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The dream of the United States of Europe.
An ambitious scenario challenged by the Brexit.

By Max Haller
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Policy Recommendations

1. The Brexit is a very important event also for the European Union. It should be used as an occasion to discuss seriously the question of the finality of integration.

2. The comparison of European integration with a bicycle which has to ride continuously in order not to plunge should be abandoned in favour of a more modest, but realistic aim of integration.

3. The practical workings and the most obvious achievements of the EU so far are related to its character as a *Community of Law.* The chances of extending this character should be elaborated in detail.

Abstract

The paper argues that the Brexit was a first instance of dis-integration of the European Union. It has great importance not only for Britain but also for the European Union itself. It is shown that the main reason for the negative outcome of the referendum about the UK remaining in the EU was that British citizens did not want to remain a member of an EU aspiring to develop toward fully integrated *United States of Europe*. The same stance was behind the rejection of the European Constitution by the French and the Dutch in 2005, and repeated rejection of the citizens of Norway and Switzerland to join the EU. The paper then summarizes the main historical ideas of European integration and identifies the two main different views: One perspective of Europe as a loose federation of democratic nation states, and another one as a closely integrated new political community with a strong military force. By analyzing the Monnet method, the basic documents of integration and the European Economic Community/European Union policy of accepting new members, it is shown that the EU (except the United Kingdom) in fact is aiming toward the first model, "to become an ever closer union", that is, a kind of *United States of Europe*. An alternative vision, called Europe as a *Community of Law* is sketched out; this vision is supported by recognized scholars of constitutions and in this realm the EU has had the biggest achievements so far. In such a view, the EU would concentrate itself on enacting basic constitutional principles and legal norms which should provide a binding framework within which all member states could implement their specific national policies.

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In this paper[1] I will proceed in three steps. First, I will discuss what the main reasons and consequences of the Brexit were; second, I will argue that ideas have played a significant role in European integration; however, there was not one single idea, but two quite different ones. Third, I will show that the factual process of European integration has been motivated, albeit more in a subtextual way, by the aim that Europe should become a new large and powerful political unit; on such a background, also the Brexit can well be understood. The paper concludes with some considerations for a process of European integration based on the idea of a *Community of Law*.

The dominant, but one-sided interpretation of the Brexit

The Brexit is generally explained in a rather clear and simple way: The organization of the referendum about the remaining or leaving of the EU by Britain was an irresponsible decision by the British Prime Minister David Cameron; it was inspired mainly by the aim to strengthen the political position of himself and of his government; but also the supporters of the Brexit were inconsiderate populists, using one-sided and even forged arguments in order to win the referendum. In my view this interpretation is appropriate, but incomplete. It ignores an important fact: that British-EU relations have since long been quite ambivalent. Three facts are relevant in this regard.

First, Britons have always been rather skeptical about their membership in the European Economic Community (EEC)/European Union (EU); in all Eurobarometer studies, Britons were the most skeptical about European integration and the proportion of those who did not see advantages for their own country usually was highest. In the early 2000s, only 7% of the Britons associated the EU with "trust", and only 23% with "hope"; these were the lowest values among all 24 member countries (the overall mean were 20% and 38%); just a little more than one-fourth of the Britons believed that EU membership "is a good thing" and "the country has benefited from it"; the means for all countries were 53% and 57%.[2] In 2015, one year before the Brexit, the values were rather similar. While in all member states, 32% of citizens had trust in the European Community, only 23% of the Britons had trusted it[3]; this was a proportion nearly as low as in Greece and Cyprus, two countries hit strongly by the economic crisis.

Second, the skepticism concerning British membership in the EU was widespread among political elites as well. David Cameron was not the first British Premier in recent times to propose a referendum. Also Tony Blair had announced to hold such a referendum; but later on, he abandoned this plan. In addition, leaders of continental EEC/EU member states were themselves highly skeptical about Britain's EU membership. In 1963 and 1967, the British application for membership was rejected after the veto of French president De Gaulle who wanted to establish a common foreign and defense policy and he feared that Britain's membership would disbalance the internal power structure of the EEC. Continuous British reservations against an institutional consolidation of the EU in terms of social policy, particularly advocated by premier Margaret Thatcher, strengthened the ambivalent stance of many EU member states against British membership.

