the continent in theory; thus, in this respect, it would take an equal or greater amount of time to unwind the project in the same, slow, peaceful, and diplomatic manner. The symbolic renewal of ties in 2019 between France and Germany, led respectively by President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Angela Merkel, may endure as only a symbolic gesture. President Macron, a self-styled pro-Europe centrist, is deeply unpopular with the French people, who only elected him to office in 2017 to prevent an even less-palatable Le Pen presidency. It is not out of the realm of possibilities that he will join his predecessors Sarkozy and Hollande as a one-term President. Chancellor Merkel, who has maintained standing for being the most powerful politician in Europe for more than a decade, announced that she would leave German politics at the end of her term in 2021. It is unclear if she will leave all politics or accept a high-level position in the EU. Nevertheless, her departure and Macron's low approval ratings (coupled with the Gilets Jaunes protests in France), leaves more questions than answers on who will definitively lead Europe into the 2020s.

Economics played a key role in exposing underlying variations between EU member states. While the Greek economy has significantly improved since the lowest point of their depression, unemployment has not returned to pre-2008 levels. Many Greeks have given up on politics or left the country, and the Greek government still holds a mountain of debt. The far-left government led by SYRIZA, while campaigning in 2015 on an anti-austerity platform, has largely broken its campaign assurances to show restraint in accepting loans backed by austerity measures. It is easy to participate in the 'what-if' game with Greece, but it is troubling to imagine what would occur if the global economy stalled with circumstances similar to 2008. Furthermore, the 2008 financial crisis also created conditions that have allowed so-called cryptocurrencies to flourish in use as skepticism toward national banks and currencies intensifies. Growth in e-commerce and economic globalization have rendered physical iterations of currencies less relevant, which threatens some of the optimism that the creators of the Euro had in trying to craft a European identity through a monetary union. The Euro is a continual reminder of European cooperation and European citizenship but has the corresponding ability to cultivate resentment toward ambiguous European institutions when the economy is not doing well.

Putin's strategy in the Ukraine has been a success, far surpassing the geopolitical advances originally made in Georgia. Russian-backed separatists in the Donbas alone has created enough ambiguity related to Ukraine's sovereignty that NATO accession carries more risk than before. Perhaps the largest

disadvantage for Ukraine is the loss of control over the Crimean Peninsula, which now functions as Russia's guaranteed dominance over the Black Sea. Additionally, Putin's multifaceted Special War has taken on new frontiers. Russian-backed exploitation of largely unregulated Internet-based and social media platforms has assisted in manipulating political discourse and intensifying the politics of Western liberal democracies. While foreign interference in elections is recognized by most observers and politicians to be problematic, evidence of how effective online propaganda and misinformation is in actually altering voting intentions of the electorate in the overall, complex political discourse remains inconclusive.

Populists will continue to remain prominent in European politics and alter political landscapes. Some observers toward the end of 2016 suggested that populism was a passing phase; that soon Europe would be able to return back to relative political stability seen in the early 2000s. Nothing could be further from the truth. Look no further than the course that Brexit has taken in the United Kingdom since 2016. Brexit has inarguably defined the second half of the 2010s, possibly even the whole decade. The United Kingdom was poised to officially leave the European Union on March 29, 2019 in compliance with the provisions in the now-famous initiation of Article 50. However, this did not happen. Prime Minister David Cameron's successor Theresa May negotiated a withdrawal agreement with the EU but catastrophically failed in securing a majority that would see its approval. Thus, the United Kingdom was not able to leave on time.

Also problematic was Prime Minster May's minority Conservative government elected in a 2017 snap election that not just included hardliners within her own party, but the Eurosceptic, British Unionist, and Northern Ireland based Democratic Unionist Party. The specific issue that ostensibly killed the withdrawal agreement upon its disclosure in late 2018 was related to the so-called Irish backstop, a provision that would keep Northern Ireland within the EU Customs Union if a solution was not made to avoid a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Eurosceptics within the Conservatives in addition to the whole DUP delegation, predictably did not accept May's agreement. In many respects, the weak negotiating position held by Cameron before the referendum has intensified under May. In order to avoid a 'no-deal' Brexit, an extension (two of them, at this point in time) was made to Article 50 to October 2019. May's failure to deliver *any* Brexit, a key 2017 campaign promise that explicitly mentioned the March 2019 deadline, effectively wiped out support for her Conservative government and has miraculously resurrected the political life of Nigel Farage under his new 'Brexit Party.' A scenario that the March 2019 deadline was supposed to prevent, the United Kingdom is likely to participate in European elections in May 2019, with Farage's tightly-run, single-issue Brexit Party receiving high levels of support from disillusioned Brexit supporters.

The complications related to Brexit underscores the complexion of the greater political zeitgeist in contemporary European politics. When traditional politics is unable to solve a particular crisis, the sole act of keeping power from

radicals and populists by desperately governing from the political center

inadvertently disillusions more of the populace to turn to alternatives. This

strategy, in general terms, has been the playbook of the so-called 'political

establishment' in recent years. May's withdrawal agreement demonstrates the

politically lethal act of trying to please everyone, but eventually pleasing no one.

The challenge for the EU and its members in the years forward will be the

navigation of the shifting political paradigm driven by political alternatives. Brexit

negotiations under May has confirmed that this strategy does not work.

Ultimately, the long-term political health of the EU, and indeed the whole of the

Western world, will rest upon this very issue of balancing between solving

popular grievances without jeopardizing the foundations of liberal democracy.

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