1) This paper is a synopsis of a semi-plenary lecture given at the 13th Conference of the European Sociological Association, Manchester, August 22, 2019. Its theoretical background was elaborated in my book European Integration as an Elite Process. The Failure of a Dream? New (2009).

2) Findings from the Eurobarometer, reported in Haller, European Integration as an Elite Process (2008), p.225.

3) Eurobarometer Autumn 2015, see https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=eurobarometer+2015 (11.11.2019).

"The thesis proposed here is that the Brexit has been a far-reaching event disproving the idea that the EU should develop itself toward a full political community by citizens in most member states."

What is missing in most interpretations of the Brexit is its relevance for the further development of the European Union itself. The thesis proposed here is that the Brexit has been a far-reaching event disproving the idea that the EU should develop itself toward a full political community by citizens in most member states. I will proceed in three steps to prove this argument: First, in showing that ideas are very important in long-term social changes and this has also been the case in the process of European integration; second, by arguing that many EU political leaders in fact proposed – since Jean Monnet - and still have in mind the idea of the *United States of Europe* as its ultimate state; and third that the Brexit in fact was a further important event which disproved the political feasibility of this idea.

The role of ideas in history and the case of European integration

"Ideas have certainly played a very important role also for European integration."

Concerning the role of ideas in history, we can refer to the famous German sociologist **Max Weber**; he wrote in 1916, as a conclusion out of his comprehensive studies on the role of religions in the rise of capitalism: "Economic interests determine actual, day-to-day behavior to a large degree. In the long run, however, ideas are the switchmen who decide in which direction change and development will go" (Weber 1973, p.414). Ideas have certainly played a very important role also for European integration. The "Idea of Europe" (Foerster 1963) has been discussed among political philosophers, historians, social scientists and other intellectuals since the 17th century (for an overview see Haller 2008, 264-283). The main goal behind these ideas was to end the continuous wars which shacked this continent ever and ever. But – contrary to what many believe – there was no single, consistent idea about how such a peaceful Europe should look like. Rather, there were two opposed ideas – one, which aimed at a closely integrated Europe (the *United States of Europe*), and another one, which saw Europe's future only as a union of independent and democratic nation states.

The proponents of the *United States of Europe* had a vision of Europe as a new large and powerful political community, with all institutions of a centralized state, including a strong government. Proponents of this idea include the **Duke of Sully** (1559-1641), a French nobleman, soldier and statesman; in his *Memorials of Saint Helena*, **Napoleon Bonaparte** proposed an alliance between all European states, but with France as the leading nation in this new Europe; the Christian conservative and nationalist writer and politician **Friedrich Naumann** who conferred to Germany in his book *Mitteleuropa* (1915), the task of uniting and leading Europe. For the German philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche** (1844-1900) European unification would be a means to overcome both the nation-state and democracy. The most influential recent proponent of an integrated Europe was the Austrian political writer and activist **Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi** (1894-1972). In his book *Paneuropa* (1923) he proposed that Europe should become a powerful world empire, co-equal with the British Commonwealth and the United States. This Europe should also include the French, Belgian and German colonies overseas, particularly in Africa, but evidently not Britain. This position was also advocated by **Winston Churchill** in his famous address given at Zurich University in September 19, 1947; in this speech, he asked explicitly for the foundation of *United States of Europe*, mainly as an alliance between France and Germany, while Great Britain would act as an external "friend and sponsor".[4]

Other recognized thinkers foresaw European integration in a different way. For the French

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4) See https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/address_given_by_winston_churchill_zurich_19_september_1946-en-7dc5a4cc-4453-4c2a-b130-b534b7d76ebd.html (retrieved 11.11.2019).

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philosopher **Abbé de Saint Pierre** (1658-1743), Europe should become a peaceful federation of the then 24 largest states of Europe, integrated also by a free trade area. Similar ideas were developed by the Scottish writer **Charles Mackay** (1814-1889) and the prolific French social philosopher **Henri de Saint Simon** (1760-1825). The main preoccupation in his book *De la reorganization de la société Euro-péenne* was the abolishment of the absolute order and the establishment of parliamentary systems as the main preconditions for peace in Europe. Similar ideas were proposed earlier and later by **Erasmus of Rotterdam**, **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** and **Victor Hugo**. The most convincing arguments in this regard, however, were developed by the German philosopher **Immanuel Kant**; even if he did not refer to Europe but to the world as a whole. In his famous essay *Perpetual peace*: *A philosophical sketch* (1795), Kant proposed three main preconditions for peace between nation states: (1) Every state should be a republic; (2) international law should be founded upon a federation of all states; and (3) a world citizenship should exist, limited however, to the right for universal hospitality. A republican (democratic) constitution for Kant includes the rule of law and freedom and equality between all citizens. A world constituted in this way would be peaceful because wars break out much more seldom if ever, because all citizens have to agree; only the elites are gaining from war while the citizens have to bear all the costs. Hundreds of political papers have been written by political scientists to test this "democratic theory of peace" but none of them could disprove it (Rauch 2005).

How the elites pursued European integration toward an "ever closer union", the "United States of Europe"

After 2nd World War it was the second strategy, that of the creation of new large and powerful political Union which became the leading idea of European integration (albeit in a tacit way). I will prove this argument by three kinds of evidence: the influence of Jean Monnet and the Monnet method; the content of important treaty documents; and the political actions of the EU leaders in processes of enlargement.

Jean Monnet and the Monnet method

"Monnet was no 'visionary', but a pragmatic, success-oriented and also elitist political counselor and activist."

The mastermind behind the process of European integration since the mid-1950s was the French entrepreneur and political advisor **Jean Monnet** (1888-1979). Monnet was no "visionary", but a pragmatic, success-oriented and also elitist political counselor and activist. The realization of his ideas became possible because a particular strategy of integration was pursued, the famous Monnet method.

The Monnet method includes five specific strategies (see also Haller 2008, pp.67-68):

(1) The strategy of *elitist integration* from above: A plan should be developed by political advisors in cooperation with political leaders, and be made public only if it was accepted by all leaders;

(2) The strategy of *persuasion*: Governments and people must be informed and influenced in a way to take over the ideas proposed;

(3) *Manifold and flexible plans* have to be developed, so that an appropriate plan is ready when the chance for realization arises;

(4) An *independent agency* has to be established with the task of pursuing integration; this was first the High Authority of the *Coal and Steel Community*, then the *EU Commission*; later on, the *European Court of Justice* became an additional very influential institution pursuing integration;

(5) Integration should occur *step-by-step*: Beginning with modest steps of economic integration, it should go on toward deeper and deeper political integration.

The general idea behind these strategies is the functional theory of integration. This theory argues that in the course of integration more or less automatic processes of "functional spillover" will occur; the reason is that small steps of economic integration make necessary deeper ones and also more and more elements of social and political integration. Such a process occurs slowly but continuously and in an unspectacular way; thus, it will be accepted by the populations and in the long-term lead to full integration. Democratic participation does not play a significant role in this process.

The United States of Europe in the basic documents of integration

"The most recent and important Lisbon Treaty, signed in 2007, in effect adopts the Constitution for Europe which was rejected by clear majorities of the French and Dutch voters in 2005."

The basic idea of European integration was first stated in the *Treaty of Rome* of 1957 which established the *European Economic Community*. It opens by proposing explicitly with the statement that the signatory states have the strong intention to lay down the basis for an **ever closer Union** among the people of Europe. *The Solemn Declaration on the European Union* of 1983 in Stuttgart confirms this commitment explicitly; it led to the *Maastricht Treaty* of 1992, the establishment of the European Single Market in 1993 and the *Amsterdam Treaty* of 1997 (abolishing border controls in the Schengen area). The most comprehensive and ambitious effort to advance European integration was the elaboration of a *European Constitution* in 2002/03. Its intent was to provide a consolidated legal framework for the European Union, comparable to the national Constitutions. It is highly significant that David Cameron in his negotiations with the EU in 2016 (before the Brexit referendum) asked explicitly for an exemption from the long-term goal of "an ever closer union". The most recent and important *Lisbon Treaty*, signed in 2007, in effect adopts the Constitution for Europe which was rejected by clear majorities of the

French and Dutch voters in 2005. The Lisbon Treaty implemented only cosmetic changes to that constitution, for instance, by omitting hints toward Europe becoming a new "nation" of its own, the references to the symbols of the EU (flag, anthem etc.).

How the aim to become a world power has inspired EC/EU decisions about enlargement

It is not difficult to show that nearly all processes of the enlargement of the European Community (EC) and the EU were motivated to a considerable degree by the idea of Europe becoming a powerful global player. This was clearly the case in the big Eastern enlargement in 2004 when eight former state-socialist countries were accepted surprisingly fast as members, and in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania were approved. This fast integration and the related extension of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) toward Central and East Europe was clearly connected to the aim to detach these countries (and later on also the Ukraine) from their former alliance with the Soviet Union and Russia, respectively.

The clearest proof of this thesis is the way how negotiations with Turkey were conducted. It is obvious that Turkey is a country very different in cultural and political terms from the six founding members. Since 1945, the military has taken over political power in Turkey four times; its present government, headed by President Recep T. Erdogan, practices savage acts against political opponents. Given the fact that Britain's quest for membership was first rejected in the 1960s, a very critical stance toward Turkey's membership could have been expected. This did not happen, however. Already in 1963 the Ankara agreement established a reduction of customs; in 2000 the Copenhagen European Council stated that Turkey had fulfilled all political criteria for opening talks about the question of joining the EU as a member and in 2005 formal negotiations began. However, these negotiations met strong reservations in several other nations and some of them (including Austria and France) declared that they would hold a referendum about Turkey's admission

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to the EU. A main reason why Turkey was rather successful in its effort to become closely related to the European Union was certainly – besides economic interests - that Turkey is a very important country in geopolitical terms, located strategically between Europe and Asia. Turkey has by far the largest army in Europe today (around 600.000 soldiers, while France, Germany and the UK have only 200.000 or less); at the time of the writing of this paper (October 2019), this army invaded the northern, Kurdish part of Syria in order to "suppress terrorism" there; this action was widely seen as a clear violation of international humanitarian law.

The Brexit as a further strong proof that citizens reject the idea of "United States of Europe"

The Brexit is, in my opinion, a clear indication that British citizens reject the idea of *United States of Europe.* But none of the reactions of the EU leaders questioned this tacit, fundamental aim of integration. That European citizens do not want the supersession of their nation states by a central EU government can be shown by looking more closely at the motives of the Brexit supporters, and on the outcomes of former referenda in other European countries. They all show a deep split between political and economic elites on the one side, and the citizens on the other side; while the former are enthusiastic about European integration, the citizens at large are much less excited (for extensive empirical evidence see Haller 2008, pp.1-30).

The Leave voters in Britain feared that EU membership would undermine the autonomy of the British nation state. The main reasons were:[5] Britain should be able to control immigration autonomously; border controls should be improved; the welfa-

re system should become "fairer" by offering fewer benefits to immigrants; British laws should be controlled by the British institutions; and quality of life should be improved.

"The main arguments of those against the constitution again reflect that oppositional political elites and people did not want the EU to become a super-state."

Since the aforementioned *European Constitution* was seen widely as a significant step toward the further integration, the French and Dutch decided to submit it to a popular referendum in 2005. It came as a thunderclap when clear majorities of the citizens in both founding EU member states rejected this constitution. It was certainly the case that internal political issues were also relevant but they were closely interconnected with arguments concerning the new EU constitution. The main arguments of those against the constitution again reflect that oppositional political elites and people did not want the EU to become a super-state. Additional arguments were a lack of democratic accountability in the EU; a threat to the European social model; opposition against Turkey becoming an EU member. The cases of Switzerland and Norway whose citizens have repeatedly voted against EU membership confirm such an interpretation. In Switzerland, the citizens were mainly concerned about the political autonomy of their country and the preservation of their unique system of direct democracy. In Norway the main reasons of citizens against the EU were the wish that Norway should decide by itself about its future; fears that agriculture and fishery would be threatened; and a view of the European Union as being dominated by big enterprises.

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5) See Wikipedia: Brexit, p.9 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brexit, retrieved 19.8.2019). The findings are based on Lord Ashcroft Polls, 24.6.2016.

Conclusions

"The main lesson concerning the further institutional development of the European Union is that it would be well advised to refrain definitely from the slogan 'toward an ever closer Union'."

I think that we can draw two important lessons from the Brexit about the future development of the European Union; the first refers to its internal development, the other to its role in the world.

The main lesson concerning the further institutional development of the European Union is that it would be well advised to refrain definitely from the slogan "toward an ever closer Union". Even without this aim, it has an important mission. We can see it as a *Community of Law*. Law can be a very strong force binding the members of a country together and obliging all of them to common principles (respect for basic human rights, full enforcement of democratic constitutions, establishment of comprehensive and fair welfare state institutions). Several analysts of European integration and the influential first Commission president Walter Hallstein, have considered the EEC/EU in this way (Weiler 1999; Stone Sweet/Brunell 1998). Such a view captures the essence of the European Union and its actual workings. The main activity of the EU Commission concerns the enactments of laws and decrees, and the European Court of Justice plays a highly significant role with its many pivotal decisions. The greatest accomplishments of the European Union so far are connected with this aspect: The introduction of the "four freedoms", including the right of all citizens of the member states to settle down and work everywhere in the EU; the abolishment of border controls in the Schengen area (which comprises 26 European states); the adoption of clear standards in many aspects of labor and social law, including gender mainstreaming. Success in the policy areas in which the EU spends most of its money and acts as a kind of "government" – agriculture and structural policy – , however, is limited and considered by several experts even as a failure (see, e.g.

El-Agraa 2011). The view of the EU as a *Community of Law* could also bridge the splits between the northern and southern and the western and eastern EU member states as well as the new split between towns and countryside. The huge redistribution in terms of structural and regional policies would be replaced by indirect forms of convergence policies (such as tax reliefs for entrepreneurs in less developed regions; the definition of minimal wages related to the local income levels; an EU-wide, supplementary unemployment insurance etc.). It is evident that the reason behind the opposition of the Visegrád countries against accepting refugees is that they do not want to give up their national autonomy in matters of migration on behalf of Brussels. Here, the EU should not constrain individual members to accept certain numbers of refugees but would only support those who are willing to do so.

"An EU conceived of a Community of Law could also be quite open and active in the outside world."

The second conclusion relates to the foreign relations and policy of the European Union. An EU conceived of a *Community of Law* could also be quite open and active in the outside world. As a unique *Civil Power* (Kohnstamm 1964) it does not dispose of huge military forces but relies mainly on negotiations and treaties; in this regard, it is in fact seen as a peace-building actor (Lucarelli/ Fioramonti 2009). However, the global image of the European Union is far from being mainly positive. Particularly its policies of trade and development are seen as contradictory and its agrarian protectionism is criticized. The EU should not try to propose a delusive self-image as being based only on values against interests. It should portray itself as a complex actor who proposes his own values and interests but at the same time promotes fair and multilateral world trade regimes which also benefit the poorer countries. Given its immense economic weight, it can well play also a significant global role.

It is not political integration and centralization which has provided peace in Europe. This has been

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shown not only in the thousand years old history of China where political power centralization was continuously interrupted by fierce internal wars (Vogelsang 2018); it was also proved by the case of the United States with its devastating civil war 1861-1865, not to speak of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. That democracy is a main guarantee for peace has been proved by the fact that also in many other regions of the world, including Japan – which was very aggressive in the first half of the 20th century - there was no war since 1945. As a civil *Community of Law*, the EU would remain a closely integrated "family of nations" (to paraphrase an idea proposed by Charles de Gaulle in 1960), but at the same time a respected actor on the global level. An autonomous democratic Britain outside, but very closely connected with the EU, could continue to cooperate closely with the EU in fostering economic growth in Europe and peace in the world.

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